The capacity for romantic intimacy: exploring the contribution of best friend and marital and parental relationships

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This study examined, in a longitudinal design, the contributions of three different relationships, namely marital, parent–child and best friend, to the capacity for intimacy in romantic relationships of Israeli male adolescents, as well as the mediating role of socio-emotional capacities. Eighty-four 17-year-old adolescents and their parents filled out questionnaires concerning the quality of these relational contexts. Four years later the Intimacy Status Interview was administered to the adolescents at the conclusion of their mandatory military service to examine closeness, separateness, and commitment within their romantic relationships. Results showed that all relational contexts were related to capacity for intimacy (directly or indirectly), with higher relational qualities associated with better capability for intimacy. The marital relationship was associated with intimacy through its effect on the parent-child relationships. The effects of the parent–child relationships on the capacity for intimacy were mediated through the adolescents' socio-emotional capabilities. The contribution of the parent-adolescent relationships to the capacity for closeness and commitment was further mediated through relationships with the best friend, whereas the contribution to the capacity for separateness was not. A substantial number of our participants showed high capability for intimacy although in the military service context the circumstances for the development of intimacy were quite limited and non-optimal. Exploration of the separateness and closeness facets of intimacy in romantic relationships in the two sexes and in other contexts is recommended.

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Introduction

The development of the capacity for romantic intimacy is one of the major markers of late adolescence and young adulthood (Erikson, 1968). Romantic relationships are an important avenue by which adolescents and young adults define themselves, their identity, and their sexuality (Brown et al., 1999) and are therefore a major source of anxieties and happiness. Furthermore, the importance of romantic relationships as providers of support and as targets of intimacy increases with age, though friends and family members remain important figures (Laursen and Williams, 1997; Seiffge-Krenke, 1997; Shulman and Scharf, 2000).

Interestingly, despite extensive theoretical discussions of the processes involved in the development of this capacity (Sullivan, 1953; Erikson, 1968; Bowlby, 1980; Ainsworth, 1989; Orlofsky, 1993) less attention has been directed to empirical investigation of its antecedents and precursors. By means of a longitudinal design, the main objective of this study was to examine precursors of variations in the capacity for intimacy in romantic relationships of male adolescents. Several close relationships in which the adolescents were involved...
(whether as observers or as active participants) were examined as possible precursors: (1) the adolescents’ relationships with their parents; (2) their relationships with their best friends; and (3) their parents’ marital relationships. In addition, we explored the mediating role of social competence in the association between these relationships and the capacity for intimacy.

Intimacy refers to relationships characterized by trust, self-disclosure, and concern (Sullivan, 1953; Reis and Shaver, 1988; Orlofsky, 1993). “To achieve intimacy, one must first be oriented to value and seek closeness. Second, one must be able to tolerate, and even embrace, the intense emotions that are inextricably part of close relationships and to be able to share emotional experiences freely. Finally one must be capable of self-disclosure, mutual reciprocity, sensitivity to the feelings of the other, and concern for the other’s well-being” (Collins and Sroufe, 1999, p. 127). In addition, it was emphasized that mature intimacy simultaneously involves the capacity for autonomy, individuality, and separateness within the relationships (Grotevant and Cooper, 1986; Selman and Schultz, 1990; Allen et al., 1994; Shulman et al., 1997b). Individuals must first develop a coherent sense of identity that will enable them to achieve closeness and sharing with others without fear of losing their unique identity (Erikson, 1968). Mature and “genuine” intimacy was seen as involving a balance between emotional closeness (connectedness) and separateness (Guisinger and Blatt, 1994, Shulman and Knafo, 1997; Connolly and Goldberg, 1999).

In this study we employed the conceptualization suggested by Orlofsky (1976, 1978, 1993) which encompasses these aspects. Building on Erikson’s theory of life span development, Orlofsky refers to the capacity for intimacy in terms of two major dimensions, depth of intimacy and degree of commitment. Mature intimacy is seen as a combination of closeness, respect for individuality, and separateness, coupled with the willingness to commit to a long-term relationship. Orlofsky examined these concepts through a semi-structured interview, which inquired about friendships and romantic relationships. Subsequently, Orlofsky added a third dimension (Orlofsky, 1976; Levitz-Jones and Orlofsky, 1985) regarding the capacity to respect own and other’s individuality and maintain some level of separateness within the intimate and close relationship. These three major dimensions, closeness, respect for individuality (separateness), and commitment, were examined in this study as exemplifying the capacity for intimacy in romantic relationships in late adolescence.

The development of the capacity for romantic intimacy takes place within several relationship contexts. In particular, adolescents’ relationships with their parents, their parents’ marital relationships, and the adolescents’ relationships with their friends were described as most influential (Sullivan, 1953; Furman and Buhrmester, 1992; Collins and Repinski, 1994; Feldman et al., 1998; Connolly and Goldberg, 1999; Gray and Steinberg, 1999).

**Parent–child relationships and adolescents’ romantic relationships**

Parent–child relationships lay the foundation for later close relationships and for the capacity for intimacy with peers and with romantic partners (Bowlby, 1980; Sroufe and Fleeson, 1986; Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Ainsworth, 1989; Collins and Sroufe, 1999). Based on their interactions with their parents, children develop generalized expectations regarding their parents and how the parents will take care of them; later these expectations generalize to others, including peers and romantic partners (Bowlby, 1980; Hazan and Shaver, 1994; Shulman and Collins, 1995; Collins and Sroufe, 1999). Further, parents play a major role in the development of their children’s social competencies through their interactions and
general parenting styles (Parke and O’Neil, 1999; Mize et al., 2000; O’Neil and Parke, 2000). These skills in turn may contribute to the quality of the relationships with romantic partners. Thus, expectations arising from the relationships with parents as well as skills learned in this context were expected to contribute to the association between parent–child relationships and romantic intimacy (Shulman and Collins, 1995).

Specifically, children who experience positive parenting (e.g. sensitive care) develop trust in others and in themselves and are confident in their interactions with others, feeling at ease with disclosure to and reliance on others. They are also better at negotiating differences of opinion. In contrast, children who experience insensitive caregiving (e.g. rejection and over-control) find it difficult to trust others and themselves. They either cling too much or tend to rely on themselves. They do not develop constructive conflict resolution strategies and in general find it difficult to develop balanced intimacy with others (Hazan and Shaver, 1994; Shaver et al., 1996).

Though the association between positive parent–child relationships and the capacity for intimacy was mostly demonstrated with regard to peer relationships (Parke and Ladd, 1992; Kerns et al., 2000) a similar transfer is postulated for intimacy in romantic relationships also (Hazan and Shaver, 1994). In general, parental warmth, structure, emotional availability and autonomy granting were hypothesized to promote the capacity for intimacy in romantic relationships through their effect on internalized expectations and social competence (Shulman et al., 1997a; Collins and Sroufe, 1999; Gray and Steinberg, 1999). Gray and Steinberg (1999) in particular stress the importance of the grant of autonomy during adolescence as an important precursor of adolescent emotional investment in romantic relationships because it reflects the release of the adolescent from the close grip of the relationships with parents and allows emotional autonomy. Thus, both closeness and separateness (autonomy granting) in the relationships with parents were expected to contribute to higher intimacy with others.

In line with these arguments, it was found that young adults who retrospectively report close and autonomous relationships with their parents also report closer, more intimate, and more secure relationships with their romantic partner (Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Kobak and Sceery, 1988; Furman and Simon, 1999). In one of the few longitudinal studies conducted on this aspect, Collins and his colleagues (Collins et al., 1997; Collins and Sroufe, 1999) presented preliminary analyses showing an association between attachment security in infancy and middle-childhood social competence as well as middle childhood quality of friendship. They further showed association between these middle-childhood capacities and security with dating at age sixteen.

Marital relationship and adolescents’ romantic relationships

The parental marital relationship is another context where children can observe and learn about close intimate relationships. Parents’ intimate behavior may serve as a model of ways to communicate, express affection, and resolve conflicts with close partner (Gray and Steinberg, 1999). In addition, it was suggested that the association between parental marital relationships and their children’s romantic relationships was mediated by parent-child relationships (Grych and Fincham, 1990). Partners’ support of each other contributes to effective parenting (Quinton et al., 1984), whereas problematic marital relationships may impair the parents’ ability to behave sensitively and responsively to the child (Easterbrooks and Emde, 1988). As indicated above, the parent–child relationships in turn affect the
child’s ability to form satisfactory social relationships in general and develop romantic intimacy in particular.

Most evidence supporting the association between marital relationships and offspring’s romantic relationships is in studies on divorce and marital discord. Exposure to marital violence increases the possibility of physical aggression against the romantic partner (Downey and Feldman, 1996). In addition the way college students resolved conflicts with their romantic partners was related to the conflict strategies their parents used (Martin, 1990). A recent study that specifically examined romantic intimacy found that mothers’ marital satisfaction was only related to “happiness in love” of young adults but was not associated with other intimacy indexes employed in that study (Feldman et al., 1998). At present little evidence exists regarding the association between parents’ marital relationship and their children’s romantic intimacy.

Peer/friendship relationships and children’s romantic relationships

The context of the relationships with peers, particularly best friends, was hypothesized to make a unique contribution to romantic relationships (Connolly and Goldberg, 1999; Furman, 1999). Through interactions with friends, which are egalitarian/symmetrical in nature, children have rich opportunities to develop competencies of reciprocity, cooperation, reciprocal altruism, and co-construction of relationships; such opportunities are far less common in the hierarchical and asymmetrical relationship with their parents (Furman, 1999). Furthermore, peer and romantic relationships share many qualities, in particular the voluntary reciprocal nature of the relationships and the centrality of the affiliative system (Furman, 1999).

Some researchers even suggested that the parent–child relational context affects romantic relationships through the mediation of the relationships with peers (Connolly and Johnson, 1996; Furman, 1999). It was hypothesized that competencies and capacities developed within the context of the parent–child relationships are applied and practiced in the peer context (especially with best friends), and that this practice and experiences in turn are transferred to the romantic relationship. Beside their role as mediators, friendships were expected to make a unique contribution to the romantic relationship by allowing the sharing of information and the secure base from which to explore romantic partners.

This conceptualization has received some initial support. First, several studies attested to the contribution of friendship to romantic relationships. In two cross-sectional studies with high-school students, support derived from relationships with parents and support derived from relationships with best friends both made a unique contribution to the prediction of support in romantic relationships, though much of the predicted variance was shared (Connolly and Johnson, 1996; Furman, 1999). Similarly, in a short longitudinal study, ratings of support in best-friendships predicted ratings of support in romantic relationships a year later (Connolly et al., 1995). Finally, analyzing diaries of adolescent girls, Seifge-Krenke (1995) found that close friends uniquely contributed to the development of social competence and helped prepare them for romantic love.

Second, several studies provided some support to the contention that the peer domain is more strongly associated with romantic relationships than the parent–child context. For example, affective intensity in romantic relationships was related to concurrent appraisals of affective intensity in friendship and not associated with concurrent affective intensity with parents (Shulman and Scharf, 2000). In another study with high-school students the kind of...
support obtained from friends and romantic partners were found to be similar, though they both differed from that obtained from parents (Furman, 1999). Employing an interview to assess relational styles with parents, best friends, and romantic partners, Furman and Wehner (1994, 1997) found associations between relational styles with parents and those with friends, as well as associations between relational styles with friends and those with romantic partners. However, and consistent with the mediation hypothesis, relational styles with parents were not directly related to relational styles with romantic partners, nor did they add any significant prediction to romantic styles beyond that obtained with the friendship scores (Furman, 1999). These findings are consistent with the notion that experiences in the friendship domain mediate the link between the parent–child relationship and romantic relationships, though friendships may account for added variance (Furman, 1999). A direct examination of this notion was undertaken in this study.

**The current study**

In this study we extended previous research in several ways. First, we examined concurrently the contribution of three different relationships, marital, parent–child and best friend, to young adults’ capacity for intimacy in their romantic relationships. We further employed a longitudinal design that could shed more light on the developmental processes involved, and examined a possible mediating variable, interpersonal competence, which reflects socio-emotional capacities. Finally, following current conceptualizations that emphasize both relatedness and individuality as important aspects of close relationships (Guisinger and Blatt, 1994; Shulman and Knafo, 1997; Connolly and Goldberg, 1999), we differentiated between these two facets in the assessment of the relationships with parents and friends. Additionally, when examining the romantic relationships we looked at commitment. Thus, with regard to romantic intimacy we assessed three important aspects, closeness, separateness, and commitment, and explored the precursors of each of them separately.

Each of the relational contexts described above may make a unique and direct contribution to the capacity for intimacy in romantic relationships. However, the research reviewed above also suggests several mediating processes. A general model encompassing the possible paths suggested by the literature reviewed above is presented in Figure 1. In it, marital quality is hypothesized directly to affect romantic intimacy. However, it may also affect the capacity for intimacy through its effect on the parent–child relationships. The parent–child relationship is hypothesized directly to affect the capacity for romantic intimacy when it serves as a model and a template for later relationships. However, it may also affect romantic intimacy through two mediational processes. First, relationships with parents may affect romantic intimacy through the mediation of social competence. These relationships may also affect romantic intimacy through their effect on the quality of the relationships with best friend. This association (between parent–adolescent relationships and friendship) in its turn may also be mediated by social competence. Hence relationships with parents may affect friendship either directly, or indirectly through the mediation of social competence. Finally, friendship may affect intimacy directly or through its own contribution to social competence. In this latter case social competence acts as a proximal mediator which directly affects the capacity for intimacy, whereas both parents and friends contribute to intimacy through their effect on social competence. These optional models were examined in this study by means of structured equations modeling.
Method

Sample and procedure
The study reported here was part of a larger longitudinal project, which examined parent-adolescent son relationships in Israel during late adolescence and young adulthood. This period in Israel is marked by a mandatory military service. Specifically the great majority of the 18-year-old cohort of Jewish men (92%) perform 3 years’ mandatory service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF; Gal, 1986). The timing of the military service is determined by one’s age and is not affected by adolescents’ maturity. In this study all of our male adolescents served in the IDF. To avoid diverse sources of variation, we limited our choice of participants to intact families in which life had been quite stable. This constraint did not result in a highly skewed sample because divorce rates in Israel are much lower than in the U.S.A. (8.5% according to Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics, 1996). We decided to include only adolescent males in the sample for several reasons: (1) parents’ relationships with adolescents tend to differ depending on the adolescent’s gender (e.g. Grotevant and Cooper, 1985; Seiffge-Krenke, 1999) (2) logistic constraints; and (3) to avoid complicated interactions for which we might not have enough statistical power.

Eighty-five male adolescents and their parents were interviewed and filled out questionnaires about a year prior to the sons’ conscription when the adolescents were high-school seniors. A second assessment took place during their basic training period, and a third about four years from the first assessment, three months prior to the conclusion of their mandatory service. This report includes data from the first and third assessments on 84 participants for whom full data relevant to the present study were available.

Mothers’ mean age was 45.89 years (s.d. = 3.91, range = 37–55), fathers’ mean age was 47.69 (s.d. = 4.81, range 39–64), and adolescents’ ages ranged from 17 to 18 years at the time of the first assessment. Parents were married on average 23 years (s.d. = 3.42). Number
of children in these families varied between 1 and 5 with a mean of \(2.93 \text{ (S.D. } = 0.74)\). About a third of the adolescents (37%) were first-born children, 43 per cent were second children, and the rest third and fourth. Parents were mostly of Western Jewish origin, that is, Ashkenazi (70%); 20 per cent of them were of Eastern Jewish origin, and the rest were of mixed origin. Eighty per cent of the fathers, and 74 per cent of the mothers had an academic education. About 70 per cent of the families described themselves as secular, and the rest described themselves as keeping the religious tradition but not in an orthodox manner. In general the sample includes mostly middle-class families. None of these background variables was associated with the variables assessed in this study.

**Measures**

**Time 1 assessment: Parent–adolescent relationships.** The Mother–Father–Peer Scale (Epstein, 1983) was employed to assess acceptance and encouragement of independence in the relationships. In this study we included only the mother’s and the father’s scales. Due to time constraints a slightly shorter version of each of these two scales was employed, with a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a very large extent). These were parental acceptance/rejection (8 of the original 10 items, e.g. “My father/mother could always be depended upon when I really needed his/her help and trust”) and parental encouragement of independence versus overprotection (9 of the original 13 items, e.g. “My father/mother encouraged me to make my own decisions”). The adolescent filled out the questionnaire separately for relationships with each parent. Cronbach \(\alpha\) was 0.82 and 0.80 for maternal and paternal acceptance, and 0.71 and 0.71 for maternal and paternal encouragement of independence, respectively. Higher scores reflect higher acceptance and encouragement of independence in the parent-adolescent relationships. The inventory was proven reliable and was validated against several other measures of parenting (Crowell et al., 1999; Ricks, 1985).

**Marital relationships.** ENRICH: Enriching and Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication and Happiness (Olson et al., 1985) was employed to assess marital satisfaction with regard to diverse aspects such as personality characteristic, role responsibilities, communication, and sexual relationships. For the present study mothers and fathers filled out the marital satisfaction scale using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale (10 items, e.g. “I’m very happy about how we make decisions and resolve conflicts”). In the current study Cronbach \(\alpha\) was 0.85 for paternal satisfaction and 0.75 for maternal satisfaction, with higher scores reflecting compatibility and general satisfaction with the marital relationships. The measure has been widely used and showed good internal and test–retest reliability.

**Friendship relationships.** Me and my best friend (Shulman et al., 1997) was employed to assess intimacy in same-sex best friendship. Adolescents filled out the questionnaire using a 1 (not true) to 4 (very true) Likert scale. Two scales of the questionnaire were employed in this study: (1) Emotional closeness, included shared affect, availability, and instrumental assistance, (8 items, e.g. “Gives me the feeling that I can tell him/her everything”); and (2) balanced relatedness which reflected tolerance for differing opinions and ideas, (8 items, e.g. “Thinks it is right to sometimes disagree with him/her”). Cronbach \(\alpha\) was 0.85 and 0.62 respectively, with higher scores denoting better friendship qualities. The scale has shown
Social competence. The Adolescent interpersonal Competence Questionnaire (AICQ; Buhrmester et al., 1988; Buhrmester, 1990) was employed to assess important dimensions reflecting competence in close relationships. Adolescents filled out the questionnaire using a 1 (poor) to 5 (very good) Likert scale. For the purposes of the present study three scales were employed: (1) Emotional support-giving (8 items; e.g. “Help people cope with stress or sad events”); (2) Assertiveness (8 items; e.g. “Confront others when they break a promise”); and (3) Management of interpersonal conflicts (8 items; e.g. “Forgive quickly after disagreement or dispute”). Cronbach $\alpha$ was 0·83, 0·76 and 0·75, respectively, with higher scores denoting better competencies. The measure showed good test–retest reliability and was validated against similar scales (see Buhrmester et al., 1988).

Follow-up assessment. The Intimacy status Interview (Orlofsky and Roades, 1993) was administered to the adolescents 4 years after the first assessment to examine the capacity for intimacy in romantic relationships. It is a semi-structured interview designated to examine individuals’ interpersonal attitudes and behaviour and their capacity for intimacy in friendships as well as in romantic relationships. The interview consists of two parts, the first referring to close friends and the second to dating and love relationships. Here we only report the romantic part, in which participants were asked about emotional closeness, conflict resolution, involvement and autonomy, sexuality, satisfaction and commitment in their romantic relationships with past and/or current partners. The interviews were audiotaped, and rated according to the extensive manual (Orlofsky and Roades, 1993) by two raters using several rating scales which ranged from a 1 (representing the low level of the scale) to 5 (representing the high end). Twenty-five (28.6%) interviews were rated by both raters to establish reliability. Three dimensions of the capacity for romantic intimacy were assessed: closeness, separateness, and commitment.

Closeness was assessed by means of three scales: (1) Intra-personal self-disclosure, where the low end represents low levels of sharing and mistrust and the high end represents confiding and sharing of worries, problems and personal matters; (2) Interpersonal disclosure where the low end describes someone who is closed and distant and the high end represents a situation of sharing openly positive and negative feelings; and (3) Caring and affection, with the low end representing dislike of, disdain for, or an instrumental attitude toward the partner and the high end representing genuine caring for the partner. Inter-rater reliabilities were 0·94, 0·97, and 0·94, respectively. A composite closeness scale was constructed by averaging across the three scales (Cronbach $\alpha = 0·96$).

Separateness was assessed by two rating scales: (1) Maintenance of own interests, with the low end representing giving up own interests and the high end representing maintenance of own interests while caring for partner’s needs and wishes; and (2) Acceptance of partner’s separateness, with the low end representing clinging or struggling against partner’s autonomy and the high end representing encouragement and valuing of partner’s autonomy. Inter-rater reliabilities were 0·76 and 0·73, respectively. A composite separateness scale was constructed by averaging across the two scales (Cronbach $\alpha = 0·77$).

Commitment was assessed by means of two scales: (1) Duration of the relationships, where the low end represents a situation of someone who dates around while the high end represents involvement and definite plans for the future; and (2) Quality of commitment, where the low end represents a situation in which the person thinks that relationships do not
need any investment in maintaining their quality and the high end reflects investment in enhancing and maintaining the quality of the interactions. Inter-rater reliabilities were 0.93 and 0.94, respectively. A composite commitment scale was constructed by averaging across the two scales (Cronbach α = 0.87). Because the correlation between closeness and commitment was 0.91, a composite scale, connectedness, was constructed by averaging the two scales.

Beside these ratings, participants were also classified into one of seven intimacy statuses according to the manual (Orlofsky and Roades, 1993). (1) Isolates have had no close relationships with romantic partners. (2) Stereotyped lack open communication and emotional closeness in their relationships and have not established long-term commitment. (3) Pseudo-intimate participants lack closeness in their relationships, yet they have established long-term commitment. (4) Mergers/committed and (5) Mergers/uncommitted have established long-term relationships which are characterized by high involvement to the point of enmeshment and by low levels of separateness; two statuses of merger exist, based on their degree of commitment. (6) Pre-intimates have relationships characterized by open communication, affection, care, and respect for the other’s interests, preferences, and autonomy. However, they have low level of commitment in their current relationship. Finally, (7) Intimate participants have relationships characterized by open communication, affection, care, and respect for the other’s interests, preferences, and autonomy and have made a commitment to continue the relationships (for further description of the statuses see Orlofsky and Roades, 1993). Inter-rater agreement on intimacy classification was 100 per cent.

Results

Fifty-two (62%) of the participants reported on a current romantic relationship and the rest reported on past relationships. The duration of the relationships ranged from 1 month to 60 months with a mean of 16.99 (S.D. = 15.65). About half reported on a relationship shorter than 10 months. Not surprisingly the status of the relationship (current or past) and its duration were related to the intimacy dimensions (closeness, separateness, and commitment), with current relationships and longer ones reflecting higher intimacy. We examined the distribution of the intimacy statuses in our sample: 43 participant were classified as Stereotype (51.2%), three as Pseudo-intimate (3.6%), one participant was classified into each of the Merger statuses (1.2% in each), 26 participants were classified as Pre-intimate (31%), and 10 were classified as Intimate (11.9%).

To explore differences among adolescents in the various intimacy statuses regarding relational contexts, we created two groups: (1) a low capability for intimacy group (n = 48) included the Stereotype, Pseudo-intimate, and the Merger statuses; and (2) a high capability for intimacy group (n = 36) included the Intimate and the Pre-intimate statuses. Table 1 presents the results of the t-tests.

Three MANOVAs were conducted for each of the relationships. The MANOVAs regarding relationships with parents and relationships with friend approached significance \( F(4, 78) = 2.07; p = 0.09, \ F(2, 80) = 2.30; p = 0.11, \) respectively whereas the MANOVA concerning the marital relationships was non-significant \( F(2, 76) = 126; p = 0.29. \) Because scales in each domain were moderately correlated problems with multicollinearity may have hindered the likelihood of achieving statistical significance.
Accordingly, we proceeded with univariate ANOVAs. As can be seen in Table 1, several differences were significant. Levels of acceptance and of encouragement of independence of both parents were higher among adolescents in the high capability for intimacy group. As compared with their counterparts, these adolescents also reported higher levels of balanced relatedness and emotional closeness (approaching significance) with their best friends. However, the two groups did not differ in parental reports on their marital satisfaction.

The next step was to examine the associations between the quality of the relationships in the three relational contexts (marital relationships, parent–adolescent relationships, and best-friend relationships) and the capacity for intimacy as reflected in the two composite scales connectedness and separateness. Table 2 presents the Pearson correlations.

**Table 1** Means and s.d. of adolescents in two capacity for intimacy groups

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Low capacity for intimacy</th>
<th>High capacity for intimacy</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent–adolescent relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance by father</td>
<td>4·04</td>
<td>0·48</td>
<td>4·28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance by mother</td>
<td>4·08</td>
<td>0·64</td>
<td>4·37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence by father</td>
<td>3·78</td>
<td>0·44</td>
<td>4·02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence by mother</td>
<td>3·49</td>
<td>0·55</td>
<td>3·79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marital relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Marital satisfaction—father</td>
<td>5·69</td>
<td>0·89</td>
<td>5·92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital satisfaction—mother</td>
<td>5·41</td>
<td>1·05</td>
<td>5·78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent—best friend relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Balanced relatedness with friend</td>
<td>2·82</td>
<td>0·32</td>
<td>2·98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional closeness with friend</td>
<td>3·11</td>
<td>0·53</td>
<td>3·33</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*p < 0·05; **p < 0·10.

(Ganzach, 1998). Accordingly, we proceeded with univariate ANOVAs. As can be seen in Table 1, several differences were significant. Levels of acceptance and of encouragement of independence of both parents were higher among adolescents in the high capability for intimacy group. As compared with their counterparts, these adolescents also reported higher levels of balanced relatedness and emotional closeness (approaching significance) with their best friends. However, the two groups did not differ in parental reports on their marital satisfaction.

The next step was to examine the associations between the quality of the relationships in the three relational contexts (marital relationships, parent–adolescent relationships, and best-friend relationships) and the capacity for intimacy as reflected in the two composite scales connectedness and separateness. Table 2 presents the Pearson correlations.

**Table 2** Pearson correlations between the three relational contexts and dimensions of adolescents’ capacity for romantic intimacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Connectedness</th>
<th>Separateness</th>
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<tr>
<td>Parent–adolescent relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adolescents’ reports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance by father</td>
<td>0·18**</td>
<td>0·34**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance by mother</td>
<td>0·12</td>
<td>0·27*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence by father</td>
<td>0·22*</td>
<td>0·26*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence by mother</td>
<td>0·23*</td>
<td>0·25*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital satisfaction—father</td>
<td>0·14</td>
<td>0·22*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital satisfaction—mother</td>
<td>0·12</td>
<td>0·17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent—best friend relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced relatedness with friend</td>
<td>0·23*</td>
<td>0·26*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional closeness with friend</td>
<td>0·37***</td>
<td>0·14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0·05; **p < 0·10.
As can be seen in Table 2, connectedness in romantic relationships was related to adolescents’ reports on mother’s and father’s encouragement of independence (father’s acceptance approached significance), and to balanced relatedness and emotional closeness in relationships with best friend. The other correlations were not significant. Separateness in romantic relationships was related to father’s and mother’s acceptance and encouragement of independence, to father’s reports on marital satisfaction, and to balanced relatedness with best friend. The other correlations were not significant.

In addition, hierarchical regressions were performed to determine the unique contribution of the different relational contexts to dimensions of adolescents’ romantic intimacy. We included in the model only those relational contexts that were significantly related to the specific intimacy dimension in the previous procedure (zero-order correlations).

In the prediction of connectedness in romantic relationships, the parent–adolescent relationships were entered as a block in the first step, and the best-friend variables were entered as a block in the second step. Relationships with parents did not significantly contribute to connectedness with a romantic partner (7% explained variance). However, relationships with best friend significantly added 10 per cent to the explained variance. The final model was significant and explained 17 per cent of the variance of connectedness (\(F(6, 76) = 2.61, p < 0.02\)).

In the prediction of separateness in romantic relationships, the marital relationships were entered in the first step, the parent–adolescent relationships were entered in the second step, and the best-friend variables were entered in the final step. The first step with marital relationships was not significant (6% explained variance). However, the addition of the relationships with parents resulted in a significant regression model (16% explained variance \(F(6, 72) = 2.24, p < 0.05\)). Finally, relationships with best friend did not add significantly to the model (only 2% added explained variance).

**Estimation of mediation processes**

Latent variable structural equation models were constructed to test our general model regarding the mediation processes (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1993). To achieve a better indicators-to-subjects ratio we first examined a measurement model of the mediating latent variable of socio-emotional capacities. All the indicators loaded significantly on the latent variable (emotional support-giving \(\beta = 0.65\), assertiveness \(\beta = 0.61\), and conflict management \(\beta = 0.33\)). Consequently we constructed a composite scale for this construct by averaging across the respective three scales (alpha = 0.81). We further constructed one scale of parental acceptance and one scale of parental encouragement of independence by averaging across the respective scales of mother and father. Correlation between the respective scales for acceptance \((r = 0.45)\) and for encouragement of independence \((r = 0.55)\) were moderate and warranted such a procedure. These two composite scales served as the indicators of the latent variable “relationships with parents”. Table 3 presents the correlation matrices, means, and standard deviations for the variables used in the analyses.

As expected, the parent–child relationship scales were positively correlated with the scales regarding marital satisfaction, with the scales assessing the relationships with the best friend, and with social competence. As expected, the scales of the relationships with the best friend were positively correlated with social competence, which in turn was positively correlated with the different facets of the capacity for intimacy. The marital satisfaction scales were not significantly correlated with friendship quality or with social competence. The significant
correlations were mostly moderate in size. This general profile of correlations justified examination of the hypothesized model.

To explore mediation processes for each of the facets of intimacy we estimated two major models, one with connectedness and the other with separateness. The models were estimated by examination of the measurement and structural models simultaneously. When only one indicator served for a latent variable we used its internal reliability and its variance to estimate the error covariance (see Joreskog and Sorbom, 1993, p. 37). We looked at a full saturated model where all hypothesized paths were estimated. We then eliminated those paths that were not significant and assessed the nested model, where only the significant paths were allowed, to examine whether this model provided a better and a more parsimonious fit of the data.

We first estimated the model with connectedness as an indicator of the capacity for romantic intimacy. The standardized structural coefficients of the full saturated model provided a good fit of the data with reasonably high goodness-of-fit indices ($GFI = 0.96$, $AGFI = 0.89$, and $NNFI = 0.97$), and with non-significant $\chi^2$ ($\chi^2 = 15.98$, $df = 14$, $p < 0.01$; Bollen, 1989). In this model the paths from marital relationships to parent–child relationships, from relationships with parents to the socio-emotional capacities latent variable, from socio-emotional capacities to relationships with best friend, and from relationships with best friend to intimacy were all significant. None of the other paths was significant. Figure 2 presents the standardized maximum likelihood estimates of the nested model for closeness and commitment, which included only the significant paths.

As can be seen in Figure 2, factor loadings of the indicators of each latent construct were reasonably high, and were all statistically significant. When the nested model was estimated it also showed a good fit of the data, with reasonably high goodness-of-fit indices ($GFI = 0.94$, $AGFI = 0.88$, and $NNFI = 0.95$) and with non-significant $\chi^2$ ($\chi^2 = 22.74$, $df = 18$, $p < 0.01$; Bollen, 1989). The difference in $\chi^2$ between the full saturated model and the nested one with four degrees of freedom was not significant (difference $\chi^2 = 6.76$), and the Model AIC, which indicates the degree of parsimoniousness of the model (with lower

### Table 3  Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the study variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Acceptance by parents</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Independence by parents</td>
<td>0.551</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Marital satisfaction—father</td>
<td>0.326</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Marital satisfaction—mother</td>
<td>0.185</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>0.399</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Relationships with friend—balanced relatedness</td>
<td>0.429</td>
<td>0.335</td>
<td>0.121</td>
<td>-0.098</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Relationships with friend—emotional closeness</td>
<td>0.376</td>
<td>0.277</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>0.560</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Social competence</td>
<td>0.372</td>
<td>0.383</td>
<td>0.183</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.481</td>
<td>0.578</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Intimacy—connectedness</td>
<td>0.173</td>
<td>0.254</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>0.226</td>
<td>0.366</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Intimacy—separateness</td>
<td>0.351</td>
<td>0.286</td>
<td>0.219</td>
<td>0.173</td>
<td>0.260</td>
<td>0.145</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td>0.558</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* For all the correlations $n = 84$, $r < 22$, $p < 0.05$; $r > 27$, $p < 0.01$; and $r > 34$, $p < 0.001$. 

Table 3  Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the study variables
scores denoting better fit), indeed showed a decrease from 59·98 to 58·74. Another index of parsimony, the Model CAIC, also showed a decrease from 135·46 to 120·149. Consequently, because the inclusion of all the paths indicated in our theoretical model did not improve the fit of the model, the more parsimonious nested model was retained.

Another model was estimated, in which the path from relationships with best friend to capacity for intimacy was omitted and the direction of the arrow from socio-emotional capacities to friendship was reversed. Namely, the model estimated a hypothesized situation in which friendship affected romantic intimacy through its contribution to socio-emotional capacities. In this model, however, none of the paths predicting capacity for intimacy was significant. Thus, we retained the former model. In this final model the marital relationship was associated with intimacy indirectly through its effect on the parent–child relationships. These relationships affected the capacity for intimacy with a romantic partner indirectly through their effects on the adolescent socio-emotional capacities. These, in turn, again did not directly affect the capacity for intimacy. Rather, the adolescent socio-emotional capacities contributed to the quality of the adolescents’ relationships with their best friend, which in turn was directly associated with connectedness in the romantic relationship.

A similar procedure was undertaken for the estimation of a model with separateness as an indicator of the capacity for intimacy. The standardized structural coefficients of the full saturated model provided a good fit of the data with reasonably high goodness-of-fit indices (GFI = 0·97, AGFI = 0·91, and NNFI = 1·00) and with non-significant $\chi^2$ ($\chi^2 = 13·15$, $df = 13$, $p < 0·44$: Bollen, 1989). In this model the paths from marital relationships to parent–child relationships, from relationships with parents to socio-emotional capacities, from socio-emotional capacities to relationships with best friend and to capacity for intimacy were all significant. None of the other paths was significant. When the nested model which included only the significant paths was estimated (see Figure 3) it also showed a good fit of
the data, with reasonably high goodness-of-fit indices (GFI = 0.95, AGFI = 0.90, and NNFI = 0.99) and with non-significant $\chi^2$ ($\chi^2 = 18.23$, $df = 17$, $p < 0.05$; Bollen, 1989). The difference in $\chi^2$ between the full saturated model and the nested one with four degrees of freedom was not significant (difference $\chi^2 = 5.08$) and the Model AIC, which indicates the degree of parsimony of the model, showed a decrease from 59.19 to 56.23. Another index of parsimony, the Model CAIC, also showed a decrease from 138.06 to 121.41. Because the inclusion of all the paths indicated in our theoretical model did not improve the fit of the model, the more parsimonious nested model was retained. Figure 3 presents the final model. In terms of the measurement model, and as can be seen in Figure 3 factor loadings of the indicators of each latent construct were reasonably high, and were all statistically significant.

As with the model in which connectedness served as a marker of intimacy, here too a model that estimated a hypothesized situation in which friendship affected romantic intimacy through its contribution to socio-emotional capacities was estimated. In this model, however, none of the paths predicting capacity for intimacy was significant. Thus, we retained the former final model (see Figure 3). In this model marital relationships were associated with the separateness aspect of intimacy indirectly through their effect on the parent-adolescent relationships. Relationships with parents affected both friendship and separateness in romantic relationships through the mediation of socio-emotional capacities. However, friendship was not directly associated with separateness.

**Discussion**

The results of our study revealed that all three relational contexts, parent–adolescent, marital, and best-friend, contributed (directly or indirectly) to different facets of the capacity

![Figure 3. Final model for the effects of marital relationships and relationships with parents and best friend on separateness in romantic intimacy. Note: All standardized coefficients are significant at the two-tailed probability level of 0.05 or better.](image-url)
for romantic intimacy. In general, higher qualities of relationships in these contexts were associated with better capability for intimacy. These findings lend empirical support to theoretical conceptualizations that describe the processes and precursors involved in the development of the capacity for intimacy and highlight the importance of each of these relational contexts (Collins and Sroufe, 1999; Gray and Steinberg, 1999). Based on structural equations modeling, our findings also underscored several mediating processes, some of which were different depending on the facet of intimacy examined.

First, the marital relationship was indirectly associated with both the connectedness and the separateness facets of the capacity for intimacy through its effect on the parent–adolescent relationships. In our study the two relationships (marital and parent–adolescent) were assessed by two different sources (parents and adolescents), thus ruling out self-report bias and accentuating this finding regarding the mediation through the parental domain. This finding accords well with research emphasizing that the quality of the marital relationships contributes to parenting sensitivity and effectiveness (Quinton et al., 1984; Gable et al., 1992; Kerig et al., 1993). Satisfied spouses tend to be better parents, and more positive parenting in turn contributes to better functioning of the children (adolescents in our case) in close relationships. Yet our data did not provide evidence for a direct effect of the marital relationships on the capacity for intimacy. This may be related to the aspect of the marital relationships that we assessed in our study, or to the specific facets of romantic intimacy that we examined. For example, specific and observable facets of the marital relationships, such as conflict resolution styles, may be more likely to be learned and transferred directly than general marital satisfaction. Alternatively, for a direct effect to take place the adolescent’s own perception of the marital relationship might be relevant (Harold and Conger, 1997). Finally, romantic relationships of longer duration may be necessary for a direct effect to show up.

Second, the parent-adolescent relationships were associated indirectly with both the connectedness and the separateness facets of romantic intimacy through their effects on socio-emotional capacities. Specifically, positive parent–adolescent relationships (acceptance and encouragement of independence) contributed to better social competence, which in turn promoted (directly or indirectly) higher capacity for intimacy in romantic relationships and better quality of friendship. This finding accords well with a vast number of conceptualizations (Parke and Ladd, 1992; Parke and O’Neil, 1999; Kerns et al., 2000) all stressing that the parent–child relationships lay the foundation for later close relationships through the effect of parents on children’s social competence (Shulman and Collins, 1995; Parke and O’Neil, 1999). Such mediation processes have been demonstrated in respect of peer relationships and intimacy in friendships (Shulman, et al., 1994; Ostoja, in Collins and Sroufe, 1999). Indeed, our own results underscore such a process, as the parent–adolescent relationships were associated with quality of friendship through the mediation of social competence. However, such mediation has not yet been directly demonstrated with intimacy in romantic relationships. Thus, the present study provides an important demonstration of the role of socio-emotional capacities in mediating the effects of parent–adolescent relationships on the capacity for intimacy in romantic relationships.

Interestingly, in the examination of connectedness in romantic relationships, the results of this study demonstrated that the quality of the relationship with the best friend further mediated the association between parent–adolescent relationships and the capacity for intimacy. Specifically, the association between parent–adolescent relationships and intimacy could be described as a three-step process. The relationships with parents affected socio-
emotional capabilities, which themselves contributed to the relationship with the best friend. This relationship in turn was directly related to the capacity for closeness and commitment in romantic relationships. Practicing the competencies learned in the family arena with best friends seems to contribute to romantic intimacy.

This finding substantiates recent conceptualizations that the friendship arena provides a practice ground in transferring relational competencies from relationships with parents to romantic relationships (Furman, 1999). In the relationships with the best friend, adolescents might be able to refine socio-emotional capacities that are eventually expressed in the capacity for romantic intimacy. Furthermore, the friendship arena may provide a context for consultations and a secure base from which romantic relationships can be tried out (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995). The friendship arena was described as providing a more suitable context for such practice than the familial one because of its egalitarian/symmetrical nature and its similarity to the romantic arena in the affiliative aspect (Furman, 1999). Though several previous studies have presented findings consistent with this notion they have not directly assessed it (Furman and Whener, 1994; Shulman and Scharf, 2000). One of the strengths of our study is the demonstration of such a mediation process in a longitudinal design. Our study depicted a general mediational model without a direct examination of the specific processes involved. Future research may need to explore this issue further, to examine the nature of the transfer and the kinds of competencies that are practiced, and to address the unique contribution of the friendship arena to romantic intimacy (see Seiffge-Krenke, 1995 for an illuminating study conducted with a qualitative methodology).

The conceptualizations regarding romantic intimacy (as those dealing with other close relationships) underscore the importance of two dialectic aspects: connectedness (i.e. closeness) and separateness (individuality and autonomy within the relationship) (e.g. Shulman and Knafo, 1997; Connolly and Goldberg, 1999). Most of the research on romantic intimacy has focused on the closeness facet of the relationship (e.g. Feldman et al., 1998); but see a series of studies by Shulman and colleagues (e.g. Shulman and Knafo, 1997; Shulman et al., 1997b, c). In this study we further examined the separateness aspect as exemplified by the capacity to maintain one’s own interests while caring for one’s partner’s needs and the capacity to encourage and value the partner’s autonomy. As expected, in our study these two aspects proved highly related and together defined the construct of separateness. In our sample the capacity for separateness in romantic relationships was associated with the capacity for connectedness but was not equivalent to it. Thus, the significance of the two facets as separate aspects of romantic intimacy was underscored.

In line with this contention the results for the separateness facet were somewhat different from those for connectedness. Specifically, for separateness the effects of the parent–adolescent relationships on romantic intimacy were mediated only through the socio-emotional capacities and not through the relationships with the best friend. Thus, with regard to the capacity for separateness our data did not provide evidence for the notion that the friendship arena provides a training ground in transferring relational competencies from relationships with parents to romantic relationships. Given the preliminary nature of our examination of the separateness construct it is not clear how to interpret this finding. It is however consistent with Gray and Steinberg’s (1999) contention that underscores the importance of emotional autonomy from parents in the development of romantic relationships. The parents’ capacity to grant autonomy, while setting limits and remaining emotionally available, may be central in shaping children’s capacity for individuality and separateness. It might be the case that the parent–child relationships play a more direct role...
in adolescents’ capacity to maintain flexible boundaries within close relationships (compared with their role in adolescents’ capacity for romantic closeness), and that this capacity (for individuality and separateness) is less influenced by the relationships in the friendship domain. Future research may need to further explore the construct of separateness in romantic relationships, and in doing so address this issue as well.

In this study we explored a third facet of the capacity for intimacy, namely commitment. Unfortunately, this facet was so highly correlated with closeness as to suggest that they both capture the same construct. At this developmental phase closeness and commitment may well be closely related because as closeness increases the wish to remain in the relationship grows. Future research may need to address this issue and explore whether the overlap found in our study is a function of the age group we examined, the measure we employed, or a general similarity between the constructs.

This study was conducted in a unique cultural context and focused on men only, from middle-class intact families, so the generalizability of its findings to other contexts needs to be further explored. Several theoretical frameworks (Gilligan, 1982; Josselson, 1996) as well as empirical research (Sharabany et al., 1981; Seiffge-Krenke, 1997; Feldman et al., 1998) suggest that young men’s negotiation of the processes involved in development of the capacity for intimacy is different from that of young women. For example, family influences were found to be stronger for women than for men with regards to romantic relationships (Feldman et al., 1998). These differences warrant a separate examination to learn of the processes and precursors involved in the development of women’s capacity for intimacy.

We examined the capacity for romantic intimacy in young men in Israel at a time when they performed mandatory military service in the Israel Defense Forces. The service is long in duration (3 years) and in often extremely arduous (Gal, 1986). Many of the soldiers serve in units that are mostly composed of males, and come home only once every several weeks for a weekend vacation, and thus find it difficult to invest in a long-term romantic relationship. Several of our interviewees specifically recounted circumstances that interfered with their capacity to maintain a romantic relationship. In line with this claim, previous studies have shown that military service freezes exploration in several domains, including the romantic one (Mayseless, 1993). Interestingly, although the circumstances for intimacy development were not optimal and in many cases quite limited, a substantial number of our participants still showed high capacity for intimacy. Yet, the levels of the capacity for intimacy might have been enhanced had our participants not been constrained by the circumstances of their military service. About half of the participants did not have a current romantic relationship when they were interviewed. Furthermore, the variability in terms of length of romantic relationships was quite high. As expected, these aspects were associated with the capacity for romantic intimacy with current relationships, and longer duration was associated with higher capacity. Similar findings were reported by Furman and Wehner (1997) where exclusive dating was associated with attachment security in high school and college. This pattern of association may reflect a situation in which those who have high capacity for intimacy find it easier to form relationships and maintain them, or a process whereby having a romantic partner for a longer duration contributes to the development of romantic intimacy. These two processes may also co-occur. Future research, such as a longitudinal study where capacity for romantic intimacy is assessed at least at two points in time, is needed to address this question.

In this study, we employed an elaborate measure of the capacity for intimacy in romantic relationships. This measure is less open than questionnaires to self-report biases, and it allows
an assessment of both closeness and individuality within the romantic relationship, the two aspects that have been singled out as central in close relationships (Guisinger and Blatt, 1994; Connolly and Goldberg, 1999). Thus, it provided valuable assessments of the capacity for romantic intimacy. Nevertheless, our study was based mainly on the adolescents’ perspective and reports. The inclusion of other perspectives, such as observations and perceptions of friends and of romantic partners, could enrich our understanding.

In sum, our study set out to explore the precursors of variations in the capacity for intimacy in romantic relationships of male adolescents. In particular we examined the interplay of different relational contexts, as well as socio-emotional capacities, in contributing to the capacity for intimacy. The structural equations modeling as well as the hierarchical regressions predicted about 20 per cent of the capacity for closeness and commitment in romantic relationships, and about 30 per cent of the capacity for separateness. This is a significant effect in light of (1) the four-year interval between the assessments; (2) the employment of two different assessment methods (questionnaires for the precursors and interview for the capacity of intimacy); (3) the focus on a sample of men for whom previous findings showed small or non-significant effects (Feldman et al., 1998); as well as (4) the non-optimal conditions for development of intimacy during military service. For example, assessments conducted after the conclusion of military service might have been able to demonstrate even higher associations between the quality of relational contexts during adolescence and later capacity for romantic intimacy. Future research has the task of further exploring the processes involved in the development of the capacity for romantic intimacy in other cultural contexts, employing diverse sources of information, and looking at both sexes.

Acknowledgement

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References

Capacity for intimacy


