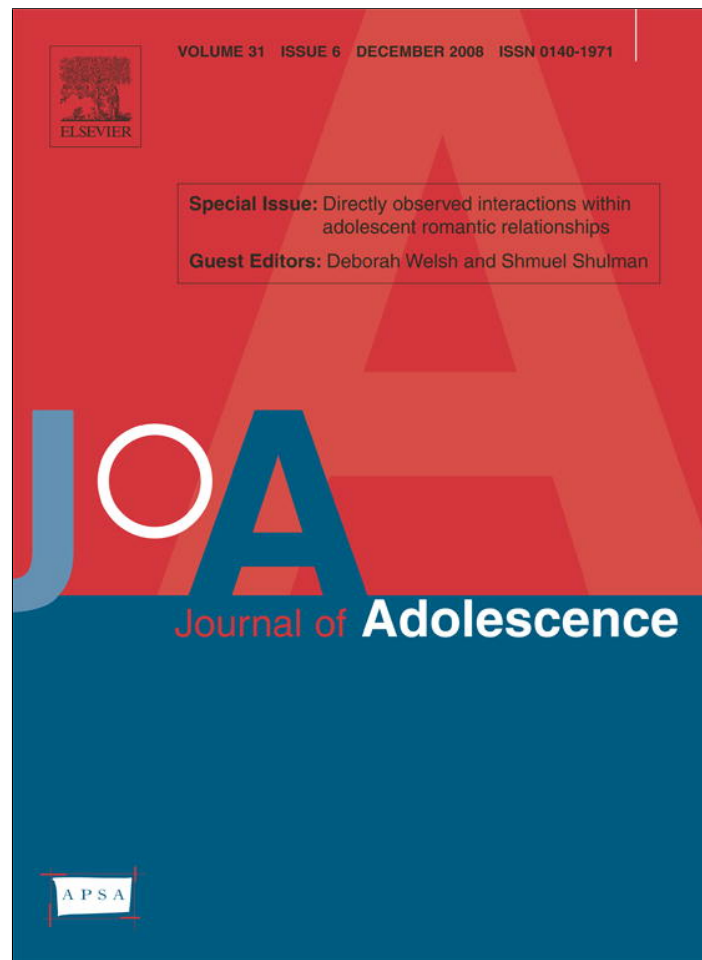


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Late adolescent girls' relationships with parents and romantic partner: The distinct role of mothers and fathers

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Abstract

The distinct role of mothers and fathers in shaping the quality of relationships with romantic partner was explored. One hundred and twenty 17-year old girls were observed during their senior year in high school with each of their parents during a Revealed differences task [Allen, J. P., Hauser, S. T., Bell, K. L., Boykin, K. A., & Tate, D. C. (1994). *Autonomy and relatedness coding system manual, version 2.01*. Unpublished manual] and filled out questionnaires pertaining to their relationships with romantic partners. A year and a half later (7 months after conscription to compulsory military service) they again filled out questionnaires.

Whereas self-reports did not distinguish between relations with mothers and fathers observational data revealed that relationships with each parent are associated with somewhat different aspects of the romantic relationship. Better quality of relationship with mother was associated with delays in the girl's entrance into sexual romantic relationships, and with better quality of romantic relationship concurrently whereas better quality of relationship with father was associated with better quality of romantic relationship once they are formed concurrently and longitudinally. The findings highlight the central role that mothers and fathers play in shaping the quality of the romantic relationships that late adolescent girls form and underscore the importance of using observational data as well as questionnaire data.

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Keywords: Parent–adolescent relationships; Romantic relationships; Fathers; Mothers; Autonomy and relatedness

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Introduction

Developing the capacity to form a stable and fulfilling romantic relationship is one of the key developmental tasks of adolescence and young adulthood (Brown, Feiring, & Furman, 1999). It involves the capacity to balance intimacy and closeness with individuality and separateness. This develops in several relationship contexts, particularly adolescents with their parents (Collins & Repinski, 1994; Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Gray & Steinberg, 1999b). Applying a longitudinal design, and using observational measures as well as self-reports, this study examined the distinct contribution of the relationship with mother and with father to girls' romantic relationships.

Parent–child relationships and adolescents' romantic relationships

Parent–child relationships are conceived as a central context in which the capacity to form and maintain a romantic relationship is learned (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1980; Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986). Within these relationships, children first develop expectations and schemas of their relationship with each parent and internalize a general model of close relationships. They also learn various skills and capacities such as communication, conflict resolution strategies and emotion regulation. These as well as the internalized models can then be applied in the romantic relationship arena (Bowlby, 1980; Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; O'Neil & Parke, 2000; Shulman & Collins, 1995).

In this study, we focus on two central dimensions in the parent–child relationship that have been implicated in predicting quality of relationship with peers and romantic partners: relatedness and autonomy (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Guisinger & Blatt, 1994, Shulman & Knafo, 1997). Relatedness refers to a sense of warmth, acceptance and open communication experienced within the relationships. Autonomy and individuation have been described as involving the promotion of independence in instrumental functioning, decision-making and emotional self-reliance. Both aspects, relatedness and autonomy, are considered important in helping children internalize a sense of security and a capacity for intimacy and individuation, which contribute to better quality of romantic relationships (Cooper & Grotevant, 1987; Scharf & Mayselless, 2001).

Research to date has supported this prediction both concurrently and longitudinally. For example, concurrent examination showed that late adolescents who reported close and autonomous relationships with their parents also reported closer and more secure relational styles in their romantic relationships (Beinstein-Miller & Hoicowitz, 2004; Furman & Simon, 1999; Furman, Simon, Shaffer, & Bouchey, 2002; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). From an attachment perspective, several researchers have demonstrated that working models of relationships with parents and with romantic partners, as assessed through interviews and questionnaires, were modestly related (Furman et al., 2002; Owens, Crowell, Pan, Treboux, & Water, 1995).

Similar associations were reported in longitudinal studies. Collins and his colleagues (Collins, Hennighausen, Schmit, & Sroufe, 1997; Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Collins & Van Dulmen, 2006) demonstrated an association between positive quality of parent–child relationships, assessed via observations and self-reports, and stability and quality of adolescent and emerging adult romantic relationships. Similarly, in a sample of late adolescent males Scharf and Mayselless (2001) showed that perceived acceptance and encouragement of independence by fathers and mothers alike were

positively associated with the capacity for romantic intimacy 4 years later. Another longitudinal study (Feldman, Gowen, & Fisher, 1998) showed that positive relationships with parents, as evinced in flexible control and family cohesion, predicted romantic intimacy, especially for girls. Kim, Conger, Lorenz, and Elder (2001) showed that positive affect and monitoring predicted a positive quality of romantic relationships.

The effects of the parent–child relationships on romantic relationships sometimes differ for girls and boys (Cooper & Grotevant, 1987). For example, adolescent girls might be more impacted than boys by their relationships with parents (e.g., Brooks-Gunn & Furstenberg, 1989; Feldman et al., 1998). Such gender differences call for a special focus on developmental processes unique to each gender (Russell & Saebel, 1997). In this study we focus only on girls, examining the association between their relationships with father and with mother and their romantic relationships.

Relationship with father and relationship with mother

The relationship with mother differs from that with father in quality and implications for adolescents' adjustment and behavior. Numerous studies have demonstrated that the relationship with mother is closer and more engaged than that with father, and also involves higher levels of conflict (e.g., Smetana, Campione, & Metzger, 2006; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Adolescents also confide in mother more than in father, and report being able to trust and turn to mother in times of need more than to father (Apter, 1990; Mayseless, Wiseman, & Hai, 1998; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Further, the mother–daughter dyad is much closer than are all other dyads in the family (Mayseless et al., 1998). The developmental literature has further suggested that father plays a special role in socializing the social facets of the child's functioning and in promoting individuation and differentiation (Parke, 2002). Fathers were observed more than mothers to support the sex-typed roles of the children, to teach the child discipline, autonomy and individuation (Ross, 1977), and frequently to play the role of playmate. Still, Smetana et al. (2006, p. 261) in their recent review chapter state, “surprisingly little empirical research includes fathers or examines the differential influence of mothers and fathers on adolescent development”.

In general both relationships are expected to be important in affecting daughters' socialization into romantic relationships. In both relationships girls learn to negotiate issues of intimacy and closeness, and both relationships form the basis of an internalized model that later shapes future close relationships, including romantic (Furman et al., 2002). The encouragement of autonomy and separateness of girls within each of these relationships was found to contribute to their development of dating identity (Cooper & Grotevant, 1987). A central developmental task of adolescence is to achieve an optimal balance between autonomy and relatedness in the relationship with parents (Allen, Hauser, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994). Hence, the capacity of girls to succeed in forming such a balance with each of the parents may be important in predicting their sexual and romantic relations.

In general, girls are expected to learn through emulating their mother how to enact the cultural role expected of a woman in heterosexual romantic relationships. Girls who have failed to create a balance of relatedness and autonomy with mother, and who fight her over their individuality, or are too enmeshed in their relationship with her, are expected to evince negative indicators in

relationships with romantic partners, reflected in risk behavior (i.e., early sexual involvement) and lower quality of romantic relations (i.e., low level of intimacy).

In line with this depiction, negative quality of the relationship with mother (e.g., permissive control, lower levels of positive communication) was found associated with earlier initiation of intercourse—an indication of a risk behavior, lower levels of responsible sexual activity (i.e., higher number of sexual partners) and higher incidence of unwanted pregnancies in adolescence (Brooks-Gunn & Paikoff, 1997; Hogan & Kitagawa, 1985; Inazu & Fox, 1980; Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Miller, Benson, & Galbraith, 2001; Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2004).

Besides providing closeness and security, fathers play an especially salient role in promoting the exploratory side of their children's development (Grossmann et al., 2002) and with daughters they probably provide a safe arena wherein to learn to interact with the other sex. In particular, it was suggested that girls are assumed to learn feminine behaviors by complementing their father's masculine behavior (Russell & Saebel, 1997). Following this logic, the quality of the relationship with father is expected to be part of the prototype on which girls base their style of relationships with men, including romantic relations (Collins & Read, 1994).

In line with this depiction, father's involvement in early childhood was found to predict women's empathy at age 31 (Koestner, Franz, & Weinberger, 1990), and paternal warmth in childhood predicted better social relationships at age 41 (Franz, McClelland, & Weinberger, 1991). Dalton, Frick-Horbury, and Kitzmann (2006) found in college students that father's but not mother's reported parenting was related to the quality of current relationships with a romantic partner, and father's parenting style was also related to views of the self as being able to form secure and close romantic relationships.

Hence, girls' separate relationships with mother and with father, in particular their autonomy and relatedness, should predict their sexual involvement as well as the quality of their romantic relations.

Issues of assessment: self-report and observations

Very few studies have addressed the different and possibly unique role of father and of mother in predicting adolescent girls' capacity to develop fulfilling romantic relationships. The few studies that examined separately the quality of relations with father and with mother showed their associations with various indicators of romantic involvement to be similar (e.g., Black & Schutte, 2006). One reason for such similarity may be the way the relationship with each parent was assessed. In most cases the assessment method involved a self-report questionnaire regarding relations with father and with mother. In adolescence, these reports usually evince very high correlations—between .60 and .80 (e.g., Scharf, 2007; Steinberg, 2001). This level of similarity often prompts the researcher to aggregate the reports to one score of parental relationship, thereby preventing examination of the unique roles of father and of mother.

This observed similarity in self-reports might reflect actual similarity in the quality of each relationship, but it might also express internal processes of integration characteristic of adolescence: various interpersonal models and internalizations of relationships coalesce into a general model of experienced parenting. In that case the observed quality of each relationship may be moderately distinct, but the internalized models may be quite similar. Observational measures might circumvent such a cognitive and affective propensity, and expose the unique facets of each relationship (Hawes & Dadds, 2006; Janssens, De-Bruyn, Manders, & Scholte, 2005). This study

used self-reports and observations to assess quality of the relationship with each parent; this facilitated examination of the possible unique contribution of each relationship to girls' romantic sexual relationship and the relative contribution of the self-reported parent–adolescent relationship, reflecting the adolescent's inner perception of it and observations of this relationship.

We did not include observed interactions of romantic couples. One reason is the frequency of romantic relationships in adolescence. Though a very large majority of late adolescents in Western countries report that they have been involved in a special romantic relationship, and can thus be asked about their experiences, only about half (around 60% in representative sample in the USA) report being currently in such a relationship (Carver, Joyner, & Udry, 2003). Including only adolescents who currently had a stable relationship, hence whose relationship quality could be observed, might have seriously limited our capacity to examine the research question regarding the association between quality of the relationship with mother and with father and romantic relations concurrently and longitudinally. Furthermore, quality of relations with parents may affect the possibility of having a current romantic partner. So to examine our research question in a valid manner in a large enough sample, we needed to examine both quality of the current specific relationship and general relational styles and other general sex-related behaviors in a sample that would not be biased due to exclusion of adolescents who currently did not have a romantic partner with whom the relationship could be observed. Overall, we expected each relationship (with mother and with father) to make both a shared and a unique contribution to various indicators of romantic relations, concurrently and longitudinally.

Method

Participants

One hundred and twenty late adolescent girls in Israel who were planning to start compulsory military service away from home were recruited during the spring semester in their senior year at high school to participate in a short-term longitudinal study. As the study required the investment of several hours by each family member, most families who declined did so because of pressure of time. The final sample reflects consent by 55% of eligible families.

The families were recruited from middle-class neighborhoods and were largely well educated (74% percent of the fathers and 73% of the mothers had at least a college education), 58% of the families were of Western origin, and their living quarters were of moderately low density (1.17 persons per room).

At the time of the first assessment adolescents' ages ranged from 17 to 18 years. Mothers' mean age was 46.40 years (S.D. = 4.40) and father's was 48.99 years (S.D. = 5.33). The number of children in these families varied between one and five, with a mean of 2.87 (S.D. = .70). About a third of the adolescents (32%) were first-born children. About 72% of the families described themselves as secular, the remainder as upholding the Jewish religious tradition but not in the orthodox way.

Procedure

Recruitment took place over two consecutive years in two waves of data collection, with 60 families participating in each wave. Identification and selection of prospective participants in the

study was through published lists of high-school seniors. Families were contacted by mail, and then by phone, informed about the research, and asked for their cooperation. In the phone conversation, we screened families to make sure that they met our research requirements (i.e., intact families, girls indicated they wanted to serve in the military). This constraint did not result in a highly skewed sample because divorce rates in Israel are much lower than in the USA (8.5% according to the [Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1996](#)) and because in these neighborhoods more than 80% of the girls serve in the military. The consent of all three family members was required for a family to participate. A monetary compensation of \$40 was offered to each family and was paid at the end of the first assessment (T1). The girls and the family also received small gifts. At T1, three different interviewers scheduled times to interview individually each member of the family who had agreed to participate (father, mother and daughter). Besides filling out questionnaires the girls and their mother and father participated separately in Revealed differences family dyadic interaction tasks, which were videotaped at home. Two interactions with mothers and two interactions with fathers could not be coded due to technical problems. The girls filled out questionnaires regarding perceived relatedness and autonomy with parents, and regarding their romantic relationships: quality of romantic relationships, enacting attachment needs and satisfaction with received support.

At the second assessment (T2), 7–10 months after conscription (about a year and half to 2 years after T1 assessment), adolescents and parents were contacted by phone and a meeting was scheduled at which they were asked to fill out questionnaires. Five families did not participate at this assessment. Reasons for non-participation included difficulty locating the girls who came home for short furloughs, and illness in the family. There were no differences in the research variables' between the girls who participated in both assessments and those who participated only in the first. With the girls these meetings (at T2) took place at home during furloughs. In some cases questionnaires were left at home for the girls and the parents to fill out, and the completed questionnaires were picked up by research assistants or were mailed to us. At this meeting the girls filled out questionnaires regarding the quality of romantic relationships and attachment styles.

Measures

Observations of autonomy and relatedness—Time 1

The Revealed differences family interaction task ([Allen, Hauser, Bell, Boykin, & Tate, 1994](#); [Allen, Hauser, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994](#)) was used to observe the quality of the relationship of daughters with father and with mother separately. Each dyad (mother and adolescent, father and adolescent) discussed a family issue on which they disagreed. To determine a topic of disagreement for discussion, adolescents and parents were asked to rate 10 areas of possible disagreement in their relationship on 11-point scales (0—not a problem, 10—a major problem: money, communication, friends, grades, household rules, plans for the future, alcohol and drugs, religion and dating). An interviewer identified the topic for discussion by the respective dyad (adolescent–mother, adolescent–father) by selecting the area in which both adolescent and parent reported the most problems (and if possible, an area that was a current problem).

The adolescent was audiotaped presenting her position on the selected conflict area. Adolescents and parents were left alone to play this tape and to discuss the topic for 10 min. One half of the adolescents talked with father first, and the other half talked with mother first. The

interactions were videotaped and the taped conversations were later transcribed; interactions were coded from the videotapes complemented by the transcriptions. The coding was based on verbal as well as on non-verbal behaviors: tone of voice, eye contact, laughing, sighing, rolling eyes up, raising eyebrows, etc. The interactions were coded using the Autonomy and Relatedness coding system (Allen, Hauser, Bell, & Boykin, et al., 1994). Following the directions in the extensive manual, four indicators based on nine types of behaviors were coded, reflecting behaviors exhibited by each parent toward the adolescent, and likewise four indicators as exhibited by the adolescent toward each parent. Expressing and discussing reasons behind disagreements, and confidence in expressing one's opinion, were summed to form the indicator *exhibiting autonomy*. Queries and validation, agreement with the other, and degree of engagement in the interaction were summed to form the indicator *exhibiting relatedness*. *Autonomy-inhibiting* behaviors included behaviors that inhibit the autonomy of the other such as over-personalizing the disagreement and pressuring the other person to agree, whereas *relatedness-inhibiting behaviors* included behaviors that inhibit the sense of relatedness and closeness of the other such as expressing hostility and rudely interrupting the other. Single utterances were rated on a 0–4 scale based on intensity, and algorithms were used to add the scores across the interaction. A high score might reflect an intense single utterance, or alternatively low-level behavior across the entire interaction.

Six raters coded the interactions, at least two raters coding each one. In cases where a gap of more than 1 between raters was found on the specific scales, a third rater coded this interaction as well, and the mean among the three raters was calculated. Reliability was established based on 25 interactions that were coded by all raters and the authors. Intraclass correlations between each rater and authors for the whole set of coded scales (16 scales) were: exhibiting autonomy (range .54–.82, mean = .70), exhibiting relatedness (range .62–.75, mean = .70), inhibiting autonomy (range .75–.93, mean = .83), and inhibiting relatedness (range .65–.95, mean = .79). In addition, following the procedure described in the coding manual a score of balanced autonomy and relatedness was constructed by computing the sum of the exhibiting autonomy and exhibiting relatedness indexes after subtracting the sum of the inhibiting behaviors index. Well-balanced scores reflect presence of autonomy and relatedness and the absence of behaviors inhibiting autonomy and relatedness.

As can be seen in Table 1, intercorrelations among the scales range from low to high. For example, there are high correlations between inhibiting autonomy and inhibiting relatedness (.63–.73) for girls' behaviors toward either parent, and for mother's behaviors toward the daughter.

Girls' exhibiting autonomy is highly related to inhibiting behaviors toward both parents (.44–.49). Parents' exhibiting autonomy and inhibiting the girls' autonomy are also positively related (.34–.39). There is similarity in the ways the girls behave toward the two parents (ranging from .17 in exhibiting relatedness to .42 in inhibiting the parent's autonomy). There is also moderate similarity (circa .40) in how each person in a dyad behaves toward the other (i.e., mother toward daughter and daughter toward mother) and moderate similarity in how each parent behaves toward the daughter (ranging from .13 to .42).

Perceived relatedness with parents—Time 1

This aspect of the adolescent–parent relationship was assessed by two self-report measures. Adolescents completed the 28-item Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA: Armsden &

Table 1

The association between autonomy-relatedness in relationships with parents and girls' romantic relationships

| | Time 1 | | | Time 2 | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| | Quality of romantic relationships | Enacting attachment needs | Satisfaction from support | Quality of romantic relationships | Avoidance | Anxiety |
| Observations | | | | | | |
| Autonomy-relatedness (M) | .27* | .20 | .23 | .02 | .10 | .02 |
| Exhibiting autonomy (M) | -.25 | -.24 | -.18 | -.15 | .07 | -.08 |
| Inhibiting autonomy (M) | -.38** | -.26 | -.21 | -.19 | -.04 | .02 |
| Exhibiting relatedness (M) | -.02 | -.01 | .12 | -.20 | .01 | .08 |
| Inhibiting relatedness (M) | -.36** | -.34** | -.32* | -.10 | .01 | .10 |
| Autonomy-relatedness (F) | .29* | .28* | .25 | .43** | -.32*** | .04 |
| Exhibiting autonomy (F) | -.19 | -.11 | .14 | -.00 | -.12 | -.05 |
| Inhibiting autonomy (F) | -.28* | -.24 | -.05 | -.35* | .16 | -.09 |
| Exhibiting relatedness (F) | .17 | .14 | .22 | .20 | -.14 | -.04 |
| Inhibiting relatedness (F) | -.36** | -.32* | -.15 | -.38** | .25* | -.08 |
| Questionnaires | | | | | | |
| Perceived relatedness (M) | .36** | .20 | .34** | .11 | -.21* | -.20* |
| Perceived relatedness (F) | .36** | .13 | .33** | .28* | -.30** | -.31*** |
| Perceived autonomy (M) | .31* | .10 | .48*** | .14 | -.08 | -.22* |
| Perceived autonomy (F) | .29* | .09 | .48*** | .14 | -.10 | -.25** |

Note: F = father, M = mother; quality of romantic relationships Time 1 $N = 52-57$; enacting attachment needs $N = 45-50$; satisfaction from support $N = 52-57$; quality of romantic relationships Time 2 $N = 47-52$, attachment avoidance and anxiety $N = 100-107$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Greenberg, 1987) separately for father and for mother. This measure, which has previously been used in studies of adjustment to college (e.g., Larose & Boivin, 1997), includes three scales: trust (α mother = .78; α father = .79), communication (α mother = .91; father = .92), and alienation (α mother = .86; father = .86). These three scales are often combined to reflect closeness to parents (e.g., Taradash, Connolly, Pepler, Craig, & Cpsta, 2001). The adolescents also completed the Relationships-with-Mother-Father Questionnaire (RMFQ; Mayseless & Hai, 1998) to tap current relationships with parents on the dimensions of closeness (mother = .91, father = .93) and mutuality (mother = .80; father = .87). These scales were adapted from Schaefer's (1965) inventory of Children's Report of Parental Behavior and have been used in several studies with this age group in Israel (e.g., Mayseless & Hai, 1998; Mayseless et al., 1998). Because all the scales assessed various facets of the relatedness construct, and we were not interested in the associations of each specific facet with different outcomes but in the general construct of relatedness, we constructed one scale reflecting relatedness by averaging across the five scales (alienation scale was reversed) for mothers and fathers separately. Intercorrelations between mother's separate scales ranged from .62 to .84 and between father's scales they ranged from .65 to .84. Internal reliabilities for the constructed scales were high ($\alpha = .97$ for both father and mother). The correlation between perceived relatedness with mother and with father was .78.

Perceived autonomy with parents—Time 1

The adolescents also completed the *conflictual independence* scale from Hoffman's (1984) *Psychological Separation Inventory (PSI)* separately for mother and father ($\alpha = .83$ and $.86$, respectively). The measure had good concurrent and predictive validity with college students (Lopez & Gover, 1993) and was used to assess level of autonomy/individuation in the relationship. The correlation between perceived autonomy with mother and perceived autonomy with father was $.99$, demonstrating that the quality of the relationship with each parent reflects a global and integrated perception.

The correlations between the general scale of perceived relatedness and perceived autonomy with each parent were $r = .46$ for mother and $r = .41$ for father, demonstrating that relatedness and autonomy are associated, yet distinct.

Background questionnaire

Besides general background information (e.g., age, number of people in household and ethnic origin) the girls were asked to indicate if they currently had a romantic partner, the duration of their current romantic relationship, how many romantic partners they had had, and the length of the longest relationship they had had. They were asked to report the age at which they experienced their first intercourse, and the age of their romantic partner. In addition, at Time 2 they also provided information regarding their military service (e.g., frequency of furloughs and type of military base). None of these variables was associated with romantic relationships.

Relationships with romantic partner—Time 1

Quality of romantic relations was measured using the *Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ: Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983)*. The girls were asked to rate the degree to which they could count on their romantic partner on a 1–5 Likert scale (6 items $\alpha = .73$).

Enacting attachment needs. The *WHOTO Attachment-Related Functions Measure (Fraley & Davis, 1997; Hazan & Zeifman, 1994)* was used to examine three components of attachment: (a) *Secure Base* (.94); (b) *Safe-Haven* (.92) and (c) *Separation Protest* (.80). Additionally, we used an adaptation of the *Enacted Support Questionnaire (ESQ: Barrera, 1986; Barrera & Baca, 1990; Barrera, Sandler, & Ramsay, 1981)* to measure the frequency of *turning for support* to romantic partner (.89). Since all the scales assess (in different ways) adolescents' tendency to turn to their romantic partner for their attachment concerns, and as the scales were highly correlated (.72–.93), we constructed one indicator of enacting attachment functions in the romantic relationship.

We used the *satisfaction with received support* from the ESQ (Barrera, 1986; Barrera & Baca, 1990; Barrera et al., 1981) to measure satisfaction with specific types of enacted social support—information, instrumental or emotional (10 items; $\alpha = .90$).

Relationships with romantic partner—Time 2

Quality of romantic relations was measured using the SSQ (Sarason et al., 1983). The girls were asked to rate the same six items (Time I) describing the degree to which they could count on their current romantic partner on a 1–5 Likert scale ($\alpha = .86$).

Attachment styles were assessed using the *Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR: Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998)*. The girls rated the extent to which each item described their feelings in romantic relationships (even if they did not have a current stable one) on a 7-point scale ranging

from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Cronbach's alphas were high for both *avoidance* (.90) and *anxiety* (.87). Two global attachment scores were computed for each girl by averaging the relevant items.

Results

At the first assessment, 57 of the 120 girls reported having a current stable relationship with a romantic partner (47.5%). The mean duration of a romantic relationship was 13.12 months (S.D. = 2.95; range 1–67 months). The age at which they had their first romantic relationship ranged from 10 to 18 years (mean = 14.97, S.D. = 1.35), the age of the romantic partner ranged from 17 to 25 years (mean = 19.33, S.D. = 1.85), and number of romantic partners ranged from 1 to 5 (mean = 1.54, S.D. = 1.13). Forty-five girls (37.5%) reported having had intercourse, 13.3% at age 15–16, and all the others at age 17–18. At the second assessment, 52 girls had a current romantic partner. A total of 103 girls reported ever having had a romantic relationship at T2. Mean duration of romantic relationships as well as whether or not the girl reported having had intercourse were not related to any of the variables assessing the quality of romantic relationships.

With regard to demographic variables related to romantic relationships, girls who had had sexual intercourse in the past as reported at Time 1 exhibited higher levels of autonomy in their discussions with their mothers ($M = 2.13$, S.D. = .56) than girls who had not ($M = 1.86$, S.D. = .62; $t(1, 98) = 1.70$, $p < .05$), and also showed higher levels of inhibiting the mother's autonomy ($M = 1.29$, S.D. = .64 versus $M = .94$, S.D. = .67; $t(1, 98) = 2.05$, $p < .05$). Mothers of girls who had had sexual intercourse in the past also exhibited higher levels of inhibiting relatedness ($M = .91$, S.D. = .43) than their counterparts ($M = .59$, S.D. = .49). We found a significant association between mother's inhibiting the daughter's autonomy and number of romantic partners ($r = .19$, $p < .05$), and between father's exhibiting relatedness to daughter and duration of romantic relationships ($r = .25$, $p < .05$). Significant positive associations were found between age differences between girls and their romantic partners and girls' exhibiting autonomy, inhibiting autonomy and inhibiting relatedness to mother (.30, .38 and .47, respectively; $p < .05$) and mother inhibiting relatedness to their daughters ($r = .27$, $p < .05$).

To examine the associations between autonomy and relatedness in daughters' behaviors toward parents and the self-report indicators of romantic relations we computed Pearson correlations (see Table 1). As can be seen in Table 1, daughters' inhibiting mother's autonomy and inhibiting mother's relatedness were negatively related to quality of romantic relationship (Time 1), while the autonomy–relatedness balance in the discussions with mothers was associated positively with the quality of romantic relationships (Time 1). Additionally, daughter's inhibiting relatedness to mother was negatively related to enacting attachment needs and satisfaction with support in romantic relationships (Time 1). None of the adolescent–mother observations was significantly associated with Time 2 romantic indicators.

Regarding indicators of the observed behavior of girls toward father, the autonomy–relatedness balance of the adolescent girls in the discussions with father was positively associated with quality of romantic relationship at Time 1 and Time 2, and with enacting attachment needs at Time 1; it was negatively associated with avoidance at Time 2. As for the specific observational indicators with father, inhibiting father's autonomy and inhibiting father's relatedness were negatively related, as expected, to quality of romantic relationships at Time 1 and Time 2; inhibiting father's

relatedness was further negatively associated with enacting attachment needs at Time 1 and was positively associated with avoidance in romantic relationships at Time 2.

Because size and significance of correlation coefficients of autonomy–relatedness balance with father and with mother with the romantic indicators differed we examined to what extent these differences are significant. In two cases, there was a significant difference between the correlation coefficients: observations of autonomy–relatedness balance with father were significantly higher than those with mother for the correlations between autonomy–relatedness balance and avoidance and autonomy–relatedness balance and quality of romantic relations at Time 2.

As for parents' behaviors toward daughter, only one significant correlation emerged. Father's inhibiting autonomy in the discussions with their daughters was negatively associated with enacting attachment needs at Time 1 ($r = -.27, p < .05$).

From the questionnaires that assessed parent–adolescent relationships (see Table 1), relatedness in the relationship with mother was positively associated with quality of romantic relationship at Time 1 and satisfaction with support at Time 1, and negatively associated with attachment avoidance and anxiety. Relatedness in the relationship with father was positively associated with quality of romantic relationship at Time 1 and Time 2 and with satisfaction with support at Time 1, and negatively associated with attachment avoidance and anxiety. Perceived autonomy in the relationship with mother and perceived autonomy in the relationship with father were positively associated with quality of romantic relationship (T1) and satisfaction with support (T1), and negatively associated with attachment anxiety.

To examine the distinct contribution of the two data sources (observations and self-report questionnaires) of the parent–adolescent relationship to the girls' romantic relationships we conducted six hierarchical regression analyses. For each of these, in the first step we entered the observational variables of the autonomy–relatedness balance with each parent as a composite scale summarizing the different aspects of the observation. In the second step, we entered the questionnaire variables: perceived relatedness and perceived autonomy in relationship with parents. To avoid multicollinearity, we combined the two related self-report scales for father and for mother (e.g., perceived relatedness with father and perceived relatedness with mother) because they were highly correlated. Observational data were entered first because they are less biased than the self-report questionnaires, which share both source and method with the predicted variable (self-report questionnaires regarding romantic relations).

In three cases, the final models of the hierarchical regressions were significant and in all three only observational behavior of autonomy–relatedness balance with father was a significant predictor: in predicting enacting attachment needs at Time 1 [$F(4, 59) = 3.35, p < .05$; 13.9% explained variance; $\beta = .37, p < .01$]; in predicting quality of romantic relationships at Time 2 [$F(4, 47) = 3.61, p < .05$; 25.1% explained variance; $\beta = .53, p < .01$], and in predicting avoidance at Time 2 [$F(4, 97) = 5.67, p < .01$; 19.6% explained variance; $\beta = -.31, p < .01$].

Discussion

In sample of late adolescent girls, we set out to examine the separate contribution of their relationship with mother and with father to their romantic relationships. The findings clearly underscore the importance of using observational data in assessing the quality of parent–adolescent girl relationships. From the self-reports, the associations between scales assessing the

quality of the relationships with each parent were so high that there was hardly any possibility of examining each parent's unique contribution to their daughter's romantic relationships, and indeed there was a clear similarity in pattern of associations.

Through the use of observations some of the uniqueness of the separate relationships with mother and father could be observed. In general, positive indicators of the relationships with parents (excluding girls' exhibiting autonomy in discussions with mother, which will be discussed later) were associated with positive markers of romantic relationships, but the patterns of association were somewhat different for mothers and for fathers. Observations of the relationship with mother and with father were concurrently associated with the quality of the late adolescent girls' romantic relationships. However, only the observed quality of the relationship with father was associated with the quality and the attachment security (i.e., attachment style of avoidance) of the girls' romantic relationship about 2 years later. In turn, mostly observed qualities of the relationship with mother were associated with experiencing sexual intercourse, age at first intercourse, number of romantic partners and age difference between the romantic partners. With the exception of exhibiting autonomy in discussions with mother, which in our sample was positively associated with earlier sexual involvement, better quality of relationship with mother (i.e., higher exhibition of relatedness, lower levels of inhibiting autonomy and lower levels of inhibiting relatedness in the discussions with her) predicted lower levels of sexual risk indicators. Only in one case was father's observation associated with these behavioral indicators: father's exhibiting relatedness was positively associated with duration of romantic relations.

So according to observational data, the assessed relationship with each parent seemed to affect somewhat different aspects of the romantic relationship. In line with previous studies (Brooks-Gunn & Paikoff, 1997; Miller et al., 2001), we found that better quality of relationship with mother delayed the girl's entry into sexual romantic relationships and contributed to better quality of relationship concurrently. In contrast, observations of the girls' behavior with father were hardly associated with earlier involvement in sexual relationships or with other sexual risk indicators, such as number of sexual partners, but better quality of relationship with father was reflected concurrently and longitudinally in better quality of a romantic relationship once formed. These findings highlight the central role that relationship with father plays in shaping the quality of the romantic relationships that late adolescent girls form with their male partners, once these girls become romantically involved. Observed quality of father-adolescent daughter relationship predicted between 10% and 28% of explained variance in various indicators of the quality of the romantic relationships, including a longitudinal prediction across a 2-year gap.

Why should each relationship have such a distinct effect? One reason may have to do with the stage of the romantic relationship. Many romantic relationships in late adolescence may not last long and may rest on affiliative features more than intimacy, attachment and care-giving (Shulman & Scharf, 2000). Only over time do romantic relationships begin to satisfy needs for support or care-giving (Connolly, Furman, & Konarski, 2000; Feiring, 1999; Furman & Wehner, 1997). In late adolescence, when affiliative aspects are prevalent, the relationship with father and with mother may both serve as prototypes. In contrast, when issues of intimacy and commitment in heterosexual relationships become more salient—mostly later in the developmental trajectories of these girls—the relationship with father becomes more central and may therefore exert a stronger effect on the quality of the romantic relationships. At that stage the prototype of the

relationship with the parent of the other sex may be more salient (Collins & Read, 1994; Dalton et al., 2006).

An indication for such an interpretation may be found in the positive association between fathers' observed relatedness in the discussions with their daughters and length of romantic relations. Farther along, when romantic relationships become more consolidated, perhaps in early adulthood, we might again find similar importance and contributions from both parents. It is as if based on their relationship with their mother, adolescent girls learn when and how much to be involved in sexual romantic relationships, but from their father they learn how to behave with another man in a romantic context, once a more steady relationship develops (Franz et al., 1991). Future research may need to address this possibility. Still, reported quality of relationship with mother, which was highly correlated and therefore statistically indistinguishable from reported quality of relationship with father, was associated with quality and attachment security in romantic relationships longitudinally also. Thus, the quality of the relationship with mother as perceived by the girls is associated with the perceived quality of romantic relationships longitudinally.

An interesting finding from the observations concerns the scale that appraises exhibiting autonomy on the part of the girl. This scale with father and with mother was either not significantly correlated with romantic relationships or was associated with risk indicators despite its positive connotation. From these observed behaviors in our sample, and from the pattern of the intercorrelations (i.e., it is highly correlated with inhibiting autonomy and inhibiting relatedness), in this sample at least such behaviors of confidence and articulation in the context of disagreement with parents seem to denote a kind of defiance rather than positive autonomy. The possibility that exhibiting autonomy in the mother–adolescent relationship is a negative indicator of the quality of the relationship and reflects a disrespectful and insolent attitude has been previously discussed in a US sample (Allen et al., 2002; Marsh, McFarland, Allen, McElhaney, & Land, 2003). In keeping with the suggestion that relationships involve a general style and not a list of specific parenting practices (Gray & Steinberg, 1999a, 1999b), such “autonomous” behaviors perhaps reflect a positive outlook of the relationship only in a context of relatedness (the balanced autonomy/relatedness index).

In line with this interpretation, the profile of associations between observed qualities in the mother–adolescent relationship and the girls' romantic behavior reveals an interesting and clear picture. In general, sexual risk indicators (e.g., experiencing intercourse, larger number of romantic partners and a wider age gap) were associated with a distinct profile of relationship with mother. Compared with others, girls who evinced the high-risk profile had mothers who inhibited their autonomy and inhibited their own exhibition of relatedness to the girls, and the girls tended to exhibit autonomy in the discussions with their mother along with inhibiting the mother's autonomy and inhibiting their exhibition of relatedness in their discussions with her. This might indicate a profile of rebelliousness and defiance, where the daughter engages in early romantic and sexual involvement as a defiant act against the mother. Alternatively, because of the girl's early and problematic involvement in sexual romantic relationships the mother's attitude becomes more constrictive and less close. Both processes may be operating. Yet note that this profile of relationships was not observed in the father–daughter relationship. Contrary to some conceptions that regard the father as guardian of his daughter's propriety and proper sexual conduct, in our sample, as in others (Brooks-Gunn & Paikoff, 1997; Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2004), sexual risk indicators were mostly associated with quality of relationship with mother, not father.

In our sample, parents' behavior toward their daughter was moderately associated with the girl's behavior in the same observational context, but in most cases was not associated with the quality of her romantic relations. Observations of the girl's behavior toward her parents were implicated in such associations. At this developmental stage of adolescence, when the girls have already internalized various behavioral tendencies and interpersonal attitudes and skills from their relationships with their parents, these internalizations are apparently those that serve as prototypes and are carried into other close relationships, not the parents' concurrent behavior. What matters, in terms of quality of romantic relationships that daughters develop, are the models and skills that they have received or developed at that time, based on their relationships with their parents. Parents' current behaviors may still affect the quality of the girls' later romantic relationships, but it may take longer to absorb and internalize them, and they may be assimilated into current models in a way that is biased by the latter. This may be quite different at an earlier age, when internalizations are still being created. Future research may need to address such a possibility.

Despite the shared method variance between self-reports on relationships with parents and self-reports on romantic relationships, observational data regarding relationships with parents showed in some cases a stronger prediction of various indicators of romantic relationships. When regression analyses were conducted to predict romantic relationships at Time 2 only quality of the relationship with father as exhibited in the observations (e.g., the autonomy–relatedness balance) entered as a significant predictor. These findings attest to the importance and strength of prediction from observations of father–adolescent quality of relationship compared with self-reports.

Self-report measures of the quality of the relationships with parents were in most cases associated, as expected, with the various indicators of romantic relationships. These correlations may also reflect self-serving or response biases. For example, some girls may tend to see all relationships as negative (or positive) based on current mood or personality traits, hence will answer similarly about the quality of both relationships. Still, the pattern of association was not similar for all the indicators, suggesting that these reports might only be partially biased. One notable exception was the non-significant associations between the self-report measures of the quality of the relationships with parents and enacting attachment needs in the romantic relationship at T1. As discussed in a previous section, these aspects of a romantic relationship may be less salient in the romantic relationships of late adolescence, which may revolve more around affiliative concerns. Significant associations may perhaps be expected in romantic relationships of longer duration, where attachment concerns may play a more central role.

The observations in our study predicted most aspects of the romantic relationship besides attachment anxiety. A context of discussion of disagreements may not be optimal for observing the relevant qualities of the relationship that predicts such attributes. Specifically, we might have expected that exhibiting autonomy, particularly low levels of exhibiting autonomy, would be associated with attachment anxiety. However, as discussed in the previous section this scale may have tapped defiance rather than autonomy, so it might not have been a good indicator of actual low levels of autonomy in the relationship. In line with this suggestion, the correlation between exhibiting autonomy and perceived autonomy was non-significant ($-.15$ and $-.02$ for mothers and fathers, respectively).

We examined the association between quality of relations with parents and romantic relations concurrently and longitudinally. We did not examine how change in quality of relations with

parents as the girls leave home for military service or quality of relations with parents at Time 2 affects the girls' romantic relations. Both might be additional contributors to the quality of the girls' romantic relations but they were not the focus of the current report. Future research may address these added sources.

We assessed quality of relationship with romantic partner only through self-report. Had we restricted the sample to adolescents who at Time 1 had a stable romantic relationship, hence could be observed with their partner, we might have seriously limited our capacity to investigate our research questions. Still, observations of the romantic couple add an important source of information regarding these relationships and help reduce problems related to self-serving biases. In our sample, with its complicated follow-up design and intensive assessments, it was difficult to include observations of the romantic dyad as well, and our findings are limited in this respect. Future research may need to include more sources regarding romantic relations, including observations and the point of view of the other partner.

Several caveats and limitations of this study need to be noted. First, the reports regarding romantic relations were based on the sub-sample of girls (about half of the sample) who at the time of assessment had a current romantic relationship. Only the attachment styles questionnaire assessed a report regarding own romantic style from the entire sample. But note that we found no significant difference on any of the indicators in our study between those who had a romantic relation and those who had not at the two times of assessment. Second, though the Revealed differences procedure was quite 'revealing', this is not an optimal context for observing "soft" and more intimate aspects of the relationship, which are expected to be significant predictors of major facets of romantic relationships. Similar concerns regarding observations of Revealed differences have been discussed in the marital interaction literature. Though a very successful tool to examine conflict behavior, it may be less suited as a window to observe intimacy processes and support provisions (Cutrona & Suhr, 1994; Roberts & Greenberg, 2002).

Third, this study examined only girls and their close relations with parents and romantic partners. The developmental trajectories of boys and the quality, meaning and significance of these close relations in the lives of boys, are quite distinct from those of girls and warrant a separate examination. Fourth, this study was conducted in a special cultural milieu—the Israeli culture, which is communal and has a low authority gap (Mayselless & Salomon, 2003). Moreover, the study was conducted in the wake of the girls' home-leaving for compulsory military service, a transition which might have affected the girls' relations with their parents. Moreover, it included only intact middle-class families. To allow generalization, the results of this study would need replication with a large enough sample of girls in other cultures and socio-economic contexts as well. The developmental path of girls from other contexts (e.g., different social classes, divorced families) and the unique effects of the relationships with father and with mother might be quite different. Finally, this study focused mainly on heterosexual romantic relationships. The developmental course of non-heterosexual romantic relationships should be further examined (Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2004).

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