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Relationships in Emerging Adulthood: Do the Relationships of Friends Who Live with Each Other Differ from Other Friendships in Terms of Relationship Quality and Conflict?

by

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Abstract

This study compared two types of relationships commonly found in emerging adulthood. Thirty emerging adults who had both a roommate with whom they were friends prior to living together as well as one other close friend completed the Network of Relationships Inventory – Social Provisions Version (NRI-SPV). The NRI-SPV assesses levels of relationship quality and conflict by asking respondents to rate questions in these two domains. Results indicated that emerging adults experience significantly higher levels of conflict in their roommate relationship than in their other friendship. In addition, there was a trend for relationship quality to be lower in the roommate relationship. The findings demonstrate the need for further examination and understanding of the potential impact of the friendships during emerging adulthood. Implications and future research steps are discussed.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Introduction

Over the course of a lifetime, individuals form many different relationships, and each of these has an impact on that individual's life. The influence these various relationships have depends on many factors, including the developmental stage of the individuals and the type of relationship. The individual does not always get to choose who they form some of these relationships with, such as those with parents and siblings (Lecce, Pagnin, & Pinto, 2009). In other relationships, the individual chooses their relationship partner, as is the case with friendships and romantic partnerships (Lecce et al., 2009). The influence that relationships have on the individual can be positive or negative, and can affect many aspects of the individual's life. In infancy and early childhood, the main relationships are with the primary caregivers, frequently a parent, and other family members (Shaffer, 2005). Once the individual enters school, peers begin to have an influence. In adolescence and emerging adulthood, friends and peers continue to be important, impacting and influencing the development of the individual (Shaffer, 2005). Within these various relationship types, there are similarities as well as differences, and the role each relationship plays in the individual's life will vary.

The present study looked at one of these particular types of relationship, that of friendship. During adolescence, the influence of friends on adolescents' behaviours and socio-emotional development increases (e.g., Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). Beginning in adolescence, and continuing through adulthood, friendships increase in importance, and provide greater

emotional support (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Patterson, Field, & Pryor, 1993; Nickerson & Nagle, 2005). Bullying and victimization by peers (e.g., Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2000; Nishina & Juvonen, 2005) and negative peer pressure (e.g., Dishion & Dodge, 2005) may have a negative impact on adolescents' functioning, and the support received from more accepting and positive friendships is associated with positive developmental outcomes (Laible, Carol, & Roesch, 2004). Having close friends enhances adolescents' social skills (Collins & Steinberg, 2006). Some have also conceptualized friendships as important developmental contexts for more intimate relationships, and have described friendships as precursors to romantic relationships (Furman, Simon, Shaffer, & Bouchey, 2002).

In this study I investigated whether the friendships of those who live together as roommates differ from friendships where the friends do not live together. When friends live together as roommates, the relationship then has the quality of sharing living space, and this is a quality that is generally found in family relationships, but not typically friendships. Do friends who live together have a different quality of relationship than friends who do not live together? To explore this issue, two questions were examined in this study: 1) Will the level of relationship quality in the roommate relationship be higher than the level found in other friendships, or will it be at a similar level to the support found in other friendships? and 2) Will the level of conflict in the roommate relationship be higher than the level found in other friendships? Having intimate, emotionally close friendships in adolescence and early adulthood can provide important

developmental opportunities, such as creating a safe and secure environment to explore and validate their identities (Call & Mortimer, 2001; Elliott & Feldman, 1990; Sullivan, 1953). Additionally, having high quality friendships and other supportive relationships as an adult enhances both physical and mental health, including self-esteem (Uchino, Uno, & Holt-Lunstad, 1999). Given the important role friendships and relationships play in emerging adulthood, it is important to learn what impact living with a friend may have on the quality of the friendship and on the amount of conflict found in the relationship.

Literature Review

Emerging Adulthood

The late teens and early adulthood, from the ages of 18-25, have become defined as the developmental period known as emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). For many people in industrialized countries, this is a period of much change and importance. In the past several decades, the average age of marriage has shifted from the early to the mid- or late twenties, and this has led to the transition from adolescence to adulthood becoming a distinct period in the course of life (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood is increasingly being recognized as an important developmental period (e.g., Dornbusch, 2000). During this stage of life, many young people are leaving home to attend university, or work, and with this, the role that their family and friends play in their life changes.

Friendship

The word *friend* can mean many different things to people, particularly depending on an individual's age, gender, and stage of life. Despite these

differences, there are many characteristics that remain consistent across the life span. For instance, most evidence suggests that it is important to have high quality friendships, and that social support received from friends is important throughout the life course (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). Additionally, conflict is part of all close relationships, and friendships are no exception (Bradbury, Cohan, & Karney, 1998). Through friendships, individuals learn how to get along and how to resolve problems. Friendships have many benefits, and are developmental resources at all ages (Hartup & Stevens, 1997).

Definition. Friendship has been defined several ways in the literature, but the following definition covers the many aspects of friendship. According to Hays (1988, p.395), friendship is a "voluntary interdependence between two persons over time, that is intended to facilitate socio-emotional goals of the participants, and may involve varying types and degrees of companionship, intimacy, affection, and mutual assistance". Other researchers have suggested that sharing similar interests, values, and opinions may be important for forming a foundation in a friendship (Gore, Cross, & Morris, 2006). A definition that encompasses both of these ideas, which is written in more simple language, is that "a friend is someone who you enjoy doing things together with, count on to support you when you need it, provide support when he/she needs it, talk about your everyday life, problems, concerns, ideas, and intimate thoughts" (Demir, Ozedmir, & Weitekamp, 2007, p. 250).

Characteristics of friendships. At a structural level relationships – and friendships – can be thought of as either horizontal or vertical. Friendships are

horizontal relationships, where the partners choose each other, are similar, and give equal contributions to the relationship. Not all relationships are horizontal though; some family relationships are vertical, with the relationships being forced, and each partner having different status in the relationship (Lecce et al. 2009). Friends are involved with each other because they have chosen to be involved, and they do not want to lose the relationship. Friends are similar to each other, and tend to share the idea they have of the relationship.

Self-disclosure is an important part of friendship. Hays defines self-disclosure as the process by which we come to know others, and in friendship it generally begins at a superficial level and increases as friendship becomes closer and more meaningful (Hays, 1985). There are two important elements of self-disclosure that are necessary for friendship development. First, the **quantity** of disclosure is important. In order to have the most stable friendship development, disclosure should be gradual, as revealing too much can create discomfort and result in the friendship deteriorating rather than in increased closeness. Second, **reciprocity** in disclosure is necessary, as when both parties share in disclosure, a trusting and equitable friendship is more likely to develop (Karbo, 2006).

Friendships are also an important source of happiness (Myers, 2000; Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000). Research suggests that close relationships contribute to an individual's happiness beyond the influence of the individual's personality (Demir & Weitekamp, 2006). These researchers reported that specifically in emerging adults, the quality of best friendship and conflict were

related to happiness. It has also been shown that satisfaction and closeness with friends is associated with happiness (Lyubomirsky, Tkach & DiMatteo, 2006).

Quality and conflict in friendship. Research has identified two dimensions of friendship: friendship quality and friendship conflict (Demir et al., 2007; Sherman et al., 2006). Friendship quality includes such features as companionship, affection, intimacy, emotional support, and reliable alliance, whereas conflict is often conceptualized as the frequency or amount of conflict in the relationship (Demir et al., 2007). Friendship quality includes such pro-social behaviours as praising each other's successes, disclosing personal thoughts and feelings, helping and sharing with each other, and being loyal to one another (Berndt, 2002). Friendship conflict includes such negative features as conflict itself as well as rivalry and dominance attempts (Berndt, 2002).

Friendship quality. In the friendship literature, there has often been a focus on friendship quality. For instance, studies comparing the quality of friendships found that overall friendship quality varies with the degree of closeness of the friendship (e.g., Mendelson & Kay, 2003) such that best friendships were always higher in quality than close friendships. One study by Demir and colleagues (2007) looked at friendships according to their level of closeness, defined by having the participant rank their three closest friendships. This meant that each participant reported on his or her best friend, first close friend, and second close friend. The researchers found that when compared to other friendships, best friendships were higher in quality, but not always in conflict, than either first or second close friendship. Second close friendships had

higher levels of conflict that either best or first close friendship, which did not differ from each other. These researchers suggested that this difference in the level of conflict might be due to the amount of time an individual spends with each of their friends. They postulated that individuals are more likely to spend more time with closer friends, and thus have more opportunity to experience situations that could lead conflict. Conversely, as they spend less time with friends they are not as close to, they may focus more on the positive experiences and refrain from conflict with these friends. These researchers believed that the more important the relationship the higher the overall quality of the relationship (Demir et al., 2007).

Friendship quality has also been linked to an emerging adult's adjustment to college. Researchers found a significant link from the quality of college student's peer relationships to their adjustment to college, such that better quality relationships were associated with better college adjustment (Fass & Tubman, 2002; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002). Furthermore, it has been found that increased social support over the first two semesters of college predicted improved emotional/personal and social adjustment (Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, & Cribbie, 2007). Swenson, Nordstrom, and Heister (2008) found that receiving greater amounts of social support from friends resulted in positive associations between peer attachment and social, emotional/personal, and academic adjustment among emerging adults. They also found that higher quality, more supportive friendships were associated with better adjustment.

First year college students who reported higher levels of friendship quality had higher academic performance (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005), lower levels of anxiety and depression (Mounts, Valentiner, Anderson, & Boswell, 2006), and showed lower levels of perceived distress (Rodriguez, Mire, Myers, Morris, & Cardoza, 2003). The study by Dennis and colleagues involved participants that were ethnic minority first-generation college students. Participants responded to questions pertaining to the level of social support they received from friends as well as if they felt they were experiencing any lack of support. The results showed that peer resources were significant to the students' adjustment to college, even when motivation, support, and other control variables were included in the model. Mounts and colleagues also looked at the adjustment of college students, but they focused on students who were shy. They found that students who had more parental support in the adjustment to college had higher levels of friendship quality. The students who had higher quality friendships experienced lower levels of loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Another study looking at the support of ethnic minority college students focused specifically on whether family or friends play a greater role (Rodriguez et al., 2003). These researchers found that friends made a slightly larger contribution to well-being than did family. They also found that support from friends, but not family, served as a protective factor against feelings of distrust. Thus, the quality of friendship is an important influence on psychological outcomes during emerging adulthood (Pittman & Richmond, 2008). Conversely, among adolescents, conflict in friendships was associated with more behaviour problems and poor grades (Burk

& Laursen, 2005). Other researchers found that in both high school and college students, higher levels of conflict between friends was linked to poorer adjustment to college (Swenson et al., 2008).

Conflict and anger in friendship. Conflicts within friendships can take on many forms. Friends may have differing opinions about a variety of topics and may therefore argue with each other when discussing these topics. In addition to having and spending time with friends, young adults may also have romantic relationships, and conflict may arise when deciding how much time to spend with their friend versus their partner (Purdy, 2004). Researchers have found that relational transgressions are among the most frequently cited sources of conflict among young adults (Samter & Cupach, 1998). Relational transgressions, which occur when one of the friends violates or breaches any of the expectations of friendship, tend to be distressing to young adults (Lakey, Tardiff, & Drew, 1994), but they unfortunately appear to be inevitable in friendships (Argyle & Henderson, 1984; Kelley & Waldron, 2005).

Conflict is a central feature of close relationships, and conflict resolution skills have been linked to adult relationship satisfaction and quality (Bradbury, Cohan, & Karney, 1998). Thus, conflict behaviors in which both individuals' perspectives are considered appear to be important in maintaining satisfying relationships. In contrast, attempts by either individual to dominate the other and impose their will may be detrimental to the relationship.

Conflict tactics may be learned through experiences with family members as well as friends. In one study, the conflict resolution styles reported by

adolescents in their interactions with parents were associated with the styles they reported using with their romantic partners (Reese-Weber & Bartle-Haring, 1998). Additionally, peer relationships provide individuals with opportunities to learn conflict management, in particular non-coercive strategies (Laursen, 1993). Conflict tactics that adolescents' develop in both their family and peer relationships could carry over into their adult romantic relationships. This may help explain associations that are found between the quality of adolescent interpersonal relationships and adult romantic relationships (Crockett & Randall, 2006).

When conflict occurs within a friendship, it is a source of strain. In fact, conflict with a friend was among the top 10 stressors adolescents reported in their daily lives (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995). This may be because anger and conflicts carry the risk that the friendship may deteriorate or even end (Rose & Asher, 1999; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). As friendships are voluntary relationships that tend to have strong emotional investment, they are vulnerable to disruptions due to angry exchanges (Laursen, Hartup, & Koplas, 1996). Whereas having a supportive friendship may be beneficial for adolescents' adjustment, not having or losing a friend may contribute to their self-esteem declining over a period of a few months (Gauze, Bukowski, Aquan-Assee, & Sippola, 1996) and may lead to an increase in internalizing behaviour as reported by a teacher up to two years later (Hoza, Molina, Bukowski, & Sippola, 1995). As such, the inability to maintain a supportive friendship seems to increase adolescents' susceptibility to the self-doubts and fluctuations in self-esteem that are typical in early adolescence

(Steinberg, 2002).

Although being angry with a friend carries the risk of some negative consequences (Laursen et al., 1996), it also has the potential to develop social and emotional competence for the individuals involved. The friendship may even become more informed if the anger-provoking incident is discussed or managed by the friends.

Whether anger at a close friend is an opportunity for developing social and emotional competence therefore depends in large part on how the angry individual communicates their anger to the friend who made them angry. Research confirms that preadolescents who indicated that they would resolve a conflict with their friend by using non-confrontational means had more best friends and supportive relationships than those who indicated they would use hostile strategies (Rose & Asher, 1999). Asher, Parker, and Walker (1996) thus proposed that learning to manage conflicts with friends without resorting to hostility is one of the social tasks of friendship. Overall, processes of social support and conflict resolution are both integral to the maintenance of friendships (Purdy, 2004).

Gender. There are some gender differences in friendships. These differences include differences in friendship styles, with females being much more supportive and physically affectionate with their friends, as well as being more likely to have a closer network of same-sex friends than males (Diamond & Dube, 2002). Men's friendships tend to be based more around interests and activities they have in common (Fehr, 2004). It has also been found that women

are more communal than men in their same-sex friendships, but are less communal in romantic relationships with opposite sex partners. This shows that for women, same-sex friendships have a unique intimacy (Suh, Moskowitz, Fournier, & Zuroff, 2004). Sherman and colleagues (2006) reported that same gender friendships were rated as higher in quality and lower in conflict than cross gender friendships. Participants in this study who had high quality, low conflict relationships with same gender friends had the highest self-esteem and lowest loneliness scores. These researchers also found that in same gender friendships, having high levels of relationship quality did not offset the risks to the individual's psychological health when in relationships with high levels of conflict. Additionally, in same gender friendships, the benefits of low conflict in the relationship did not offset the risks of low warmth to the individual's well-being. Thus, these researchers suggested that with respect to well-being, the central feature in same gender friendships is the combination of quality and conflict.

Researchers have also discovered that women perceive their friendships to be more interpersonally rewarding and to be more positive relationships in general in their lives than men do (Thomas & Daubman, 2001; Veniegas & Peplau, 1997). Adult females also score higher on friend functions, suggesting that they report more positive feelings for their friends than men do (Mendelson, 1999; Veniegas & Peplau). In adolescence, the construct of interpersonal intimacy, which is defined by closeness, self-disclosure, and the sharing of feelings, is more common in female than male friendships (Kirk, 2002).

Lifespan changes. Friends play a role in many aspects of an individual's life. They can have an impact on social functioning, emotional development, and on the happiness an individual experiences. High quality relationships can enhance an individual's self-esteem and happiness, while conflict in these relationships can have negative outcomes, such as higher levels of loneliness (Hartup & Stevens, 1997; Pittman & Richmond, 2008; Sherman et al., 2006). Friendships and other social relationships can impact an individual's well-being by boosting self-esteem and happiness, and also by providing companionship and support across the life span (Sherman, de Vries, & Lansford, 2000).

Beginning at the age of eleven, children and adolescents tend to rank their same-sex friendships higher in companionship and intimacy than their relationships with either of their parents, their siblings, or their teachers. Once they reach mid-adolescence, same-sex friends are also the first choice for the provision of instrumental aid and nurturance (Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1992).

Additionally, having supportive friendships with achievement-oriented individuals increased adolescents' motivation and achievement in school (Berndt & Keefe, 1995; Mounts & Steinberg, 1995). Both having high quality relationships with friends and receiving social support from friends are related to children's well-being (e.g., Cauce, 1986; van Aken & Asendorpf, 1997). Peer acceptance in elementary school is one of the most powerful predictors of behavior and mental health into adulthood (see Parker & Asher, 1987; Parker, Rubin, Price, & DeRosier, 1995 for reviews).

Also in adolescence, individuals begin to disclose information that may

not have been discussed at all previously, and that they do not discuss with their parents. Within friendships is where adolescents will first disclose their feelings about dating, intimate behavior, and relationships (Kirk, 2002). Research has found that supportive friendships and pro-social peer influences keep adolescents from making poor decisions with regard to academics, sexual behavior, drugs, etc., thus serving as a protective factor during adolescence. Positive friendships may prevent individuals from engaging in risky or negative behavior, and may also set a foundation for healthy relationships in the individual's future (Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990).

As we age, the quantity and quality of friendships change. The quantity of friendships decreases with age, but the quality and closeness of these relationships increase. Adults also tend to have more stable friendships than young people. These stable, intimate friendships may have more influence on behavior and values than less stable, more fleeting ones (Kirk, 2002). Friendships in young adulthood provide companionship (doing things together that arouse enjoyment, amusement, and excitement), help (providing guidance, assistance, information, and advice necessary to meet needs and goals), intimacy (sensitivity to the other's needs and states, providing an accepting context in which personal thoughts and feelings can be openly and honestly expressed, and openly and honestly disclosing personal information about oneself), reliable alliance (being able to count on the continuing availability and loyalty of the friend), self-validation (perceiving the other as reassuring, agreeing, encouraging, listening, and otherwise helping to maintain one's self image as a competent worthwhile

person), and emotional security (comfort and confidence provided by the friend in novel or threatening situations) (Mendelson, 1999).   Researchers have found that friendship satisfaction is related to the fulfillment of all of these functions (Koh, Mendelson, & Rhee, 2003; Mendelson & Aboud, 1999; Mendelson & Kay, 2003).

Social support. Three studies in the 1970's and 1980's sparked people's awareness of social relationships (Berkman & Syme, 1979; House, Robbins, & Metzner, 1982; Shoenbach, Kaplan, Fredman, & Kleinbaum, 1986). Most of the participants were over thirty years old, but the study by Shoenbach and colleagues included respondents as young as fifteen. All three of these studies found that participants who had low social network scores (which were measured in terms of network size and frequency of contact) were twice as likely to have died at the follow-up 9-12 years later as compared to those with high scores. This influence of social relationships was independent of health and disease-related factors.

Recently, one focus of the social support literature has been to conceptualize the basic functions of social relationships that contribute to the effectiveness of social support (Rock & Underwood, 2000). Coping resources, such as friendship social support, can influence how people deal with stress (Purdy, 2004). Reis and Collins (2000) outlined several relationship characteristics that they theorized as being relevant to providing and receiving social support. These include intimacy, trust, acceptance, closeness, companionship, and satisfaction. Researchers are also beginning to acknowledge that there are other properties besides the conventional functions of social support that may have their own positive effects (Cohen, Gottlieb, & Underwood, 2000).

Roommates

Roommate relationships have typically been studied from the perspective of strangers who live together, such as those living in college dormitories (e.g., Kurtz & Sherker, 2003; Markey & Kurtz, 2006). Markey and Kurtz reported that the behaviour of a roommate over time could affect a college student's personal, social, and academic goals. The principle of complementarity says that the behavioural styles of people who interact together tend to complement each other by encouraging individuals to act similar to each other in terms of warmth and opposite to each other in terms of dominance (Markey & Kurtz). In their study of college roommates who had been assigned to live together, they found that over time, as the roommates interacted more, their behavioural styles began to complement each other on both dominance and warmth dimensions. This suggests that as the roommates spent more time together, they altered the way they interacted in such a way as to be more complementary to one another, in order that they would get along better with each other. Having more complementary behavioural styles is likely to promote a closer relationship among the roommates. This also holds true for friendships, as according to the principle of complementarity, increasing levels of acquaintanceship lead to individuals adopting interaction patterns that complement each other. Recently, there have been studies that also included individuals who had requested to live with a roommate in the dorms, suggesting that these individuals had a pre-existing friendship, or at least the expectation of developing a friendship (Gore et al., 2006; Shook & Fazio, 2008).

Gore and colleagues (2006) found that when roommates were assigned to live together, they were more likely to have differences in personality, values, and interests than roommates who select to live together. These researchers suggested that sharing similar interests, values, and opinions may be important for forming a foundation in a friendship, and thus roommates who do not have similarities in these areas would have more difficulty establishing a close relationship.

Impact of Friendship

Friendships are important throughout the life course, and emerging adulthood is certainly no exception. Relationships help to promote the development of autonomy, which is an important developmental task of this age group (Laursen & Bukowski, 1997). These researchers also report that social competence builds on success, such that having successful relationships with friends and family members leads to the individual having other successful relationships in the future.

Psychosocial theory. Peers are central to adolescents' and emerging adults' lives. In his theory of psychosocial development, Erikson states that the major developmental task of the early 20s is to establish close intimate relationships (Erikson, 1963).   He calls the crisis associated with this stage Intimacy versus Isolation, and the task for individuals in this stage of life is to develop a strong identity, as this will make the individual ready for intimacy. Intimacy is regarded as being necessary for deep friendship, being affiliated with groups, and other interpersonal relationships. The major focus of intimacy is on establishing a mature sexual relationship. Erikson believed that one had to have a

clear sense of one's identity before becoming intimate with others. If this stage is resolved successfully, the individual will be able to be intimate with others, whereas poor resolution means the individual will never be able to share themselves with another, which would result in isolation (Bergen, 2008). Thus, during emerging adulthood, it is important for an individual to have friendships, especially high quality ones.

Erikson also speaks of a prolonged adolescence that is typical of industrialized societies, and of how young people in these societies are granted a psychosocial moratorium, which allows the young adult time to experiment with different roles (Erikson, 1968). This fits in very well with the new developmental stage of emerging adulthood, as many individuals in this age group are attaining post secondary education, and putting off some of the roles typically associated with adulthood, such as marriage and children.

Psychosocial theory is useful in conceptualizing the relationships of emerging adults, as it places emphasis on the individual establishing deep friendships. Many emerging adults describe friendships as their most important relationship (Gore et al., 2006), and the fostering these close relationships suggests that these individuals are on their way to resolving the crisis of Intimacy versus Isolation.

Attachment Theory. Bowlby's Theory of Attachment focused on how attachment develops over the first two years of life, primarily between the infant and her parent (Bolwby, 1969). Recently, there has been a lot of research looking at the impact attachment has on relationships over the course of the lifespan. For

instance, studies have shown that there is a link between the quality of attachment in parent-child relationships and both the number of friendships an individual has and the patterns of interaction with peers (Clark & Ladd, 2000; Schneider, Atkinson, & Tardif, 2001).

The attachment patterns an individual experiences manifest in many relationships over the lifespan. The type of attachment an individual develops as a young child tends to turn into particular patterns of relating, and manifest in specific attitudes toward closeness, support seeking, and support provision. These become aspects of the individual's personality, and may be manifested in different kinds of relationships (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2006). Research has shown, for example, that self-reports of attachment anxiety and avoidance are related to specific kinds of interpersonal problems, as measured by the Inventory of Interpersonal Problems (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Cyranowski et al., 2002).

Following this line of reasoning, it has been suggested that the differences in attachment-style observed in romantic relationships are replicated in close friendships. Specifically, secure individuals, as compared with insecure individuals, have more satisfying friendships (e.g., Bippus & Rollin, 2003; Markiewicz, Doyle, & Brendgen, 2001), show more intimate patterns of communication with their friends (e.g., Grabill & Kerns, 2000; Mayseless, Sharabany, & Sagi, 1997), and rely on more constructive strategies for resolving conflicts with friends (e.g., Bippus & Rollin; Creasey, Kershaw, & Boston, 1999). These specific attachment strategies have also been observed in adolescents'

same-sex friendships. Securely attached adolescents engaged in many activities including support seeking and creating opportunities to have fun with their best friends, whereas anxiously attached adolescents had more narrow interactions, and avoidant individuals had a tendency to dismiss the importance of friendships and even to maintain emotional distance from their best friend (Mikulincer & Selinger, 2001).

These types of differences between individuals with varying attachment styles have been found in many different studies. Welch and Houser (2010) found that secure individuals reported higher satisfaction in their relationships and fearful individuals reported less satisfaction in their relationships than other groups. They also found that fearful adults reported less self-disclosure than all other groups. Additionally, secure individuals reported more self-disclosure than preoccupied individuals.

Secure attachment styles have been associated with better social adjustment (Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002) and higher academic competence (Fass & Tubman, 2002). One other study found that individuals who rated themselves as securely attached had significantly better emotional/personal adjustment (Swenson, Nordstrom & Heister, 2008). Another important finding in the area of attachment is that being securely attached to a partner is associated with higher-quality relationships (Markiewicz, Doyle, & Brendgen, 2001). Individuals who are more securely attached expect more acceptance, trust, and support from friends (You & Malley-Morrison, 2000), and report higher levels of intimacy

(Gabrill & Kerns, 2000). Overall, the research on attachment suggests that those who are securely attached experience higher levels of friendship quality.

Attachment theory is useful in conceptualizing the relationships of emerging adults. The experiences children have in their relationships shape their expectations of what relationships are supposed to look like, and also teach them how to behave in a relationship. This then impacts the quality of the relationships they experience later in life.

Rationale

As indicated by in much of the research (e.g., Hartup & Stevens, 1997; Laursen & Bukowski, 1997; Sherman et al. 2006), friendships may influence an individual's psychological well-being. Depending on the type of relationship, and the specific characteristics of these relationships, well-being can be either positively or negatively influenced. Markey and Kurtz (2006) reported that the behaviour of a roommate over time could affect a college student's personal, social, and academic goals. What happens when these two roles converge? When friends become roommates, they must negotiate a change in the roles they are used to, learn to share household chores, as well as negotiate bill payments. Additionally, when friends live together and share space, conflict may arise over the sharing of each other's possessions (Purdy, 2004). These things can add more stress to the relationship, and may perhaps change the characteristics of the friendship. As relationship quality and conflict are central features of friendships, both features were considered in this study. Are relationship quality and conflict levels different between friends who live together and friends who do not? Living

with someone changes the relationship by adding new elements such as sharing space and household chores. Consequently I address two questions in this study with respect to what friendships look like when friends live together as roommates: 1) Will the level of relationship quality in the roommate relationship be higher than the level found in other friendships, or will it be at a similar level to the support found in other friendships? 2) Will the level of conflict in the roommate relationship be higher than the level found in other friendships? Since friendships can potentially have such an impact on an individual's psychological health, it is important to find out what the friendship looks like when it becomes a roommate relationship.

Objective and Hypotheses

Objectives

The objective of the current study was to investigate if levels of quality and conflict in a friendship are different in friends who live together as roommates than in friends who do not live together. The first objective was to see if friends who live together experience similar or different levels of friendship quality than friends who do not live together. The second objective was to see if friends who live together experience higher levels of conflict than friends who live apart. Researchers have suggested that friends who spend more time together have more conflict in their relationship than friends who spend less time together (Demir et al., 2007). It is likely that friends who live together as roommates would spend a lot of time together. There can be many reasons that an individual may decide to live with a roommate, including convenience, financial savings,

and not wanting to live alone. In addition, choosing to live with a friend rather than a stranger may also mean that the individuals want to spend more time with each other. Whatever the reason is, these individuals have chosen to live with a friend rather than be matched with a roommate by some other means. Research has shown that roommates tend to change their behaviour over time in order to get along with each other better (Markey & Kurtz, 2006). When individuals get along well, it is likely they will spend more time together. It has also been shown that spending more time together is linked to experiencing more conflict (Demir et al., 2007). Thus, it is likely that by living together, these individuals will experience the amount of conflict that would be typical with friends who spend a lot of time together, but there is also the additional stress of sharing living space, which will likely add to the conflict in the relationship. These friends will have to negotiate shared chores, the paying of bills, and all of the other aspects of living together that are not part of typical friendships.

Hypotheses

Friendship quality includes such pro-social behaviours such as disclosing personal thoughts and feelings, helping and sharing with each other, and being loyal to one another (Berndt, 2002). Friendship conflict includes such negative features as conflict itself and rivalry (Berndt, 2002). Friendship quality increases with the reported level of closeness of the friends, whereas conflict tends to increase with the amount of time friends spend with each other (Demir et al., 2007).

It was hypothesized that when friends become roommates, the relationship will look different than other friendships (non cohabitating). Specifically, there were two hypotheses related to these friendships. Firstly, it was hypothesized that friends who were also roommates would report higher levels of friendship quality with their roommate than they did with the friend they do not live with. The second hypothesis was that friends who live together would report higher levels of conflict in that relationship than in their relationships with the friend that they did not live with.

Methods

Participants

Thirty emerging adults between the ages of 18 and 25 participated in this study (24 females, 6 males, $M = 22.3$) . Participants were required to have a roommate who was a friend before they began living together as well as another close friend. If participants had more than one close friend, they were instructed to respond with respect to the friend they considered to be their best friend. Of the 45 people who agreed to participate, 15 were excluded from the sample. Eleven of these individuals logged in to the survey, gave their consent, but did not answer a single item on the questionnaire; two did not respond to enough of the items to produce valid scores; one was over 25; and one did not know her roommate prior to moving in together. There was insufficient information provided by these respondents to determine if they differed from the participants included in the study in any significant way.

Procedures

After ethics approval was received, participants were recruited through postings on bulletin boards on the university campus; through email, such as the educational psychology listserv; and through postings on various Internet sites, such as Facebook. Each participant answered the same questions about each of the two target relationships. Participants filled out the questionnaires online on psychdata.com. Prior to providing demographic data and responding the questionnaire items, participants were required to give informed consent. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed that data would be kept confidential.

Measures

The Network of Relationships Inventory – Social Provisions Version (NRI-SPV; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985), was used to assess relationship quality and conflict. The NRI-SPV includes ten scales with three items per scale. In this instrument, relationship quality is referred to as social support. The NRI-SPV assesses seven support features, two negative interaction features, and one measure of power in the relationship. The seven support features are Companionship, Intimate Disclosure, Instrumental Aid, Nurturance, Reassurance of Worth, Reliable Alliance, and Affection. Sample items include "How often do you play around and have fun with this person?" and "How often do you tell this person things that you don't want others to know?" Each question is answered by using a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (little or none) to 5 (the most). The two negative characteristic features are Conflict and Antagonism. Sample items include "How often do you and this person disagree and quarrel with each

other?" These items are answered on the same 5-point Likert-type scale as the support items. Two second-order factors, Support and Negative Interactions, are computed from these nine scales. The seven support features are averaged to obtain a Support Factor score and the two negative characteristics are averaged to obtain a Negative Interactions Factor score. The tenth scale, Relative Power, does not form part of either second order factor. Higher scores on the Support Factor indicate more positive qualities in a relationship, whereas higher scores on the Negative Interactions Factor indicate more negative qualities in a relationship. Each participant filled out the questionnaire once for each of the target relationships.

With respect to reliability, research has shown good to moderate internal consistency for the overall scale as well as for the subscales (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Demir et al., 2007). As for validity, the scale has been shown to have good construct validity. It has been reported that the scale is sensitive to the developmental changes that are experienced in close relationships from childhood to emerging adulthood, as well as to gender differences, with women scoring higher than men (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985, 1992).

All relationships were rated on the same page, as this method of presentation has been shown to be effective as it forces the individual to make comparisons across their relationships (Demir et al., 2007).

In addition to completing the NRI-SPV, all participants also provided demographic information such as age, gender, and the last three digits of their postal code.

Results

These results include descriptive statistics for the ages of participants, their roommates, and their friends, as well as paired t-tests for the nine scales and the two factor scores that were computed from these scales. Comparisons were made between the participant and the friend he or she lives with (roommate) and between the participant and the friend that they do not live with. Additionally, Univariate analyses were completed to detect any differences due to the gender of the participant.

Quality and Conflict in Friendship

The first research question asked whether friends who live together would experience different levels of relationship quality than friends who do not live together. Specifically, it was posited that friends who lived together as roommates would show higher levels of relationship quality. The second research question was related to the amount of conflict found in the two friendships. This question posited that friends who lived together would experience higher levels of conflict than friends who lived apart.

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the subscales and the factor scores, as well as the *t* scores for the comparisons between the two groups. For each of the two categories of relationship, roommate and friend, the scales of Companionship (COM), Conflict (CON), Instrumental Aid (AID), Antagonism (ANT), Intimate Disclosure (DIS), Nurturance (NUR), Affection (AFF), Reassurance of Worth (WOR), and Reliable Alliance (ALL) are reported. The

two factor scores, Support (SUP) and Negative Interactions (NEG) are also reported.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Summary of Paired Samples T-Tests for Roommate and Friend

	Roommate	Friend	
Scales	*Mean (SD)*	*Mean (SD)*	*t*
Companionship (COM)	3.29 (1.06)	3.58 (0.89)	-1.115
Conflict (CON)	1.68 (0.60)	1.28 (0.51)	3.049**
Instrumental Aid (AID)	2.78 (0.97)	3.01 (0.82)	-1.256
Antagonism (ANT)	1.99 (0.70)	1.41 (0.49)	3.563**
Intimate Disclosure (DIS)	3.06 (1.22)	3.79 (1.04)	-2.688*
Nurturance (NUR)	3.04 (1.25)	3.19 (1.10)	-0.464
Affection (AFF)	3.33 (1.14)	3.72 (1.04)	-1.300
Reassurance of Worth (WOR)	3.16 (0.94)	3.43 (0.80)	-1.288
Relative Power (POW)	2.33 (0.83)	2.12 (0.64)	1.194
Reliable Alliance (ALL)	3.39 (1.19)	4.13 (0.84)	-2.885**
Support (SUP)	3.15 (1.01)	3.55 (0.74)	-1.737
Negative Interactions (NEG)	1.83 (0.63)	1.34 (0.46)	3.458**

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

As seen in Table 1, participants did not report significantly different levels of relationship quality in the two target relationships. Participants did report significantly higher levels of conflict with their roommates than with their friends.

Next, Univariate analyses were completed on the two Factor scores to see if there were any significant gender differences. None of the results of these analyses were significant, suggesting that gender did not have a significant influence on either of the Factors.

Friendship quality. The level of friendship quality in both of the target relationships was measured by the seven support subscales of NRI-SPV. These seven subscales combine to produce a Support factor score. Higher Support scores indicate higher levels of relationship quality experienced by the respondent, such that a score of 1 indicates 'little or none', 3 indicates 'very much', and 5 indicates 'the most'. Support scores were generally high for both of the target relationships, with means of 3.15 for roommates and 3.55 for friends. This suggests that both types of relationship are of a reasonably high quality.

The results did not support the hypothesis that friends who lived together would experience higher levels of friendship quality than friends who did not live together. The reported levels of relationship quality among roommates and friends who did not live together were not significantly different from each other, as shown by the Support Factor ($t = -1.737$, $p = .093$). Two of the seven support features subscales, Intimate Disclosure and Reliable Alliance, did yield significant results, with respondents reporting significantly higher levels of both with their friends, ($t = -2.688$, $p < .05$, and $t = -2.885$, $p < .05$, respectively). These results however, were in the opposite direction to the hypothesis, indicating that respondents experienced higher levels of these features with the friend that they did not live with. Each of the positive support features produced scores that were consistently lower for the roommate relationship. In fact, there was a non-significant trend in the data of all of the support features suggesting that overall relationship quality was higher in the non-cohabitating friends, though none of the

remaining five subscales (Companionship, Instrumental Aid, Nurturance, Affection, and Reassurance of Worth) approached significance.

   Friendship conflict. The second hypothesis was that participants would experience higher levels of conflict in their roommate relationships. Relationship conflict in each of the target relationships was measured by two negative interactions subscales of NRI-SPV. These two subscales were then combined to produce the Negative Interactions factor score. The data does support this hypothesis, with respondents reporting significantly higher levels of conflict in their relationship with their roommate than in their relationship with their friend. This is demonstrated by the Negative Interaction Factor, $t = 3.458$, $p < .01$. In addition, both of the subscales that make up this factor were also significant, with participants experiencing higher levels of Conflict ($t = 3.049$, $p < .01$) and Antagonism ($t = 3.563$, $p < .01$) with their roommates. These scores suggest that there is indeed a difference in the amount of conflict experienced in a friendship when the friends live together as roommates.

<div align="center">

Discussion

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   The objective of this study was to compare friendship quality and conflict in two different types of relationships: friends who live together as roommates and friends who do not live together. The Network of Relationships Inventory – Social Provisions Version (NRI-SPV; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985), was used to measure levels of social support (relationship quality) and negative interactions (conflict) in these two target relationships. Two hypotheses with respect to these relationships were proposed. First, participants would report higher levels of

relationship quality in their roommate relationships. Second, roommate relationships would have higher levels of conflict than other friendships. The following Discussion will review the results of this study as well as relate the results to previous research. Limitations of the current study will be outlined and future directions for research will be suggested.

Friendship Quality

One of the aims of this study was to look at the differences in friendship quality between friends who lived together and friends who did not. Contrary to the hypothesis, friends who lived together as roommates did not have higher levels of relationship quality, or social support, as measured by the NRI-SPV. Though not significant, results actually showed that the trend was for friends that did not live together to have higher levels of social support than friends who did live together. This was particularly true for two of the social support scales, Intimate Disclosure (DIS) and Reliable Alliance (ALL), with participants indicating that they experienced significantly higher levels of these features in their non-roommate friendships. Research has shown that friendship quality varies with the degree of closeness of the friendship, such that the closer the friends, the higher the relationship quality (e.g., Demir et al., 2007; Mendelson & Kay, 2003). This may suggest that participants in this study were closer to the friends they did not live with than with their roommates.

Even though the roommate relationships were not higher in quality than other friendships, the data suggests that they were still high quality relationships, as demonstrated by the average score on the Support Factor. This is important as

previous research shows that having high quality friendships and other relationships can enhance self-esteem and happiness (Hartup & Stevens, 1997; Pittman & Richmond, 2008; Sherman et al., 2006). Participants in this study were more likely to disclose intimate details to their friend rather than to their roommate, suggesting that proximity may not have an impact on the level of closeness of two friends. This may also partially support the idea that the friends may have chosen to live together for reasons other than simply wanting to spend more time together.

Conflict in Friendships

A second aim of this study was to determine if friends who live together experience higher levels of conflict than friends who do not live together. The results indicate that friends who live together do indeed experience higher levels of conflict, which confirms the second hypothesis. The Negative Interactions Factor (NEG) indicated that participants experienced significantly higher levels of conflict in their roommate relationships. In addition, both of the subscales that combine to form this Factor score were significant, also indicating that participants reported more negative features in their roommate relationship. These results support the idea that shared living space, along with the negotiations and responsibilities that go along with this, may increase the level of conflict in the friendship. As conflict can have a negative impact on an individual (Demir & Weitekamp, 2006; Gauze et al. 1996; Hoza et al. 1995), recognizing what relationships have the potential for higher levels of conflict may prove to be an important contribution to research in the area of friendship.

Research has shown that conflict in relationships can also be positive. Conflict can help individuals learn conflict resolution skills (e.g., Bradbury, Cohan, & Karney, 1998; Laursen, 1993; Laursen at al. 1996). As such, more information about they types of conflict experienced as well as how the conflict was resolved is important to determine what specific effects are being experienced.

Implications

The results of this study indicate that respondents experienced lower levels of relationship quality and higher levels of conflict with roommates than with friends that they did not live with. Though the results suggest that individuals who choose to live with friends may experience reasonably high levels of friendship quality with these roommates, they are also likely to experience significant amounts of conflict as well. These results may help to raise awareness as to what impact choosing to live together may have on a friendship. Perhaps coaching individuals in conflict resolution skills may help them to have lower levels of conflict in their living environments, which may in turn have positive impacts on their friendships.

Limitations

The current study builds on literature about roommate relationships by extending beyond strangers living together to looking at friends who choose to live together. This study also provides some insight as to how quality and conflict look in the two different types of friendships studied – friends who live together as roommates and friends who do not live together. Although there are many

strengths of this study, there are also some limitations that should be considered in future research.

This study utilized a relatively small sample size, which may make the results difficult to generalize. Though this may be the case, the results are still meaningful in that they provide information on a relationship that has not been given much attention in the literature up until now – that of friends who choose to live together as roommates. Additionally, there were a smaller number of male respondents, and this would be an area where further research could expand on the current results. The researcher also overlooked some potentially significant demographic variables, such as socioeconomic status and culture, which also limits how generalizable the results may be across populations. In the future, these variables could be included, thus providing further information with which to extend the results.

A limitation that is inherent in survey research is that it depends on the individual's motivation to respond. The researcher has no way of knowing how much thought an individual gave to their responses. There is also no way of measuring what 'very much' or 'extremely much' mean to the different individuals who respond to the survey, which means different individuals may feel the same way about an item, but respond quite differently.

Future Directions

In the future, the research should be extended to include a larger sample, as well as more demographic information from participants. This could

potentially influence the results as well as provide wider generalizability of the results.

As much of the existing literature in this area pertains to the well-being of participants, a measure of overall well-being would be helpful to include. This would allow for stronger comparisons to other research. In the future, it would also be wise to add a third category of relationship, specifically those who do live with individuals that they do not have a prior relationship with. This would again allow for greater comparisons across the literature.

It may also be beneficial to ask participants why they chose to have a roommate, and why they chose this specific friend to live with. This would provide some insight as to the reasons individuals choose to cohabitate with a particular person, which may in turn shed some light on the results. Additionally, a more specific measure of time spent with both the roommate and non-roommate may assist in determining how time spent together relates to both relationship quality and conflict.

Finally, another direction to consider exploring would be to incorporate a longitudinal design. Participants could rate the levels of friendship quality and conflict before living together, while living together, and again once they cease to live with their friend. This would provide a better look at how the relationship changes over time, and more specifically what impact living together has on the friendship.

Conclusion

This study aimed to extend on current research on the impact of friendships during emerging adulthood. Specifically, the current study compared the levels of relationship quality and conflict in two different types of friendships: those who live together and those who do not. Despite the limitations and suggestions for future research detailed above, the study contributes to the field of friendship literature in several ways. The hypothesis suggesting that individuals would experience higher levels of conflict with the friend they lived with was supported. Friends who live together were found to experience significantly higher levels of conflict in their relationship as compared to friends who do not live together.

The hypothesis suggesting that friends who live together would experience higher levels of relationship quality was not supported. Relationship quality did not differ significantly between the two target relationships. One interesting finding was that though these roommate relationships are high in conflict, they are also relatively high in quality. This roommate relationship was lower in quality than the other friendship investigated, with the data showing a trend for respondents to have a lower quality of relationship with their roommates than with their other friend. This supports the idea that though two individuals may choose to live together, sharing living space alone does not necessarily predict a closer relationship.

The current study highlights the importance of different friendships in emerging adults. The quality and conflict inherent in relationships can impact an individual in both positive and negative ways. Friendships play an important role

in the psychological health of individuals. Having high quality relationships can enhance well-being whereas experiencing high levels of conflict can be stressful and harmful to an individual's well-being. The results suggest that living with a friend results in high amounts of conflict. Conflict in young adult relationships can have many negative results, including low grades and poorer adjustment to university. University students who are living in residence are likely already adjusting to many changes in their lives, and experiencing conflict with their roommate will only add to any stress they may be feeling. As such, residences should provide extra support and conflict resolution training to their students.

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APPENDIX A – EMAIL RECRUITMENT

Are you currently living with a roommate with whom you were friends first? Do you also have at least one other close friend? Are you between the ages of 18 and 25?

Research participants are needed for a study looking at the differences in these two different types of friendships in young adulthood. If you answered yes to the questions above, you are invited to participate in a study at the University of Alberta examining these relationships. Participation will take approximately 20 minutes of your time.

If you are interested in participating or would like more information, I can be contacted at mmarlow@ualberta.ca, or follow the link below to go directly to the survey.

https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=147506

Thank you in advance for participation. Your help is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Michelle Marlow
mmarlow@ualberta.ca

APPENDIX B – FACEBOOK RECRUITMENT

Calling anyone between 18 and 25 who lives with a friend and also has at least one other close friend: If you have 20 minutes to spare and would like to take part in my Master's research, please fill out this survey on friendships in young adulthood (link below).

https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=147506

Thanks!
Michelle

APPENDIX C – CONSENT LETTER

Friendships and Roommate Relationships in Young Adulthood Survey

Welcome to the Friendships in Young Adulthood Study!

My name is Michelle Marlow. I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta completing my Master's Degree in School Psychology. Working with the support of Dr. Jacqueline Pei, I am looking for 50 people to complete this survey. Results from this survey will be used for my Master's research.

Purpose:

This study is looking at the characteristics of two different friendships in young adulthood, specifically a close friendship, and roommates who were friends before they began living together. This project aims to add to the research in the area of friendship and explore the differences in these two relationship types.

Participation:

Anyone who is between the ages of 18 and 25 who currently lives with a roommate that was a friend before you began living together as well as at least one other close friend. If you have more than one friend who meets these criteria, please choose your closest friend. The survey will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.

Potential Risks:

There is little to no risk involved in taking part in this study. Your participation in this research is also completely voluntary. This means you may stop this survey at any point without penalty.

Confidentiality:

Only the primary researcher (Michelle Marlow) will have access to your responses and any identifying information, which will be held strictly confidential. As well, any information you provide will not be identifiable in any research activities. This study will use and report group data only.

If you would like a summary of the results of the study please email me at mmarlow@ualberta.ca and a copy will be sent to you when the study is complete. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email me before completing the survey.

Please note that the servers used to store the questionnaires are housed in the U.S., and as such are subject to review and use by the U.S. Federal Authorities under the U.S. Patriot Act.

For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, you may contact the University Of Alberta Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615.

Thank you so much for your time!

Michelle

Michelle Marlow, BA(Hons)
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*1) Survey Consent:
         ⭕ I consent to participate in this survey
         ⭕ I do not wish to participate at this time