THE EFFECT OF PEERS ON MARITAL BELIEFS AND EXPECTATIONS

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THE EFFECT OF PEERS ON MARITAL BELIEFS AND EXPECTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

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The current study examined the effect peers have upon young adults’ romantic beliefs, controlling for other factors known to impact romantic beliefs, such as interparental conflict. Friendship intimacy was found to be strongly associated with peers’ level of influence on romance. Young adults perceived that their friends’ romantic beliefs were similar to their own. Differences in beliefs were not related to friendship closeness. The relationship between closeness and influence was not moderated by romantic experience, nor was the relationship between differences in belief and closeness. The relationship between friendship intimacy and influence might vary by gender. Men perceived equal influence from their male and female friends. Women sought advice more frequently from female friends than male friends. Much of this gender effect disappeared once friendship intimacy was accounted for. Opposite gender peers did not significantly influence the realism of romantic beliefs. This research suggests that friends play a strong
role in young adults’ romantic beliefs, although this impact may vary based upon intimacy and gender.
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INTRODUCTION

Is marriage important? The answer should be obvious: from romantic comedies dominating the box office, to love songs on the radio, to six-year-olds already planning their weddings, marriage is a pervasive part of American culture. Reality TV now abounds with shows such as Say Yes to the Dress, Bridal Plasty, and Four Weddings, all promoting the fairy-tale wedding beginning a perfect marriage. Many think of marriage as society’s defining, fundamental institution (Whitehead & Popenoe, 2001). The number of Americans who never marry is extremely low; in 2003 only 4% of Americans over the age of 65 had never been married, indicating that 96% had married at least once during their lifetime (Tamborini, 2007). Even though the age of first marriage has been steadily climbing, most young adults (87%) expect that they will find a partner when they are ready (Whitehead & Popenoe, 2001). Most people want to get married eventually. And why would they not? A recent study found that not only does marriage increase longevity in both partners, it also affords better physical health to husbands and mental health to wives (Gallacher & Gallacher, 2011). No wonder that for young, unmarried adults preparing for marriage and finding a partner is an expected goal and dominant task.

Marital Beliefs

Because marriage is so pervasive, most children come to expect early on that they will one day get married. Consequently, as they grow up, they absorb from various
sources information about romance and what it means to be a husband or wife. A study by Sanders, Halford, and Behrens (1999) shows that beliefs predictive of marital outcomes are present long before couples marry. Because of this, even before they marry, long before they meet their future partner, adolescents have an ideal of what marriage means. They carry these expectations with them, allowing them to guide their courtship and marriage.

Couples hold a variety of beliefs about what marriage itself is. Some view it as a legal contract which only has implications for health insurance and tax benefits. Others see marriage as an institution designed for raising children. Still others define marriage as a natural extension of an intimate dyadic relationship (Hall, 2006). Different people will espouse varying opinions; however some ideals are quite common. The belief in “my one and only” is pervasive. The National Marriage Project found that 88% of currently single men and women believed there was “a special person, a soul mate, waiting for you somewhere out there” (Whitehead & Popenoe, 2001, p. 8).

Sabatelli argues that relationship beliefs and expectations are formed via comparison theory (Sabatelli & Pearce, 1986; 1988; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; 1984). A person forms a Comparison Level, a standard in their mind of what they can realistically expect from a romantic relationship, based upon both their own personal romantic experiences and broader cultural norms of such dimensions as companionship, trust, and day-to-day conflict levels. When the person perceives that their current romantic relationship meets or exceeds their Comparison Level, they feel satisfied with the relationship. When they feel their relationship is not living up to expectations set by their Comparison Level, they feel dissatisfied. Thus, a person’s relationship satisfaction
depends directly upon how realistic or achievable their beliefs of what to expect in a relationship are.

Research has shown a pattern of unrealistic beliefs which, when used as a guiding standard during the inevitable rocky patches of a relationship, contribute to greater unhappiness. In an often-cited study by Eidelson and Epstein (1982), twenty marital therapists were asked to list the most commonly held unhelpful or maladaptive relationship beliefs they saw in their clients. Examples include such unrealistic beliefs as Mindreading is Expected, an expectation that one should not have to communicate their needs to their partner, because a loving partner will be able sense their needs and Disagreement is Destructive, a belief that every disagreement between partners signals an immediate end to the relationship, because loving couples never argue. Other researchers have found similar, highly unrealistic beliefs among unmarried college students, including the belief that marital satisfaction should increase from the newlywed stage, through parenthood, and into the golden years (Larson, 1988).

Given the prevalence of idealistic beliefs about marriage, it is no wonder that these unrealistic beliefs have been identified as a factor contributing to marital stressors and ultimately, higher rates of divorce. Research has found that general and specific beliefs about marriage contribute to conflict within and then the severance of marriage. For example, a study by Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) found that partners who did not view marriage as a permanent arrangement were more likely to engage in extramarital affairs. A separate study by Epstein and Eidelson (1981) found that couples who entered marital therapy with unrealistic beliefs about marriage to be those who expressed the
most marital dissatisfaction, did not expect to be helped in marriage counseling, and showed the least desire to improve.

An unfortunate paradox is that couples would not marry if they do not expect that they would have a happy life together. The self-fulfilling prophecy is a well-known psychological and sociological phenomenon in which a person acts to bring about the results they anticipate (Merton, 1948). This suggests one mechanism which may explain why half of all marriages last. Couples with high expectations may be more likely to show commitment towards the relationship, investing the time and energy needed to sustain the marriage long-term (Sabatelli, 1988). One study of the self-fulfilling prophecy in romance found that when partners idealized one another and were willing to overlook faults and see the best in the other, those relationships were more likely to persist and show decreases in conflict. This was especially pertinent in those couples who had high self-regard and projected that onto their partners (Murray, Holmes & Griffin, 1996). This does not have to be the case; it is just as likely that partners who have come to expect rejection based upon their previous experiences behave in such ways that they elicit rejecting behaviors from their partner and reaffirm their bias (Downey et al., 1998). Other research has shown that positive biases only enhance relationships in certain circumstances. Among mostly-happy couples with transient or infrequent arguments, interpreting negative events in a positive light improves marital satisfaction. However, in marriages marked by severe or on-going problems, such as domestic violence, benevolent cognitions ultimately detract from the marriage by allowing partners to gloss over problems rather than actively confronting these problems and taking steps to resolve them (McNulty, O’Mara, & Karney, 2008).
Couples may enter into marriage with idealistic expectations setting them up for disappointment. Fortunately, marital expectations can and often do change. Couples can alter their current beliefs into more realistic expectations. Often this shift in expectations is a goal of marital counseling (Sabatelli, 1986). A review of commonly used marital enrichment programs has found that effective interventions often utilize an adjustment of expectations, along with improved communication and conflict management skills. This suggests that when marital beliefs are adjusted, such that they realistically reflect the reality of marriage without disillusioning the couple, this can lead to greater marital satisfaction (Jakubowski, Milne, Brunner, & Miller, 2004). Although, it is possible that those couples who enter counseling are already more realistic, because they recognize that their marriage needs help to be made sustainable (Bronson & Merryman, 2006). Classes on relationships and marriage are another way of educating young adults on what can be realistically expected during marriage; however there are mixed results regarding their effectiveness (Johnson, 2009; Larson, 1988).

While experts recognize that there is no single underlying cause of divorce, it is now suggested that “one of the most insidious factors undermining marital satisfaction and longevity is that individuals enter into marriage with unrealistic, idealistic and romanticized notions about marriage” (Demo & Ganong, 1994, p. 199). Because romantic beliefs are so salient to the quality and duration of marriage, it is worthwhile to study not only what these beliefs are but where such factors originate and how these beliefs come to influence marriage.

**Own Romantic Experiences.** One particularly salient source of marital beliefs is the quality of one’s own romantic relationships. For example, a study by Carnelly and
Janoff-Bulman (1992) examined how attachment style and personal romantic experience influenced beliefs about love and marriage. They found that while beliefs specific to marriage were related to parental influences, as participants aged their beliefs regarding love were more influenced by their own experiences.

Another study by Sabatelli (1988) contrasted the realistic Comparison Levels of never-married adults in romantic relationships with young married adults. It was found that, though they had only been married for an average of 2.4 years, the married adults had lower expectation levels compared to their unmarried counterparts. This data suggests that shortly after marriage a reevaluation of what one can realistically expect from a relationship occurs. This is reinforced by the fact that, on average, first marriages ending in divorce do so within eight years (US Census Bureau, 2005), suggesting that once the honeymoon is over and idealistic beliefs are not met, those couples unable to adjust their beliefs begin to consider divorce.

Previous relationships may be the most useful source of cognitions about one’s future marriage, because they are both salient and specific to that particular individual. However, personal experience cannot be the only source of romantic relationship beliefs. Youth cannot gain relationship beliefs as a result of romantic experiences until they reach an age where they begin to have romantic experiences. Yet young people who have not begun to date still have preconceived ideals regarding romance and marriage. Research has shown that adolescents tend to have more idealistic beliefs regarding romance than adults, suggesting once again that with age and experience come more realistic views about love (Montgomery, 2005). Other research has found that although there is some overlap in what is experienced in an actual romantic relationships and what is expected or
imagined, the expected relationships were rated as more intimate, passionate, and committed. However, this finding was most prevalent among younger adolescents with little personal romantic experience to guide their expectations. Romantic expectations therefore become more realistic as the person ages and gains further romantic experience (Connolly, Ben-Knaz, Goldberg & Craig, 1996; Connolly & Golberg, 1999).

Parents’ Relationships. Children often develop their first perspective of marriage by observing their parents. Given the current high rates of divorce in the US and the fact that 61% of divorcing couples have children who have not yet come of age (Rodriguez & Arnold, 1998), it is no surprise that much research has been conducted on divorce’s effect on children. One result consistently found is that divorce is intergenerationally transmitted; children of divorced parents are more likely to get divorced themselves (Amato, 1996). Explanations for such a phenomenon can be found in Albert Bandura’s social learning theory (1989). Children whose parents divorce learn from watching their parents that marriage is not a permanent institution. A study by Sergin, Taylor and Altman (2005) found two possible effects of divorce on children. Either they came to view marriage as a negative experience and relationships as something to be feared and avoided, or they became desensitized to marriage and divorce, becoming more likely to marry early and impulsively, with the understood option that a rash marriage could be later ended.

Further complicating the picture, not only is the parents’ marital status important but also the quality of their relationship. Research has shown that it is not the experience of divorce per se that leads to children’s cognitions regarding relationships, but the level of conflict and type of conflict resolution or lack thereof. Exactly how parental conflict
affects children is ambiguous; a study by Amato and DeBoer (2001) found that children of divorce whose parents displayed low levels of conflict before the divorce were more likely to later divorce themselves than children of divorce whose parents’ relationships were highly conflictive prior to the divorce. A separate study highlights the importance of parental conflict in both intact and broken marriages. Children who perceived high levels of conflict between their parents showed decreased levels of relationship efficacy and with it decreased satisfaction in their own relationships. Furthermore, once parental conflict was taken into account, the relationship between parental divorce and offspring dissatisfaction in their own relationships became nonsignificant. This finding is especially significant, because it implies that both children of divorce and children of unhappy marriages are vulnerable to unhealthy relationship beliefs (Cui, Fincham, & Pasley, 2008).

Conflict and divorce effect not only parents’ relationships with each other but also their relationship with their children. This disruption in the parent-child relationship has implications for children’s later relationships, including romantic ones. Bowlby’s theory of attachment states that a child’s earliest relationship, the one with their primary caregiver, forms a template upon which children base their expectations of all subsequent relationships (1969). Children who lived in high-conflict homes and perceive diminished emotional availability or increased negative emotions from their parents are more likely to be insecurely attached, avoid intimacy, and expect unhappiness in their own future relationships (Steinberg, Davila & Fincham, 2006).

It must be noted that while one’s relationship with parents certainly has a notable influence, especially in the younger years, there is evidence that as the child grows older
other relationships gain precedence and parental influence diminishes. While parental attachment style influences the romantic attachment of younger adults, as they age previous romantic experiences come to subsume that role. Nonetheless, because parental attachment style influences early relationships, which then influence later relationships, children’s relationships with their parents continue to affect their romantic relationships throughout the lifespan (Dinero et al., 2008).

**Cultural Effects.** Culture, especially popular media, shape one’s expectations of reality, including what one can expect from their romantic relationships. 90% of youth look to movies and 94% to television for information about romance, while only 33% turn to their mothers and 17% to their fathers for the same advice, suggesting the media may have an influence on romantic expectation comparable to parents (Bachen & Illouz, 1996). Television and movies in particular may act as role models. Research has shown that those who espouse a preference for romantic media with highly idealized portrayals of marriage, such as romantic comedies or soap operas, show increased idealistic expectations about marriage (Sergin & Nabi, 2002). Further research has shown that among college students, beliefs known to be associated with decreased marital satisfaction, such as the belief in the “one perfect, predestined soul-mate” and the belief that mind-reading is to be expected in relationships, were found to be associated with consumption of romantic media (Holmes, 2007). Of course, this leads to the circular argument of whether romantically idealistic individuals seek out such media, or whether they develop these views as a result of viewing such media. Interestingly, this association only applies to romantic media; those who watched more television in general showed decreased levels of idealized marital expectations (Sergin & Nabi, 2002).
The connection between the media and marital idealism may begin very early. Parents tend not to discuss such grown-up concepts as romance, marriage, and sexuality with young children, leaving them to discover such things through other sources, such as popular children’s media and literature. The animated films of Walt Disney enjoy huge popularity among young children and provide an early template of love and marriage amongst children. A study of young college women found that those who showed the strongest preference for the highly romanticized Disney movies of their youth also expressed unrealistic romantic beliefs such as love at first sight, though they tempered such beliefs with wisdom gained from their own romantic experiences (Tonn, 2008).

**Gender.** Evidence suggests that men and women differ in the idealism or realism of their romantic beliefs. Cultural stereotypes often view women as more romantically and relationally inclined. Indeed, research focused on romantic media consumption (Holmes, 2007) and talking to friends about relationships (Simon, Edner, & Evans, 1992) is usually female-centric. One unexpected finding of this research is that women tend to espouse less of the unrealistic marital beliefs and more of the realistic beliefs compared to their male counterparts. A study by Larson (1988) found that compared to women, men were more likely to believe certain idealistic marital myths such as “In most marriages having a child improves marital satisfaction for both spouses” (p. 5). Furthermore, a separate study by Lin and Raghubir (2005) found that not only do men espouse higher rates of unrealistic optimism in regards to marriage, when faced with evidence to the contrary they are less likely to change those beliefs (Lin & Raghubir, 2005). One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that compared with men, women tend to create more
intimate relationships with their friends and family and subsequently gain greater knowledge about interpersonal relationships (Shek, 1995).

Related lines of research suggest that other relationships besides friendships influence romantic beliefs to varying extents, depending on the gender and the closeness of the participants. Sibling relationships are among the longest lasting relationships a person has and are often a person’s first relationship with someone near them in age. Despite this, there is very little research on how the way one relates to one’s siblings transfers to a future relationship with a spouse. One recent study found that, in general, as negative aspects of sibling relationships increased, romantic expectations decreased. However, this association between sibling relationships and romantic expectations varied depending on the gender of the siblings. As conflict levels and other relational problems in same-sex sibling relationships increased, romantic expectations decreased. In contrast, among cross-gender siblings, as positive aspects of the relationship increased, romantic expectations also increased. Interestingly, the expected extension of this finding, that harmonious sibling relationships are associated with expectations of better relationships between spouses, was not found (Sinclair, 2010). Because this research taps into a largely unexplored area, much remains to be qualified about how sibling relationships affect marital expectations. However, this study does provide an intriguing clue of how the gender of a sibling may influence marital expectations.

**Peers.** There remains one other very strong source of influence on adolescents and young adults: their peers. Because of their superficial and transitory nature, adolescent romances were once seen as trivial and of no lasting impact. Since then, research has shown that these beginning relationships, often among peers, do indeed have
significance both for adolescent functioning and for later relationships (Collins, 2003; Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009). Although the importance of peers is universally recognized, a literature review has revealed very little research concerning the impact of friends upon romantic expectations and beliefs.

**Peer Influence**

Friends play an important role in psychosocial development. Friendship is ideally a relationship between equals, which separates it from children’s relationships with parents, siblings, teachers, etc. (Sullivan, 1953). From middle childhood onward, friends supersede parents as prominent influential figures in a person’s life (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). The dominant psychosocial tasks of adolescence and young adulthood, identity versus role confusion and intimacy versus isolation, deal directly with youth trying to establish themselves relative to their peers (Erikson, 1950). As they age, youth decrease the time spent with parents and increase the time spent with peers. Additionally, friends’ opinions and peer pressure becomes an increasingly important factor in youth’s decision-making and opinions (Brown, 1999).

It is within the context of these relationships that youth begin to develop skills such as reciprocal disclosure, conflict resolution and negotiation, and how to meet another person’s needs, as well as their own. All of these are skills which must be successfully developed before youth can successfully enter into a romantic relationship (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999). Perhaps even more importantly, theories by Hazan and colleagues (1991) state that peers act as an intermediate attachment figure between parents and romantic partners. This in-between state allows them to use their friends as a
secure base from which they begin to explore romantic relationships (Fraley & Davis, 1997; Hazan et al., 1991).

It is within the context of friendships that youth first begin to mingle with the opposite sex. Young children’s friendships usually occur in sex-same groups (Sullivan, 1953). Even young adolescents with very limited romantic experience are capable of distinguishing between an opposite-sex friend and a romantic partner (Connolly et al., 1999). By middle adolescence, these groups begin to include members of both genders (Zimmer-Gembeck, 2002). The opposite-sex friends within this group are often their first romantic partners. The significant role friends play in these early romantic relationships is highlighted by several facts. Mixed-gender peer groups act as a safe place for adolescents to begin socializing with a member of the opposite sex before attempting one-on-one dating. Friends and peer groups often act as matchmakers between group members, offer communal support and normative data during relationships, and even more importantly, provide advice and emotional support after relationships end (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999). An often-cited example of peer group influence on adolescent romantic norms was found in a study by Simon, Edner, and Evans (1992). By listening in during lunch-room conversations among groups of middle school girls, the researchers observed how group norms, such as heterosexuality and romantic exclusivity, were transmitted and reinforced. Through this process, the girls received normative information from their peers regarding not only how to attract a potential partner’s attention, but also what to expect while within a relationship. Women continue to seek romantic counsel from their friends after childhood and into young adulthood. Among
college women, it was found that even compared to family members, friends were more often used as confidants for romantic issues and personal values (Tokuno, 1983).

How adolescents pick their romantic partners also changes with age. Younger adolescents are more likely to choose a partner who conforms to group standards and place great importance on relatively superficial status symbols, such as fashionable clothing and perceived popularity. Older adolescents are more likely to choose partners based upon internal criteria important for sustaining a long-term relationship, such as compatibility and intimacy (Collins, 2003; Connolly & Goldberg, 1999). This mid-adolescence shift coincides with greater independence from the group as adolescents begin to spend more time in dyadic relationships and less time with friends. In other words, as time progresses, romantic partners begin to supersede the role of friends, just as friends superseded the role of parents.

It must be noted that as adolescents become adults, their relationships with friends change. A study by Carbery and Buhrmeister (1998) found that, although friends remain a great source of support and fulfill an important social need, friendship evolves in adulthood, especially after one friend marries. For unmarried young adults, friends were listed as the single most important source of companionship and the most sought-after confidant. After marriage, spouses become the central figure in young adults’ social networks, especially for young married men. Friends’ roles decrease even further after couples have their first child (Carbery & Buhrmester, 1998). These results suggest that friends have their greatest influence in the unmarried stage of young adulthood and, to some extent, after marriage spouses take over fulfilling the person’s needs for companionship, intimacy and support.
Friendship Intimacy. Because of friendship’s importance to psychosocial development, a child or adolescent’s relationship with peers is often included in research as an independent variable. Yet as Hartup (1996) points out, friendship is not a static, one-dimensional term. Whether or not a child simply “has friends” is not sufficient, because even children who in reality do not have friends can name several if asked (Furman, 1996). Friendship will also differ in reciprocity, egalitarianism, intimacy, and types of behavior encouraged or inhibited (Hartup, 1996). Ideally, friendships provide practice in such things as maintaining an equal balance of power, freely sharing opinions, conflict resolution skills, and balancing autonomy with interdependence, which will later become vital to maintaining romantic relationships (Simon, Kobielski, & Martin, 2008).

In a study by Furman and Buhrmester (1985), children rated their friends as providing the most companionship compared to parents, siblings, grandparents, and teachers. Only mothers ranked higher on perceived intimacy. Internal characteristics such as a friend’s deviance, personality, or even gender further influence the relationship.

Friend’s Gender. Women and men’s friendships differ in several quantitative and qualitative ways. Women report having more intimate and supportive friendships than men across several life stages (Carbery & Buhrmester, 1998). Research has consistently shown that men have less intimate friendships than women. Emotional restraint is cited as one of several factors contributing to this lack of intimacy, although men, like women, find intimate and supportive friendships to be more enjoyable than casual ones (Bank & Hansford, 2000). Girls form closer “best friendships” compared to boys who seem to prefer the peer group. In short, although girls may have fewer friends,
they form more intimate friendships (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Lever, 1976; Tietgen, 1982).

Interestingly, the majority of this literature on peers and adolescent romance focuses on female-to-female friendship. While some aspects of male-to-male friendship, such as boys leading one another into delinquency, is well researched (Mears, Ploeger, & Warr, 1998), there is very little on the topic of whether boys influence each other’s perceptions of romance.

Whether friends have an effect on one’s behavior, cognitions, and attitudes is undisputed. However, because friendship itself is a complex construct, specific aspects of the friendship, including intimacy and friends’ gender, must also be measured to disentangle the effects of such variables on various constructs.

**Current Study**

As stated above, many people have a variety of beliefs regarding romance and marriage. These beliefs come from a variety of sources, including past romantic experiences, family of origin, gender, and broader cultural stereotypes. As of yet, there is very little research regarding how same-age counterparts influence young adults’ romantic beliefs. The goal of this study is to examine the effect friends have upon romantic beliefs. Given that most adolescents begin to date and form their most salient beliefs regarding romance in a life-stage where peers are the dominant influence, it can by hypothesized that peers will be found to have a significant impact on romantic beliefs and expectations. Yet peer relationships are not simple, one-dimensional constructs. Friendships and friends’ influence upon one another vary depending upon a variety of factors. Therefore, I hypothesize the following:
1) Peers with whom the participant has an especially close relationship will have a more significant impact upon participants’ romantic beliefs. The more intimate one’s relationship with one’s closest peer, the stronger this peer’s influence will be on one’s romantic beliefs. Specifically, measures, both of general interpersonal closeness and friendship-specific intimacy, are expected to positively correlate with how much one perceives his or her friend influences their beliefs and views regarding romantic relationships (Hypothesis 1A). I also predict that friendship intimacy and closeness will be positively correlated with how often one goes to one’s friends for romantic advice (Hypothesis 1B). I further predict that the closer and more intimate the relationship between participants and their friends, the more similar their relationship beliefs will be. This will be reflected in participants’ perception of their friends’ relationship beliefs (Hypothesis 1C). The accuracy of their perception of their peers’ beliefs will be verified via comparison with their friends’ actual beliefs, as per the friends’ report.

2) As adolescents move into young adulthood the influence of the peer group wanes. Compared to adolescents, young adults are more likely to rely on their own experiences rather than the advice of others to make a decision. It is therefore predicted that the relationships described in Hypothesis 1 will be moderated by participants’ romantic experiences. Specifically, it is hypothesized that, controlling for the effects of parental conflict, for young adults with less romantic experiences, there will be a strong association between friendship intimacy and peer influence on their romantic beliefs, but for young adults with more prior romantic relationships, the relationship between friendship intimacy and peer influence will be weak or nonsignificant (Hypothesis 2A). Likewise, the relationship between friendship intimacy and how often participants’ report
going to their friends for romantic advice will be strong when participants have less romantic experiences, and weak when participants have had more romantic relationships (Hypothesis 2B). It is further predicted that the fewer romantic experiences the participant has had, the greater the similarity between their romantic beliefs and their friends’ romantic beliefs (Hypothesis 2C).

3) Friends are very important socializing agents and have a notable influence on their companions, especially during adolescence. Yet friendship is not a static, uni-dimensional concept; rather it varies based upon both the gender and interpersonal closeness of the friends. Women tend to form close, dyadic friendships, whereas men tend to form less intimate bonds within a larger group. It is therefore predicted that how much a friend influences a participant’s romantic beliefs will vary depending upon whether it is a same-sex (female-to-female or male-to-male) friendship or a cross-sex friendship. It is predicted that compared to other friendship compositions, among the closest friendships (female-to-female) participants will report that they go to their friends for romantic advice more often and perceive their friends as having a greater influence on their romantic beliefs (Hypothesis 3A). It is further predicted that this relationship between gender and friends’ perceived influence will be mediated by level of closeness, such that when levels of intimacy and interpersonal closeness are accounted for, the relationship between gender and perceived influence lessens or disappears (Hypothesis 3B).

4) Research has found a link between gender and the realism of a person’s romantic beliefs. Women have been consistently found to be more realistic and men less so. However, despite consistent evidence of this interaction, as well as equally
compelling evidence of the importance of peers to romance in general, there is very little evidence examining the specific relationship between peer gender and the plausibility of romantic beliefs. Recent research on the relationship between sibling gender and later romantic expectations suggests that the relationship between intimacy and romantic expectations varies depending on the gender of siblings, such that as closeness among cross-sex siblings increased, so do romantic expectations. Theoretically, this research might be extended to cross-gender friends. However, current evidence is preliminary and much of the effects of same vs. opposite-sex peers on romantic beliefs remain unexplored. It is possible that participants will believe that because they have a good relationship with an opposite-sex friend, they will have an idyllic relationship with a romantic partner and therefore espouse less realistic relationship beliefs. However, the opposite is possible; it is conceivable that because they have a close opposite-sex friend, they will come to better understand how men and women interact and subsequently have a more realistic set of romantic expectations. The purpose of this study is to examine which, if either, of these notions is valid. Specifically, I want to examine how the quality of one’s relationship with one’s friend of the opposite gender influences the realism of one’s romantic beliefs while controlling for the known effects of parental conflict and past romantic experiences. Additionally, I will examine whether or not the gender of the participant moderates this relationship, such that one gender is more strongly influenced by their opposite-sex friend.

It is possible that certain variables examined in this study will be influenced by participants’ level of satisfaction in their most recent romantic relationship. Therefore,
total scores on the Relationship Assessment scale will be examined and, if they are found to influence the outcome variables, controlled for.
METHOD

Participants
Analyses were based upon responses from a total of 119 undergraduate students (Males = 56, Females = 63). These students were recruited from introductory level psychology classes at a medium-sized Catholic university. Ages ranged from 18 to 22 years. The majority (92%) identified as Caucasian, with minorities identifying as African-American (3%), Asian (1%), Native American (1%), and Hispanic (3%). The majority (76%) were raised by still-married parents while 15% were raised by divorced parents. Most participants (90%) were raised by their biological parents. Those currently involved in a romantic relationship came to 40%, while 3% had terminated their latest relationship less than a month previously, 11% had been single for 1-3 months, 14% for 3-6 months, 12% for 6-12 months, and 13% for more than one year. A minority of participants (8%) had never had a romantic relationship. Participants had been in a mean of 2.6 romantic relationships prior to the study, including current ones. Two participants did not identify as heterosexual and their data were not included in the analyses. Participants were recruited via a central computer system used by the psychology department for research recruitment. In return for their participation, participants were awarded one credit towards their psychology class. Participants were also asked to direct their closest male and closest female friend to a website for a survey providing additional data on their relationship beliefs. None of the participants’ friends chose to participate.
Measures

The psychological constructs investigated in this study were operationalized as follows. The realism of participants’ beliefs concerning romance was measured using the Relationship Beliefs Inventory (RBI; Eidelson & Epstein, 1982). A general level of interpersonal closeness between participants’ and their closest friends was measured using the Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (IOS; Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). Behavioral and affective manifestations of intimacy between friends were measured using the Intimate Friendship Scale (IFS; Sharabany, 1974). Levels of interparental conflict present in the participants’ childhood homes were measured using the Children’s Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC; Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992). Participants’ level of satisfaction with their most recent romantic relationship was measured using the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, Dicke & Hendrick, 1998).

Dysfunctional Relationship Beliefs. The Relationships Beliefs Inventory (RBI; Eidelson & Epstein, 1982). The RBI is a 40 item scale designed to measure five dysfunctional relationship beliefs, divided evenly with eight items per subscale. The subscales include Disagreement is Destructive (e.g., “I cannot accept it when my partner disagrees with me”), Mindreading is Expected (e.g., “A partner should know what you are thinking or feeling without you having to tell”), Partners Cannot Change (e.g., “My partner does not seem capable of behaving other than s/he does now”), Sexual Perfectionism (e.g., “A good sexual partner can get himself/herself aroused for sex whenever necessary”) and The Sexes are Different (e.g., “Men and women probably will never understand the opposite sex very well”). While factor analysis of some studies
supports the five subscales (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982), others suggest that the Sexes are Different subscale may be best divided into two further subscales, Sexes are Different in Needs and Difficulty Understanding the Opposite Sex (James, Hunsley, & Hemsworth, 2002). Participants were instructed to complete the items on a six point Likert scale (0 = I strongly believe that the statement is false; 5 = I strongly believe that the statement is true) to indicate how much they disagreed or agreed with each item. Fifteen of the items were reverse-scored. Total scores range from zero to 200 with higher scores indicating a more severe degree of dysfunctional relationship beliefs. Initial studies by the scale’s authors found the subscales to have sufficient internal consistency with Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .72 to .81 (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982). Additionally, the subscales were found to have intercorrelations ranging from .17 to .44. Convergent validity was established when the scale’s total score was found to negatively correlate with marital satisfaction and positively correlate with couples prematurely terminating marital therapy. Another source of convergent validity was established by correlating subscales with the Irrational Beliefs Test (IBT; Jones, 1968). All subscales except The Sexes Are Different were significantly positively correlated with the IBT, with correlations ranging from r = .11 to .28. Subscale scores were also significantly negatively correlated with scores on the Wallace Martial Adjustment Scale (MAS; Locke & Wallace, 1959). Independent tests have demonstrated internal consistencies ranging from .44 to .76 with nondistressed couples and satisfactory test-retest reliability after both two and twelve weeks. Results were not correlated with social desirability. Construct validity was also verified in that marital maladjustment and a lack of communication were related to unrealistic marital beliefs (Emmelkamp, 1987) (see Appendix B).
Relationship Satisfaction. The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988; Hendrick, Dicke & Hendrick, 1998). This is a 7-item scale designed to measure relationship satisfaction, how well the partners meet one another’s needs, regrets and expectations about the relationship, love in the relationship, and problems in the relationship (e.g. “how good is your relationship compared to most”). Items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale with different labels for each item. Lower scores correspond to less endorsement (0 = not at all) and higher scores correspond to more endorsement (5 = completely). Scores range from 7 to 35 with higher scores indicating higher relationship satisfaction. Two items are reverse scored. The original study found the scale to have an alpha reliability of .86 and inter-item correlation of .49 (Hendrick, 1988). A later study established a 6-7 week test-retest reliability of .85 (Hendrick, Dicke & Hendrick, 1998). Its construct validity is established via correlations with Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) and other measures of love and sex attitudes (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1995) (Appendix D).

Interpersonal Closeness. Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (IOS; Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). The IOS is a single-item pictorial scale designed to measure interpersonal connectedness in a relationship. The participant is presented with a series of interconnected circles similar to a Venn diagram and is instructed to select the one that best illustrates their relationship, such that the item acts like a seven point Likert scale. This test can be used for a variety of relationships including parents, friends, and romantic partners.

Item analyses and inter-item measurements are not possible on single-item scales. Russell and colleagues (1989) recommend that because reliability places an upper limit
on validity, single-item scales establish reliability via validity. The original authors used an alternate form of the test with diamonds instead of circles and found an alpha of .93. Test re-test reliability was established at two weeks at .83 for an overall sample with .86 for a subsample of romantic partners and .85 for friends. Convergent validity was found by establishing an association between the IOS and the Relationship Closeness Inventory (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989) and the Sternberg Intimacy Scale (Sternberg, 1988). Scores on the IOS were found to have predictive validity for relationship closeness three months later (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). Construct validity was also established in that the closeness reported was found to correlate to measures of love and friendship (Pipp et al., 1985) (see Appendices E & H).

**Friendship Intimacy.** The Intimate Friendship Scale (IFS; Sharabany, 1974; 1994). The IFS is a 32 item scale, with the items divided evenly into eight subscales, Frankness and Spontaneity (e.g., “I feel free to talk with him/her about almost anything/everything”), Sensitivity and Knowing (e.g., “I can tell when s/he is worried about something”), Attachment (e.g., “I feel close to him/her”), Exclusiveness (e.g., “the most exciting things happen when I am with him/her and nobody else is around”), Giving and Sharing (e.g., “when something nice happens to me I share the experience with him/her”), Imposition (e.g., “I can be sure s/he’ll help me whenever I ask for it”), Common Activities (e.g., “I work with him/her on some of his/her hobbies”), and Trust and Loyalty (e.g., “I know that whatever I tell him/her is kept secret between us.”). There are two possible forms, for boys and girls. Although this scale was originally developed for measurements with children, it has been used in older age groups, including 11th graders (Sharabany et al., 1984), undergraduates (Busboom et al., 2002; Wiseman, 1997),
and both married and unmarried young adults (Eshel et al., 1998). The response format is on a six point Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree; 6 = I strongly agree). Scores are summed for a total intimacy score. Higher scores indicate higher levels of intimacy.

Content validity was established via unanimous consensus by a panel of three experts (Sharabany, 1994). In the initial study, the reliability of the subscales was found to be between .67 and .81 (Sharabany, 1974). More recent studies have found subscale alpha coefficients ranging from .72 to .77 (Sharabany, 1974) to between .77 and .98 (Jones & Dembo, 1989). Correlations among the eight dimensions ranged from .44 to .84 with a median of .69. Criterion validity was established via reciprocity of scores between best friends (Sharabany, 1974). Other studies have found a total score internal consistency of .97 (Busboom et al., 2002). It has also been found to have longitudinal stability over seven years. Between the two testing sessions, girls’ scores were correlated at \( r = .48 \) and boys’ scores at \( r = .34 \) (Lev-Ran & Sharabany, 1981) (see Appendices F & I).

**Perceived Parental conflict.** Children’s Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC; Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992). The CPIC is a 51-item scale designed to assess parental conflict via the children’s perceptions. This scale is divided into nine subscales which are Frequency (e.g., “I never see my parents arguing or disagreeing”), Intensity (e.g., “My parents get really mad when they argue”), Resolution (e.g., “When my parents have an argument they usually work it out”), Content (e.g., “My parents arguments are usually about something I did”), Perceived Threat (e.g., “I get scared when my parents argue”), Coping Efficacy (e.g., “when my parents argue I can do something to make myself feel better”), Self-Blame (e.g., “It’s usually my fault when my
parents argue”), Triangulation (e.g., “I feel caught in the middle when my parents argue”), and Stability (e.g., “the reasons my parents argue never change”). These subscales can be factor-loaded into three scales: Conflict Properties, which measure the perceived intensity, frequency, and resolution of perceived parental conflict, Threat, which measures children’s feelings of being threatened by interparental conflict and their resultant coping skills, and Self-Blame which measures how much children blame themselves for their parent’s fights. Answers are scored on a three point scale, T = true, ST = sort of true, F = false. Answers are summed with higher scores indicating more perceived negative conflict. Several items are reverse scored. The scale was originally designed to be used with children. However, it has also been used for a late adolescent sample, ages 17 to 21 (Bickham & Fiese, 1997).

The initial study found internal consistency among the subscales to range from .61 to .83. The subscales were also highly intercorrelated, as were the three scales with correlations ranging from r = .31 to .52. Test-retest reliability over two weeks was found to range from .68 to .76 for the 3 scales. The three scales were also found to have good internal consistency ranging from .78 to .90. Validity was established by correlating the CPIC with parent-rated measures of parental conflict (OPS; Porter & O’Leary, 1980). Results from the late adolescent sample had good internal consistency ranging from .85 to .95 on the three scales, as well as good test-retest reliability over a two week period ranging from .81 to .95 (Bickham & Fiese, 1997) (see Appendix L)

**Peer Influence on Romantic Beliefs.** Participants were asked to complete a series of questions concerning the influence their closest friends, one male and one female, have had upon their romantic beliefs (e.g., “how often do you go to your friend
for advice on romantic relationship issues;” see Appendices G & J). These questions were created for the purpose of this study. Two items, the questions on peer influence and frequency of seeking advice, were utilized in the analyses and analyzed individually.

**Romantic Relationship History.** Participants were asked to provide information on their romantic history (e.g., “how many romantic relationships have you had;” see Appendix C). These questions were created for the purpose of this study.

**Parental Marital Status.** Participants were asked to provide information concerning their parents/primary caregivers (e. g., “whom do you consider to be your primary parental figures;” see Appendix K).

**Demographic Information.** Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire of background demographic information, such as sex, race, and age (see Appendix A).

**Procedure**

Data collection occurred in two sections. In the first section, questionnaires were administered to groups ranging from two to thirteen people. Participants were instructed to fill out the forms without sharing their answers, beginning with the informed consent form (Appendix M).

Participants were next instructed to fill out the demographics information and the questionnaire on romantic history. Participants were then asked to fill out the forms in several sections. Participants were first asked to fill out the RBI to ascertain their true views of marriage, free from priming effects. Participants were next asked to fill out two sets of forms relating to friendship, the IOS, the IFS, as well as the questions on how much their friends influence their romantic relationship expectations. One set was for their closest male friend and one was for their closest female peer. Participants were then
asked to fill out the CPIC and the questions on parental marital status. After completing the questionnaires, participants were given a debriefing form (Appendix N).

The second section took place online. Participants from the group session were asked, following the study, to give forms to their closest female (Appendix O) and closest male friends (Appendix P), encouraging them to fill out a demographic form and the RBI online, so that their perceptions of their friends’ romantic beliefs could be compared to their true beliefs. All informed consent and debriefing forms were available online. All measures used in this study are available in the public domain.
RESULTS

Prior to analysis, missing values were inputted, substituting participants’ mean scores for each scale. Those scales which were less than 80% complete were excluded. Analyses were considered significant if they retained a $p$ value of .05 or less.

**Analyses of Major Study Questions**

**Hypothesis 1.** The relationship between friendship intimacy and peer influence on romantic beliefs was evaluated via correlations. It was predicted that measures of friendship intimacy would be significantly positively correlated with measures of friendship influence. Several analyses supported this prediction. How often participants report going to their friends for romantic advice was significantly correlated with scores on the IFS, for both female friends and for male friends. How often participants report going to friends for romantic advice was also significantly correlated with scores on the IOS, for both female friends and male friends. Participants’ perceptions of how much their friends influence their romantic beliefs were also significantly correlated with the scores on the IFS for both female friends and male friends. These perceptions were also significantly correlated with scores on the IOS for both females and male friends (see Table 1).

Similarity of participants’ relationship beliefs and their friends’ relationship beliefs was measured via correlations of total scores on the RBI. For these predictions, all correlations were expected to be positive. Participants RBI scores were significantly
Table 1

Bivariate Correlations between Friendship Intimacy Measures and Friend Influence Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IFS Female</th>
<th>IFS Male</th>
<th>IOS Female</th>
<th>IOS Male</th>
<th>Advice Female</th>
<th>Influence Female</th>
<th>Advice Male</th>
<th>Influence Male</th>
<th>RBI (Self)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IFS Male</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOS Female</td>
<td>.59**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOS Male</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice Female</td>
<td>.56**</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice Male</td>
<td>.57**</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.66**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence Female</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence Male</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.47**</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.69**</td>
<td>.63**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBI Female</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.63**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBI Male</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.19*</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.73**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means</td>
<td>134.20</td>
<td>138.99</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>84.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>26.04</td>
<td>25.44</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>16.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. IFS Female = Total scores on the Intimate Friendship Scale for closest female friend. IFS Male = Total scores on the Intimate Friendship Scale for closest male friend. IOS Female = Score on Inclusion of Other in Self scale for closest female friend. IOS Male = Inclusion of Other in Self scale for closest male friend. Advice Female = Reported frequency of seeking romantic advice from closest female friend. Advice Male = Reported frequency of seeking advice from closest male friend. Influence Female = Closest female friend’s perceived influence on romance. Influence Male = Closest male friend’s perceived influence romance. RBI Self = Total scores on Relationship Beliefs Inventory, participant’s beliefs. RBI Female = Total scores on Relationship Beliefs
Inventory for closest female friend’s perceived beliefs. RBI Male = Total scores on Relationship Beliefs Inventory for closest male friend’s perceived beliefs.

\*p < .05. \**p < .01.
correlated with their friends’ perceived RBI scores both for female friends and male friends (see Table 1). The relationship between peer intimacy and similarity of relationship beliefs was examined by first calculating an absolute value difference score between participants’ total RBI scores and their friends’ perceived scores and then correlating that difference with total scores on the IOS and IFS. This correlation was expected to be negative, such that greater intimacy and interpersonal closeness was associated with a smaller absolute difference between RBI scores, and therefore more similar beliefs. Absolute differences between participants’ scores and their female friends’ scores were not significantly correlated with scores on the IFS or scores on the IOS. Absolute differences scores between participants and their closest male friends were also not significantly correlated with scores on the IFS or the IOS. However, there was a significant positive correlation between absolute differences between participants’ and their female friends’ RBI scores and IFS and IOS scores for their male friends. There were also significant positive correlations between absolute differences between participants’ and their male friends’ RBI scores and their female friends’ IOS score (see Table 2). These results indicate that, overall, the closer the friendship the greater the friends’ influence on romantic beliefs. Participants perceive that their beliefs and their friends’ beliefs are significantly similar. However the differences between their beliefs and their friends’ beliefs are not related to friendship closeness.

**Hypothesis 2.** The relationship between friendship closeness and friends’ influence on marital beliefs was predicted to be moderated by participants’ romantic histories. Simultaneous regressions were run to test the significance of the interaction between friendship intimacy and number of romantic relationships on perceived peer
Table 2

*Bivariate Correlations between Friendship Intimacy Measures and Similarity of Relationship Beliefs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Abs Diff Self/Female Friend</th>
<th>Abs Diff Self/Male Friend</th>
<th>IFS (Female)</th>
<th>IFS (Male)</th>
<th>IOS (Female)</th>
<th>IOS (Male)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abs Diff Self/Male Friend</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFS (Female)</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFS (Male)</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOS (Female)</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>.59**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOS (Male)</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Abs Diff Self/Female Friend = Absolute differences in scores on the Relationship Beliefs Inventory between participants and their closest female friend’s perceived beliefs. Abs Diff Self/Male Friend = Absolute differences in scores on the Relationship Beliefs Inventory between participants and their closest male friend’s perceived beliefs. IFS (Female) = Total scores on the Intimate Friendship Scale for closest female friend. IFS (Male) = Total scores on the Intimate Friendship Scale for closest male friend. IOS (Female) = Score on the Inclusion of Other in Self Scale for closest female friend. IOS (Male) = Score on the Inclusion of Other in Self Scale for closest male friend.

* p < .05, ** p < .01.
influence (the dependent variable). An interaction term was created between total scores on the IFS and number of romantic relationships. To control for potential confounds from multicollinearity between the main effects and interaction term (friend_romance), the total scores on the IFS and number of romantic experiences were centered prior to forming the interaction term and running the equation (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). The unique contribution of the interaction variable, controlling for all main effects of friendship intimacy and number of romantic relationships, determined the significance of the moderation. The known effect of parental conflict, defined via scores on the CPIC, was controlled for. The data did not support this hypothesis. In the case of female friends’ perceived influence, while there was an overall significant effect, $F(4, 110) = 15.28, p < .00$, the interaction term did not reach significance, nor was there a significant main effect of number of partners or interparental conflict. There was a significant main effect of IFS scores (see Table 3). Likewise for male friends, there was a significant overall effect of friends’ perceived influence, $F(4, 110) = 9.05, p < .00$. The interaction term did not reach significance, nor were there significant main effects of number of partners or interparental conflict. However, there was a significant main effect of IFS scores (see Table 3). These findings suggest that as friendship intimacy increases friends’ influence increases and this increase is unrelated to dating history.

Hypothesis 2B was tested in a similar fashion, with the same predictor variables, including the interaction variable, and how often participants report going to their peers for romantic advice as the dependent variable. In both equations, it was predicted that number of romantic relationships would significantly moderate the effect of peer influence, such that when there is a greater number of romantic relationships there would
Table 3

Regression Analyzes Using Interactions of Friendship Intimacy and Number of Romantic Partners to Predict Friend’s Level of Influence on Romance, Controlling for Interparental Conflict.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female Friend</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPIC</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFS</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>7.43**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners x IFS</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male Friend</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPIC</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFS</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>5.58**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners x IFS</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Partners = Number of dating partners. IFS = Total scores on the Intimate Friendship Scale. Partners x IFS = the product of the number of dating partners and total scores on the IFS. CPIC = Total scores on the Children’s Perceptions of Interparental Conflict scale. Scores on IFS and number of dating partners have been centered.

**p < .01.**
be a nonsignificant association between friendship intimacy and peer influence and when there is a lesser number of romantic relationships there would be a significant positive correlation between friendship intimacy and peer influence. This prediction was not supported. It was found that for female friends, there was a significant omnibus effect, $F(4, 110) = 19.70, p < .00$ (see Table 4). However the interaction term did not reach significance, nor was there a significant main effect of number of partners. There were however significant main effects of IFS scores and interparental conflict. For male friends, there was a significant overall effect, $F(4, 110) = 6.49, p < .00$. The interaction term did not reach significance. However, there were significant main effects of both number of partners and friendship intimacy. There was also no significant effect of interparental conflict (see Table 4). These findings once again suggest that the effect of friendship closeness on friend’s influence on romance is unrelated to the effects of romantic experience. It also indicates that there is a gender effect of dating history, such that while women are not significantly influenced by the quantity of their dating partners, men are.

Hypothesis 2C was tested by calculating the absolute value differences between participants’ total scores on the RBI and their friends’ scores. The significance of this difference was tested as the dependent variable in a multiple regression equation comparing similarity of beliefs between participants’ and their friends as a function of number of romantic relationships. It was predicted that participants with fewer romantic relationships would show smaller differences between their total RBI scores and their friends’ total RBI scores and participants with more romantic experiences would show greater dissimilarity with their friends’ RBI scores. This prediction was not supported by
Table 4

Regression Analyzes Using Interactions of Friendship Intimacy and Number of Romantic Partners to Predict Frequency of Going to Friends for Romantic Advice, Controlling for Interparental Conflict.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Friend</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPIC</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>2.97**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFS</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>7.39**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners x IFS</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPIC</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>2.05*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFS</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>4.19**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners x IFS</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Partners = Number of dating partners. IFS = Total scores on the Intimate Friendship Scale. Partners x IFS = the product of the number of dating partners and total scores on the IFS. CPIC = Total scores on the Children’s Perceptions of Interparental Conflict scale. Scores on IFS and number of dating partners have been centered.

* p < .05. ** p < .01.
the data. When comparing participants’ RBI scores to those of their female friends, the omnibus effect did not reach significance, $F(1, 110) = .49, p = .48$. Likewise, there was no omnibus effect found for the difference between participants’ RBI scores and those of their male friends, $F(1, 110) = 1.54, p = .22$ (see Table 5). Because this prediction was found to be false, it implies that similarity of friends’ romantic beliefs is unrelated to dating experience.

**Hypothesis 3.** A friend’s level of influence was expected to vary depending on gender, both of the friend and the participant. This effect of gender was evaluated via Multivariate Analysis of Variance (Manova) and Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (Mancova) equations. Hypothesis 3A was tested via Manova equations. The tests consisted of two separate analyses, both of a 2 x 2 design (participant gender x friend gender), one examining the effect on how often participants report go to their friends for romantic advice and one examining the effect on how much influence they perceive their friends have over their romantic beliefs. The specific contrast effects studied were between female/female versus male/male friendships, female/female versus female/male friendships, and female/female versus male/female friendships. It was predicted that participant and friend gender would significantly interact such that women with close female friends go to their friends for romantic advice more often and perceive them as having greater influence. These predictions were supported by the data. It was found that for seeking advice from female friends, there was a significant overall effect but there was no significant effect in the case of male friends (see Table 6). Specifically, women were more likely to seek advice from their female friends compared to their male friends, whereas men did not seek advice from female or male friends at significantly different
Table 5

Regression Predicting the Effect of Number of Romantic Partners on Absolute Differences in Relationship Beliefs between Participants and Friends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>-.42</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Partners = number of dating partners.*
Table 6

*Multivariate Analysis of Variance on the Effect of Participant and Friend Gender on Frequency of Seeking Romantic Advice from Friend*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friend Gender</th>
<th>Participant Gender</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female (n = 63)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male (n = 56)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < .01.
Likewise, in the case of friend’s perceived influence, for female friends there was
a significant effect of gender and for male friends there was no significant effect (see
Table 7). Women’s female friends were more likely to influence their romantic beliefs
compared to their male friends, whereas men did not perceive much difference in
influence from their female friends and male friends.

Hypothesis 3B used Manova equations to examine if closeness confounds the
effect of gender on friend’s level of influence. This was done by adding total scores on
the IFS and IOS as covariates to the analysis described in Hypothesis 3A. It was
predicted that once measures of friendship intimacy and interpersonal closeness were
controlled for, the interaction between self and friend gender would become
nonsignificant. For seeking advice from female friends, there remained an overall effect
of gender and no overall effect for male friends. There was no significant effect of the
IOS covariates for either female friends or male friends. There was however a significant
effect of IFS scores, both for female friends and male friends (see Table 8). This indicates
that while friendship intimacy does significantly influence the frequency of seeking
romantic advice, for women there remains a significant gender effect. Women were more
likely to seek advice from their female friends than their male friends.

In the case of friends’ perceived influence, there was a no significant overall
effect of gender for either female friends or male friends. There was also no significant
effect of the IOS covariate for either female friends or male friends. There was however a
significant effect of the IFS covariate both for female friends and male friends (see Table
9). This indicates that although the gender effect on friends’ perceived influence was
Table 7

*Multivariate Analysis of Variance on the Effect of Participant and Friend Gender on Friend’s Influence on Romance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friend Gender</th>
<th>Participant Gender</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female (n = 63)</td>
<td>Male (n = 56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .01.
Table 8

Multivariate Analysis of Covariance on the Effect of Participant and Friend Gender on Seeking Romantic Advice with Friendship Intimacy Measures as Covariates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friend Gender</th>
<th>Participant Gender</th>
<th>Gender Overall</th>
<th>IFS</th>
<th>IOS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female (n = 63)</td>
<td>Male (n = 55)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.89*</td>
<td>13.71**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. IOS = Scores on the Inclusion of Other in Self scale. IFS = Total scores on the Intimate Friendship Scale.

*p < .05. **p < .01.
Table 9

*Multivariate Analysis of Covariance on the Effect of Participant and Friend Gender on Friend's Influence on Romance with Friendship Intimacy Measures as Covariates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friend Gender</th>
<th>Participant Gender</th>
<th>Gender Overall</th>
<th>IFS</th>
<th>IOS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female (n = 63)</td>
<td>Male (n = 55)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>26.69**</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>9.84**</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* IOS = Scores on the Inclusion of Self in Other scale. IFS = Intimate Friendship Scale.

**p < .01.
previously significant, once measures on the IFS are taken into account, it becomes nonsignificant.

**Hypothesis 4.** It was predicted that the idealism vs. realism of one’s romantic beliefs would influence the intimacy of their friendship with an opposite-sex peer, although the direction of this effect was an open question. The effect of opposite-sex peers on the idealism vs. realism of romantic beliefs was expected to vary depending on the gender of the participant. While it was predicted that level of intimacy with opposite-sex peers would significantly influence romantic beliefs, this relationship was further predicted to be moderated by participant gender, such that one gender was more strongly influenced by their peers. This question was tested via the methods previously outlined for Hypothesis 2. Simultaneous regression equations were used to test the significance of the interaction between participant gender and friendship intimacy on overall scores of the RBI (the dependent variable), while controlling for number of romantic relationships and scores on the CPIC. For female friends, the overall equation did not reach significance, $F(5, 109) = 1.52, p = .19$. Although the control variable, interparental conflict, reached significance the interaction term and main effects of gender and friendship intimacy did not. Similarly, for male friends, there was no significant overall effect $F(5, 109) = 2.05, p = .08$ on participant’s relationship beliefs. The effect of the interaction term, as well as the main effects of gender and friendship intimacy did not reach significance (see Table 10). This indicates that the realism of participants’ romantic beliefs is uninfluenced by friendship closeness and friend gender.
Table 10

Regression Analyses Predicting the Effect of the Interaction of Participant Gender and Friendship Intimacy on Relationship Beliefs, Controlling for Number of Dating Partners and Interparental Conflict.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female Friend</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPIC</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>2.03*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-1.01</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFS</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender x IFS</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male Friend</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPIC</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-5.12</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-1.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFS</td>
<td>-.33</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>-.49</td>
<td>-1.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender x IFS</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Gender = Participant’s gender. IFS = Total scores on the Intimate Friendship Scale. Gender x IFS = the product of participants’ gender and total scores on the IFS. Partners = number of romantic partners. CPIC = total scores on the Children’s Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale. Scores on the IFS and number of partners have been centered.

* p < .05.
DISCUSSION

The principle aim of this study was to examine young adults’ beliefs about marriage and how those beliefs were influenced by their peers. To accomplish this, several overlapping objectives were examined. One concept under investigation was the relationship between friendship intimacy and friends’ influence, and whether romantic experience or gender weakens that relationship. This study also examined how romantic beliefs differ between peers and whether romantic history diminishes that effect, as well as how closeness with an opposite-sex peer influences romantic beliefs.

The first hypothesis examined the relationship between friendship intimacy and friends’ influence on romance. It was found that the closer and more intimate the friendship, the more influence that friend had on relationship beliefs. Furthermore, understandably, young adults who enjoyed especially close friendships were more likely to lean on these friends during times of romantic confusion and seek advice. Given the importance of friends to the young adult age-group and the instrumental role such peer groups may play in initiating romantic relationships (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999), logically it follows that there is a strong connection between friendship intimacy and how much influence friends have on one another’s romantic beliefs.

Young adults perceived that those people from whom they sought advice had beliefs similar to their own, unsurprising since children and adolescents tend to select
peers similar to themselves as friends (Hartup, 1996). However, it was also found that differences in beliefs did not influence closeness with that peer. Interestingly, differences in beliefs with a peer of one gender were associated with closeness with a peer of the other gender. This may indicate that when participants perceive greater dissimilarity between themselves and one friend they grow closer to other friends. More research is needed to clarify the nature of this unexpected finding.

This study’s second hypothesis examined whether the relationship between friendship intimacy and influence was weakened by greater romantic experience and found it was not. Both men and women continued to perceive influence from their friends, especially their close friends, even if they had greater first-hand romantic knowledge to draw upon. For women, the factors influencing frequency of seeking romantic advice from friends were friendship intimacy and interparental conflict, suggesting as parental conflict increases, women were more likely to turn to friends as sources of unbiased romantic information. For men, the frequency of seeking romantic advice increased not only as friendship intimacy increased but also as their own romantic experiences increased. In other words, counter-intuitively, men came to rely less on their own expertise even as they gained experience. This may be because as men gained romantic experience they realized that romantic relationships are complex and require sustained effort to maintain. Once they realized romantic relationships would not be easy, they began to seek help from trusted sources. Another explanation is that friends came to discuss romantic relationships more often as they gained romantic experience simply because friends tend to discuss current events of their lives with each other. When a
friend has had more romantic experiences, they are more likely to talk about those experiences because they have something to discuss.

This study’s third hypothesis found that women were more likely to seek advice and perceive influence from female friends than from male friends, while men did not differentiate between genders. This supported prior research showing that women tend to form closer, female-to-female ‘best friendships’ while men prefer the group at large (Bank & Hansford, 2000; Carbery & Buhrmester, 1998). Whether this gender effect remained after accounting for closer female-to-female friendships was ambiguous. For perceived influence, the overall effect of gender disappeared once friendship intimacy was accounted for. For seeking romantic advice, there remained a significant gender effect for women even after friendship closeness was accounted for. Other factors might explain the remaining gender effect. For example, women’s increased emotional expressiveness could make a female friend appear more approachable with romantic problems compared to more emotionally restrained men (Bank & Hansford, 2000). It is also possible that women are more likely to perceive their female friends as facing challenges similar to their own and therefore better able to provide relevant relationship advice. More research is needed in this area.

This study also sought to examine what factors determined differences in relationship beliefs between peers. It has been established that peers share similar beliefs. Interestingly, when differences did exist, those differences were unrelated both to friendship closeness and dating experience. Several explanations for this exist. In adolescence, the peer group’s influence is especially strong and beliefs are often created and reinforced by group consensus (Simon, Edner, & Evans, 1992). This study focused
on students making the transition from adolescence to young adulthood when youths begin to gain independence from their peer group. Very few participants had an extensive dating history to draw upon and some had none. It may be that older age groups, who have had a greater number of relationships, would espouse a greater variety of romantic beliefs and show stronger differences between peer beliefs.

It was hypothesized that young adults would perceive influence from their peers and endorse beliefs similar to those of their peers. It was found that participants perceive a similarity between their own beliefs and those of their peers. However this did not necessarily imply that young adults became friends because they share beliefs. It is also possible that peers began with dissimilar beliefs but over time came to adopt the beliefs of their friends. In other words, this study cannot infer causation or that individuals were friends because they had similar beliefs. To overcome this limitation, future studies may wish to utilize longitudinal research, examining how young adults beliefs change as a result of the company they keep.

This study sought to examine the relationship between similarity of friends’ beliefs, their closeness, and their level of influence. It was found that young adult’s friends had great influence over their beliefs. It was also found that participants thought their friends had beliefs similar to their own, yet differences in beliefs were not related to closeness. While these findings appeared to conflict, it must be remembered that friends need not have identical beliefs, nor is it necessary for friends to have similar beliefs to be influential. Young adults may have, after witnessing undesirable results from their friends’ beliefs, come to endorse contrasting beliefs. Future studies are needed to directly examine the relationship between belief similarity and level of influence.
Prior research has shown that a relationship with an opposite-sex sibling impacts the realism of adult relationship beliefs (Sinclair, 2010). This study sought to expand that finding to opposite-sex friends. It was found that having a close opposite-sex peer did not make one’s views of romance more realistic or idealistic. Romantic beliefs appeared to be independent of friend gender and closeness. Instead, only interparental conflict showed any significant results and then only when considering female friends. This may be somewhat logical given that, as previously mentioned findings have shown, women gravitated towards same-sex peers for support in romantic matters and men did not appear to differentiate between genders when considering who influences them romantically. In short, female-to-male friendships appeared to have a negligible influence on young adults’ romantic beliefs.

This research highlights the role peers, especially close friends, have on each other’s expectations about relationships. This has several practical implications. Relationship satisfaction is strongly tied to beliefs. Because friends exert a strong influence on each other, it follows that friends can shape one another’s beliefs and, through those beliefs, each other’s satisfaction within a romantic relationship.

As previously stated, adolescents are subject to intense pressure from their social circle. Group norms tend to be rigidly enforced by the group’s members. However, sometimes group members may be unable conform to group standards. For example, as stated by Simon, Edner, and Evans (1992) adolescent female groups tend to reinforce heterosexuality as the expected norm, which can cause considerable distress for non-heterosexual group members. Another danger is that peer consensus may promote maladaptive romantic beliefs among group members. One common example is intimate
partner violence (IPV). Research has shown that talk amongst male friends glorifying violence towards women later predicts violence towards female partners (Capaldi et al., 2001). Other research has found IPV is most characteristic of males in small, tightly knit, all-male peer groups, while those in less connected social networks or whose social groups include both genders engage in less IPV (Casey & Beadnell, 2010). This research shows that, at least in the case of males, maladaptive relationship beliefs can be reinforced by groups depending on their friend’s gender and interpersonal closeness. Given that the results of this study do not support such contentions, more research is needed.

There are several limitations of this study which future research may address. This study focused exclusively upon a college-aged sample, which leads to a very narrow age-range and subsequently little variety in dating experience among the participants. This focus on college students also restricted the sample to a group with rather similar life experiences and expectations. These difficulties could be overcome in future studies by duplicating these results with a community sample. A community sample extending the age-range to adults beyond their early twenties would provide a broader range of dating experiences and presumably more variety in relationship beliefs.

The lack of diversity in this sample should also be accounted for by future studies. Some research indicates that young adults from minority ethnic groups or lower socioeconomic groups endorse very different expectations about romance, up to and including whether they expect to ever marry (Graber, Britto, & Brooks-Gunn, 1999).

Another weakness of this study is information about the participants’ friends was relatively limited. No friends of the participants provided additional data to support
participants’ estimations of their beliefs. It is possible that participants had biased or incomplete information on their friends’ views on romance. Future studies should endeavor to directly gather information from friends about their romantic beliefs and relevant factors influencing those beliefs.

Another weakness involves construct measurement. An extensive literature search revealed no preexisting measures for determining friends’ influence on relationship beliefs. Therefore a set of questions was created for the purpose of this study. Because this study relied upon a small number of unvalidated questions, its results cannot be compared to established norms or generalized to groups beyond this sample. Future studies may wish to utilize different measurement methods.

Despite these limitations, this study is notable in that it investigated a previously unexplored area and found statistically significant results. Many of this study’s findings suggest areas of interest for future studies. This study also took care to examine several known confounding variables to better establish the true effect of the constructs under study.

This study aimed to examine the role of peers in influencing romantic relationships, a previously unexplored topic. This study builds upon previous research of how romantic beliefs are influenced by factors such as a person’s romantic history, their gender, the conflict they witnessed between their parents, and the idealization of romance in the mass media. Another potential influence is peers. Friends are known to be the dominant social influence of adolescence, a time when young adults are first beginning to establish romantic relationships. Even though it’s known how friends influence young adults in general, it was previously unknown how they influence romantic beliefs in
particular. This study found that peers, especially close friends, can play a strong role in influencing a person’s romantic beliefs. This relationship held even after other influences such as interparental conflict and prior romantic experiences were accounted for. Women tend to rely on their female friends for support during romantic crises. Men come to value romantic advice more as gain romantic experience. In summary, this study establishes friends’ importance as sources of support and information regarding romantic relationships. Future research should expand upon this by examining romantic beliefs of a broader, more diverse sample using more established means of measurement.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHICS & BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please complete the questionnaire by filling in a check mark or writing in an answer next to the following items as they pertain to or describe you. All of your responses will remain confidential. Please do not write your name on this form.

**Gender**

- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female

**Age**

________

**Race**

- [ ] White/Caucasian
- [ ] Black/African-American
- [ ] Asian/Pacific Islander
- [ ] Native American
- [ ] Hispanic/Latino
- [ ] Other
Sexual orientation

__________ Heterosexual/straight
__________ Homosexual/gay
__________ Bisexual
APPENDIX B

RELATIONSHIP BELIEFS INVENTORY

The statements below describe ways in which a person might feel about a relationship with another person. Please mark the space next to each statement according to how strongly you believe that statement is true or false. You will be asked to indicate three beliefs: how much you believe each statement is true, how much your closest female friend (who is not a romantic partner) would believe each statement to be true, and how much your closest male friend (who is not a romantic partner) would believe each statement to be true. Please mark every one.

5 = I strongly believe that the statement is true.
4 = I believe that the statement is true.
3 = I believe that the statement is probably true, or more true than false.
2 = I believe that the statement is probably false, or more false than true.
1 = I believe that the statement is false.
0 = I strongly believe that the statement is false.

My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

1) If your partner expresses disagreement with your ideas, s/he probably does not think highly of you.

2) I do not expect my partner to sense all my moods.*

3) Damages done early in a relationship probably cannot be reversed.

4) I get upset if I think I have not completely satisfied my partner sexually.

5) Men and women have the same basic emotional needs.*
5 = I strongly believe that the statement is true.
4 = I believe that the statement is true.
3 = I believe that the statement is probably true, or more true than false.
2 = I believe that the statement is probably false, or more false than true.
1 = I believe that the statement is false.
0 = I strongly believe that the statement is false.

My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

6) I cannot accept it when my partner disagrees with me.
My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

7) If I have to tell my partner that something is important to me, it does not mean s/he is insensitive to me.*
My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

8) My partner does not seem capable of behaving other than s/he does now.
My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

9) If I’m not in the mood for sex when my partner is, I don’t get upset about it.*
My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

10) Misunderstandings between partners generally are due to inborn differences in the psychological makeups of men and women.
My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

11) I take it as a personal insult when my partner disagrees with an important idea of mine.
My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

12) I get upset if my partner does not recognize how I am feeling and I have to tell him/her.
My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

13) A partner can learn to become more responsive to his/her partner’s needs.*
My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

14) A good sexual partner can get himself/herself aroused for sex whenever necessary.
My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

15) Men and women probably will never understand the opposite sex well.
My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs
5 = I strongly believe that the statement is true.
4 = I believe that the statement is true.
3 = I believe that the statement is probably true, or more true than false.
2 = I believe that the statement is probably false, or more false than true.
1 = I believe that the statement if false.
0 = I strongly believe that the statement is false.

My beliefs____________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs___________

16) I like it when my partner presents views
different from mine.*

My beliefs____________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs___________

17) People who have a close relationship can sense
each other’s needs as if they could read each other’s
minds.

My beliefs____________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs___________

18) Just because my partner has acted in ways that
upset me does not mean that s/he will do so in the
future.*

My beliefs____________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs___________

19) If I cannot perform well sexually whenever my
partner is in the mood, I would consider that I have
a problem.

My beliefs____________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs___________

20) Men and women need the same basic things out
of a relationship.*

My beliefs____________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs___________

21) I get upset when my partner and I cannot see
things the same way.

My beliefs____________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs___________

22) It is important to me for my partner to anticipate
my needs by sensing changes in my moods.

My beliefs____________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs___________

23) A partner who hurts you badly once will
probably hurt you again.

My beliefs____________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs___________

24) I can feel okay about my lovemaking even if
my partner does not achieve orgasm.*

My beliefs____________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs___________

25) Biological differences between men and women
are not major causes of couples’ problems.*
5 = I strongly believe that the statement is true.
4 = I believe that the statement is true.
3 = I believe that the statement is probably true, or more true than false.
2 = I believe that the statement is probably false, or more false than true.
1 = I believe that the statement if false.
0 = I strongly believe that the statement is false.

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

My beliefs________________________
Female friend’s beliefs__________
Male friend’s beliefs__________

5) I cannot tolerate it when my partner argues with me.

27) A partner should know what you are thinking or feeling without you having to tell.

28) If my partner wants to change, I believe s/he can do it.*

29) If my sexual partner does not get satisfied completely, it does not mean that I have failed.*

30) One of the major causes of marital problems is that men and women have different emotional needs.

31) When my partner and I disagree, I feel like our relationship is falling apart.

32) People who love each other know exactly what each other’s thoughts are without a word ever being said.

33) If you don’t like the way a relationship is going, you can make it better.*

34) Some difficulties in my sexual performance do not mean personal failure to me.*

35) You can’t really understand someone of the opposite sex.
5 = I strongly believe that the statement is true.
4 = I believe that the statement is true.
3 = I believe that the statement is probably true, or more true than false.
2 = I believe that the statement is probably false, or more false than true.
1 = I believe that the statement if false.
0 = I strongly believe that the statement is false.

My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

36) I do not doubt my partner’s feelings for me when we argue.*

My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

37) If you have to ask your partner for something, it shows that s/he was not “tuned into” your needs.

My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

38) I do not expect my partner to be able to change.

My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

39) When I do not seem to be performing well sexually, I get upset.

My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

40) Men and women will always be mysteries to each other.

My beliefs
Female friend’s beliefs
Male friend’s beliefs

*indicates reverse-scored item
APPENDIX C
ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP HISTORY

Please fill out the questionnaire by indicating with a check mark or filling out the following items, as they apply to your most recent romantic relationship. If you have never been in a romantic relationship, please fill out question one and skip to the next questionnaire.

1) How recent was your latest romantic relationship?

___ Current
___ less than 1 month ago
___ 1-3 months ago
___ 3-6 months ago
___ 6-12 months ago
___ more than 1 year ago
___ I have never been in a romantic relationship

2) What is the nature of your current romantic relationship (if you are currently in one)?

___ Friends with Benefits
___ Dating (open relationship)
___ Dating (exclusively)
___ Engaged (not living together)
___ Engaged (living together)

3) How long have you been in your current/ most recent romantic relationship?

Years ____________ Months ________________________
For the following questions please define ‘romantic relationship’ as an exclusive and extended relationship between you and a romantic partner whom you would label a boyfriend/ girlfriend.

4) How long was your longest romantic relationship?

Years___________________ Months____________________

5) How many romantic relationships/dating partners have you had?_____________
APPENDIX D
RELATIONSHIP ASSESSMENT SCALE

Thinking back on your current/most recent romantic relationship, please mark the number for each item which best answers that item for you. If you have never had a romantic relationship, please skip to the next questionnaire.

1) How well does/did your partner meet your needs?

1 2 3 4 5
Poorly Average Very well

2) In general, how satisfied are/were you with your relationship?

1 2 3 4 5
Unsatisfied average very satisfied

3) How good is/was your relationship compared to most?

1 2 3 4 5
Poor average excellent

4) How often do/did you wish you hadn’t gotten into this relationship? *

1 2 3 4 5
Never average very often

5) To what extent has/did your relationship met your original expectations?

1 2 3 4 5
Not at all average completely
6) How much do/did you love your partner?

1) 2) 3) 4) 5)
Not much average very much

7) How many problems are/were there in your relationship? *

1) 2) 3) 4) 5)
Very few average very many

* indicates reverse-scored item
APPENDIX E

INCLUSION OF OTHER IN THE SELF SCALE (FEMALE FRIEND)

(Aron, Aron & Smollan, 1992)

Please circle the picture below that best describes your relationship with your closest female friend (who is not a romantic partner).
APPENDIX F

INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP SCALE (FEMALE FRIEND)

Please rate your relationship with your closest female friend (who is not a romantic partner) according to the following scale:

1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = somewhat disagree
4 = somewhat agree
5 = agree
6 = strongly agree

1) I feel free to talk with her about almost everything.

1 2 3 4 5 6

2) If she does something which I do not like, I can always talk with her about it.

1 2 3 4 5 6

3) I talk with her about my hopes and plans for the future.

1 2 3 4 5 6

4) I tell her when I have done something other people would not approve of.

1 2 3 4 5 6

5) I know how she feels about things without her telling me.

1 2 3 4 5 6

6) I know which kinds of books, games, and activities she likes.

1 2 3 4 5 6
7) I know how she feels about the person she likes.

1  2  3  4  5  6

8) I can tell when she is worried about something.

1  2  3  4  5  6

9) I feel close to her.

1  2  3  4  5  6

10) I like her.

1  2  3  4  5  6

11) When she is not around I miss her.

1  2  3  4  5  6

12) When she is not around I keep wondering where she is and what she is doing.

1  2  3  4  5  6

13) The most exciting things happen when I am with her and nobody else is around.

1  2  3  4  5  6

14) I do things with her which are quite different from what other kids do.

1  2  3  4  5  6

15) It bothers me to have other kids come around and join in when the two of us are doing something together.

1  2  3  4  5  6
1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = somewhat disagree
4 = somewhat agree
5 = agree
6 = strongly agree

16) I stay with her when she wants to do something that other people do not want to do.
1  2  3  4  5  6

17) When something nice happens to me I share the experience with her.
1  2  3  4  5  6

18) Whenever she tells me about a problem I stop what I am doing and listen for as long as she wants.
1  2  3  4  5  6

19) I offer her the use of my things (like clothes, food or books).
1  2  3  4  5  6

20) If she wants something I let her have it even if I want it too.
1  2  3  4  5  6

21) I can be sure she’ll help me whenever I ask for it.
1  2  3  4  5  6

22) I can plan how we’ll spend our time without having to check with her.
1  2  3  4  5  6

23) If I want her to do something for me all I have to do is ask.
1  2  3  4  5  6

24) I can use her things without asking permission.
1  2  3  4  5  6

82
1 = strongly disagree  
2 = disagree  
3 = somewhat disagree  
4 = somewhat agree  
5 = agree  
6 = strongly agree

25) Whenever you see me you can be pretty sure she is also around.  
1  2  3  4  5  6

26) I like to do things with her.  
1  2  3  4  5  6

27) I work with her on some of her hobbies.  
1  2  3  4  5  6

28) I work with her on some of her school work.  
1  2  3  4  5  6

29) I know that whatever I tell her is kept secret between us.  
1  2  3  4  5  6

30) I will not go along with others to do anything against her.  
1  2  3  4  5  6

31) I speak up to defend her when others say bad things about her.  
1  2  3  4  5  6

32) I tell people nice things about her.  
1  2  3  4  5  6
APPENDIX G

FEMALE FRIEND’S INFLUENCE

Please read this questionnaire and circle or fill out the answers to the following questions, as they apply to your closest female friend (who is not a romantic partner).

1) How long have you known her? Years______________

2) How often do you go to her for romantic advice?
   Never    seldom    sometimes    often    very often

3) How often do you and her talk about romantic matters?
   Never    seldom    sometimes    often    very often

4) How much does she influence your opinions on romantic matters?
   Not at all    a little    somewhat    more than not    a great deal
APPENDIX H

INCLUSION OF OTHER IN THE SELF SCALE (MALE FRIEND)

(Aron, Aron & Smollan, 1992)

Please circle the picture below that best describes your relationship with your closest male friend (who is not a romantic partner).
APPENDIX I

INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP SCALE (MALE FRIEND)

Please rate your relationship with your closest male friend (who is not a romantic partner) according to the following scale:

1 = strongly disagree  
2 = disagree  
3 = somewhat disagree  
4 = somewhat agree  
5 = agree  
6 = strongly agree  

1) I feel free to talk with him about almost everything.  

1  2  3  4  5  6

2) If he does something which I do not like, I can always talk with him about it.  

1  2  3  4  5  6

3) I talk with him about my hopes and plans for the future.  

1  2  3  4  5  6

4) I tell him when I have done something other people would not approve of.  

1  2  3  4  5  6

5) I know how he feels about things without him telling me.  

1  2  3  4  5  6

6) I know which kinds of books, games and activities he likes.  

1  2  3  4  5  6
1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = somewhat disagree
4 = somewhat agree
5 = agree
6 = strongly agree

7) I know how he feels about the person he likes.
   1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6

8) I can tell when he is worried about something.
   1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6

9) I feel close to him.
   1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6

10) I like him.
    1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6

11) When he is not around I miss him.
    1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6

12) When he is not around I keep wondering where he is and what he is doing.
    1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6

13) The most exciting things happen when I am with him and nobody else is around.
    1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6

14) I do things with him which are quite different from what other kids do.
    1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6

15) It bothers me to have other kids come around and join in when the two of us are doing something together.
    1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6
16) I stay with him when he wants to do something that other people do not want to do.
1  2  3  4  5  6

17) When something nice happens to me I share the experience with him.
1  2  3  4  5  6

18) Whenever he tells me about a problem I stop what I am doing and listen for as long as he wants.
1  2  3  4  5  6

19) I offer him the use of my things (like clothes, food or books).
1  2  3  4  5  6

20) If he wants something I let him have it even if I want it too.
1  2  3  4  5  6

21) I can be sure he’ll help me whenever I ask for it.
1  2  3  4  5  6

22) I can plan how we’ll spend our time without having to check with him.
1  2  3  4  5  6

23) If I want him to do something for me all I have to do is ask.
1  2  3  4  5  6

24) I can use his things without asking permission.
1  2  3  4  5  6
1 = strongly disagree  
2 = disagree  
3 = somewhat disagree  
4 = somewhat agree  
5 = agree  
6 = strongly agree

25) Whenever you see me you can be pretty sure he is also around.

1 2 3 4 5 6

26) I like to do things with him.

1 2 3 4 5 6

27) I work with him on some of his hobbies.

1 2 3 4 5 6

28) I work with him on some of his school work.

1 2 3 4 5 6

29) I know that whatever I tell him is kept secret between us.

1 2 3 4 5 6

30) I will not go along with others to do anything against him.

1 2 3 4 5 6

31) I speak up to defend him when others say bad things about him.

1 2 3 4 5 6

32) I tell people nice things about him.

1 2 3 4 5 6
APPENDIX J

MALE FRIEND’S INFLUENCE

Please read this questionnaire and circle or fill out the answers to the following questions, as they apply to your closest male friend (who is not a romantic partner).

1) How long have you known him?  Years________________

2) How often do you go to him for romantic advice?

Never  seldom  sometimes  often  very often

3) How often do you and he talk about romantic matters?

Never  seldom  sometimes  often  very often

4) How much does he influence your opinions on romantic matters?

Not at all  a little  somewhat  more than not  a great deal
APPENDIX K

PARENTAL MARITAL STATUS

Please read the following questions and put a check mark next to the answer best describing your parents or primary caregivers.

1) Are your biological parents
   __ Still married
   __ Separated
   __ Divorced
   __ Father deceased
   __ Mother deceased
   __ Both deceased
   __ Never married and apart
   __ Never married and cohabiting

2) Whom do you consider to be your primary parental figures?
   __ Your biological parents
   __ Your biological mother and stepfather
   __ Your biological father and stepmother
   __ Your adopted parents
   __ Your foster parents
   __ Your grandparents
   __ I was raised in a single parent home
APPENDIX L

CHILDREN’S PERCEPTIONS OF INTERPARENTAL CONFLICT

In every family there are times when the parents don’t get along. Below are some things that kids sometimes think or feel when their parents have arguments or disagreements. Looking back on your childhood, please mark the answer best describing what you thought or felt when your parents argued or disagreed.

T = True
ST = Sort of True
F = False

1) I never see my parents arguing or disagreeing.*
T          ST          F

2) When my parents have an argument they usually work it out.*
T          ST          F

3) My parents often get into arguments about things I do at school.
T          ST          F

4) When my parents argue it’s because one of them just had a bad day.
T          ST          F

5) My parents get really mad when they argue.
T          ST          F

6) When my parents argue I can do something to make myself feel better.*
T          ST          F

7) I get scared when my parents argue.
T          ST          F
8) I feel caught in the middle when my parents argue.
T ST F

9) I’m not to blame when my parents have arguments.*
T ST F

10) They may not think I know it, but my parents argue or disagree a lot.
T ST F

11) Even after my parents stop arguing they stay mad at each other.
T ST F

12) When my parents argue usually it has to do with their own problems.
T ST F

13) My parents have arguments because they are not happy together.
T ST F

14) When my parents have a disagreement they discuss it quietly.*
T ST F

15) I don’t know what to do when my parents have arguments.
T ST F

16) My parents are often mean to each other even when I’m around.
T ST F

17) When my parents argue I worry about what will happen to me.
T ST F

18) I don’t feel like I have to take sides when my parents have a disagreement.*
T ST F
19) It's usually my fault when my parents argue.
T    ST    F

20) I often see or hear my parents arguing.
T    ST    F

21) When my parents disagree about something, they usually come up with a solution.*
T    ST    F

22) My parent’s arguments are usually about me.
T    ST    F

23) The reasons my parents argue never change.
T    ST    F

24) When my parents have an argument they say mean things about each other.
T    ST    F

25) When my parents argue or disagree I can usually help make things better.*
T    ST    F

26) When my parents argue I’m afraid that something bad will happen.
T    ST    F

27) My mom wants me to be on her side when she and my dad argue.
T    ST    F

28) Even if they don’t say it, I know I’m to blame when my parents argue.
T    ST    F

29) My parents hardly ever argue.*
T    ST    F
30) When my parents argue they usually make up right away.*
T ST F

31) My parents usually argue or disagree because of things that I do.
T ST F

32) My parents argue because they don’t really love each other.
T ST F

33) When my parents have an argument they yell at each other.
T ST F

34) When my parents argue there’s nothing I can do to stop them.
T ST F

35) When my parents argue I worry that one of them will get hurt.
T ST F

36) I feel like I have to take sides when my parents have a disagreement.
T ST F

37) My parents often nag and complain about each other around the house.
T ST F

38) My parents hardly ever yell when they have a disagreement.*
T ST F

39) My parents often get into arguments when I do something wrong.
T ST F

40) My parents have broken or thrown things during an argument.
T ST F
41) After my parents stop arguing, they are friendly toward each other.*

42) When my parents argue I’m afraid they will yell at me too.

43) My parents blame me when they have arguments.

44) My dad wants me to be on his side when he and my mom argue.

45) My parents have pushed or shoved each other during an argument.

46) When my parents argue or disagree there’s nothing I can do to make myself feel better.

47) When my parents argue I worry that they might get divorced.

48) My parents still act mean after they have had an argument.

49) My parents have arguments because they don’t know how to get along.

50) Usually it’s not my fault when my parents have arguments.*

51) When my parents argue they don’t listen to anything I say

*indicates reverse-scored item.
## Project Title:
Marital Beliefs and Expectations

## Investigator(s):
Kelsey Ufholz and Lee J. Dixon, Ph.D. (Faculty Advisor)

## Description of Study:
You will be asked to complete a series of self-report questionnaires addressing interpersonal closeness, friendship intimacy, perceptions of friends’ influence, romantic relationship history, perceptions of arguments between your parents, and beliefs, both your own and your friends, regarding aspects of marriage including romance, conflict resolution, and sexual activity/satisfaction. You will also be asked to submit particular demographic information that may be considered of personal nature, such as race and sexual orientation.

## Adverse Effects and Risks:
No adverse effects are anticipated. However, you will be asked to think about relationship conflict and relationship beliefs and expectations, which may possibly raise negative emotions. If at any time while completing the questionnaires you begin to feel uncomfortable, please discontinue your participation, knowing that doing so will not affect your receiving credit for participating. Students who are experiencing distress are further encouraged to schedule an appointment at the university counseling center at 937.229.3141. There is no charge for counseling services to undergraduates at U.D. Moreover, you may be uniquely identified based off of your responses to the demographic information. If you feel uncomfortable responding to the demographic information, you may discontinue your participation and still receive credit for participating.

## Duration of Study:
The study consists of one session that will take approximately 45 minutes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidentiality of Data:</th>
<th>You will not be asked to place your name on any of the questionnaires, and your responses will be identified with a research code.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact Person:</td>
<td>If you have questions or problems regarding the study, you can contact Kelsey Ufholz (330-217-2271) <a href="mailto:ufholzk1@udayton.edu">ufholzk1@udayton.edu</a>, the faculty advisor, Lee J. Dixon, Ph.D. at (937.229.2160) <a href="mailto:lee.dixon@udayton.edu">lee.dixon@udayton.edu</a>. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the chair of the Research Review and Ethics Committee, Greg C. Elvers at (937.229.2171) <a href="mailto:gelvers1@udayton.edu">gelvers1@udayton.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent to Participate:</td>
<td>I have voluntarily decided to participate in this study. The investigator named above has adequately answered any and all questions I have about this study, the procedures involved, and my participation. I understand that the investigator named above will be available to answer any questions about research procedures throughout this study. I also understand that I may voluntarily terminate my participation in this study at any time and still receive full credit. I also understand that the investigator named above may terminate my participation in this study if s/he feels this to be in my best interest. In addition, I certify that I am 18 (eighteen) years of age or older.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Signature of Student  
Student’s Name (printed)  
Date

Signature of Witness  
Date

Page 2 of 2
Information About the Study

Many factors contribute to a couple’s happiness within their marriage. One of these factors is the sort of beliefs couples have about what marriage should be like. Some of these beliefs are not realistically obtainable and can lead to disappointment, even divorce (Epstein & Eidelson, 1981). Marital beliefs come from a variety of sources. As they date and learn more about romantic relationships, adolescents tend to become more realistic (Carnelly & Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Children’s beliefs about marriage are often influenced by conflict and divorce they witnessed between their parents (Amato, 1996; Cui, Fincham, & Pasley, 2008). Women have been found to be less likely to believe certain marital myths compared with men (Larson, 1988).

It is well known that friends strongly influence each other throughout childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. Friendships often mirror romantic relationships and friends can provide a strong support system for adolescents beginning to enter romantic relationships (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999). Despite these findings, there remains very little research on the way a person’s peers influence their romantic beliefs.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how friends of both genders influence a person’s romantic beliefs. To determine this, you were given questionnaires which measure the following:

- The Relationship Beliefs Inventory: the realism of marital beliefs, both yours and your friends’
- The Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale: closeness with your friends
- Intimate Friendship Scale: thoughts and behaviors towards your friends
- Children’s Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale: your perceptions of arguments between your parents
- The Relationship Assessment Scale: how satisfying your most recent romantic relationship was
- Male and Female Friend Influence: how much your closest friends of both genders influence your romantic beliefs
In addition, you were asked to provide demographic information, and information on your previous and current romantic relationship(s). Because this study concerns both your friends’ beliefs, as well as your own, it is requested that your friends also complete a copy of the Relationship Beliefs Inventory online.

**For more information on these topics please see the following references:**


**Assurance of Privacy:**

Your responses will only be identified by a participant number in the data along with other participant’s numbers. However, you may be uniquely identified by your responses to the demographic information.

**Contact Information:**

If you have questions or problems regarding the study, you can contact Kelsey Ufholz at (330-217-2271) ufholzk1@udayton.edu or the faculty advisor, Lee J. Dixon, Ph.D. at (937.229.2160) lee.dixon@udayton.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the chair of the Research Review and Ethics Committee, Greg C. Elvers, Ph.D. at (937.229.2171) gelvers1@udayton.edu.

Some items from the surveys you completed measured levels of relationship conflict, both between romantic partners (e.g., “How many problems are/were there in your relationship”) and parental figures (e.g., “I get scared when my parents argue”), as well as perceptions of a romantic partner’s sexual satisfaction (e.g., “If I cannot perform well sexually whenever my partner is in the mood, I would consider that I have a problem”). If you endorsed these items (or similar items) you may benefit from receiving counseling. You can schedule an appointment at the university counseling center at 937.229.3141. Counseling services are free for U.D. undergraduates.

**Thanks and Credit**

Thank you for your participation in this study. I will award you one research credit for your participation.
APPENDIX O

REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION (FEMALE FRIEND)

Please give this form to the female friend (who is not a romantic partner) you had in mind while filling out the questionnaires in this study.

Request For Further Participation:

Your friend recently participated in a psychological study examining the effect of peers upon marital beliefs. During this study, they were instructed to guess your opinions on a measure of commonly held marital beliefs. To compare these with your true beliefs, I request that you fill out the same questionnaire online. This can be done on the website Survey Monkey, https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/KV77BYR

During the study no identifying information will be taken other than demographic information. Your data will be organized by the identification number printed at the top of this form.

Participation in this study is voluntary and should take approximately 10 minutes. No credit will be awarded. If you have questions or problems regarding the study, you can contact Kelsey Ufholz (330-217-2271) ufholzk1@udayton.edu, the faculty advisor, Lee J. Dixon, Ph.D. at (937.229.2160) lee.dixon@udayton.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the chair of the Research Review and Ethics Committee, Greg C. Elvers at (937.229.2171) gelvers1@udayton.edu

Thank you and I hope you will choose to participate.
APPENDIX P

REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION (MALE FRIEND)

Please give this form to the male friend (who is not a romantic partner) you had in mind while filling out the questionnaires in this study.

Request For Further Participation:

Your friend recently participated in a psychological study examining the effect of peers upon marital beliefs. During this study, they were instructed to guess your opinions on a measure of commonly held marital beliefs. To compare these with your true beliefs, I request that you fill out the same questionnaire online. This can be done on the website Survey Monkey, https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/KV77BYR

During the study no identifying information will be taken other than demographic information. Your data will be organized by the identification number printed at the top of this form.

Participation in this study is voluntary and should take approximately 10 minutes. No credit will be awarded. If you have questions or problems regarding the study, you can contact Kelsey Ufholz (330-217-2271) ufholzk1@udayton.edu, the faculty advisor, Lee J. Dixon, Ph.D. at (937.229.2160) lee.dixon@udayton.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the chair of the Research Review and Ethics Committee, Greg C. Elvers at (937.229.2171) gelvers1@udayton.edu

Thank you and I hope you will choose to participate.