2007-07-12

The Development of READY-A (Ready for Adolescents): An Adolescent Premarital Education Inventory

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF READY-A (READY INVENTORY FOR ADOLESCENTS): AN ASSESSMENT OF ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIP COMPETENCE

By

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

Marriage and Family Therapy Program

School of Family Life

Brigham Young University

June 2007

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Lorinda A. Gutierrez in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF READY-A (READY INVENTORY FOR ADOLESCENTS): AN ASSESSMENT OF ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIP COMPETENCE

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Learning about romantic relationships can be one of the central features of adolescence. However, there are not many useful and scholarly tools for adolescents to evaluate themselves and their relationship competence. Such tools can be helpful in the premarital education process. READY is a premarital assessment questionnaire instrument that is used for such purposes but it was designed for use with adults ages 18 and over. In this study READY for Adolescents (READY-A) was developed as a revision and extension of READY with age-appropriate questions to be used with adolescents.

A review of literature on adolescent romantic relationships and factors that affect the adolescent's individual competence in these relationships was completed for this study. Based on the ecosystemic developmental theory and developmental theory of interpersonal competence, characteristics found important to adolescent romantic relationships were grouped into two categories: individual characteristics of the adolescent and contextual factors of the

adolescent's life. Individual characteristics included the sub-factors of relationship cognitions, emotional awareness, rejection sensitivity, personality traits, and sexual conservativism. Contextual factors were deal with the adolescent's family of origin and same sex/best friendships. An item pool previously created for a similar questionnaire (RELATE for Adolescents, Young, 2002) was reviewed, edited, and expanded to be made suitable for the purposes of READY-A. The items were reviewed by a panel of experts (all professors with extensive background in premarital research and members of the RELATE Board) in order to assess face validity and content validity and to omit items deemed inappropriate, repetitive or unnecessary. This process resulted in the creation of a 141-item questionnaire, READY-A. Additional research will need to further validate READY-A, test for reliability, and further refine the questionnaire through pilot testing with a group of adolescents.

READY-A may be helpful to adolescents who are learning about what it takes to develop romantic relationship competence. The main purpose of READY-A is for educational settings; however, it could also be of use to family life educators, premarital counselors or clergy working with adolescents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I finish up this thesis, the final requirement before graduating, I feel much gratitude for those who have helped along the way. First, I will always be grateful to my loving Father in Heaven, who has been gracious enough to allow me such a wonderful learning experience in attending the BYU Marriage and Family Therapy program and having to complete a thesis, both of which have required much self-discipline. The experiences I have had and the relationships that I have developed over the last several years in this program will forever be priceless in my eyes.

My family has also had a huge influence on me, especially my parents, Fernando Gutierrez and Ida Silguero. My father has always believed that this is the field in which I belong. His constant love, encouragement, and words of wisdom have helped me to stick it out when times were hard. My mother has also been a source of great love and support. I will always appreciate her great example and the experiences we shared as we worked on our Masters degrees at the same time! Also thanks to my siblings, Xavier, Shadrach, and Sariah. Their love and support has always been a great source of strength in my life.

Last, but most certainly not least, my thanks goes out to the great individuals who have helped develop this thesis. I will always be grateful to Dr. Robert Stahmann for his constant patience, guidance, and support as I have completed this project. He is a great mentor for whom I will always have a great deal of respect and admiration. Also, much thanks to Dr. Jeffry Larson, Dr. Thomas Holman, and Dr. Dean Busby for their time, efforts, and editing to help make this project theoretically and logically sound.

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Chapter I

Background, Research Problem, and Plan of Thesis

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental period in the course of one's life that sets the stage for many experiences in adulthood. Many "firsts" are experienced in this phase of life, such as living away from home for the first time, getting a job, and forming romantic relationships. Indeed, romantic relationships seem to be one of the most common experiences associated with adolescence in general. Brown, Feiring, & Furman (1999) stated that American popular culture depicts romance as being center stage in adolescent life, confirming that romance is the center of attention for adolescents. Having romantic experiences by the age of 14 or 15 is considered normative (Davies & Windle, 2000; Kuttler & LaGreca, 2004; Collins, 2003). One study reported that the percentage of adolescents who report having a boyfriend or girlfriend is around 34.3 % in 7th grade, increasing to 58.6% in 10th and 11th grade, and shooting up to 72% in 12th grade (Kuttler & LaGreca, 2004).

Adolescents do not usually approach their romantic relationships from the mind set of "This could be the one." This is a good thing, as research has shown that "the relationships between young age at marriage and marital instability are among the strongest and most consistently documented in the research literature" (Larson & Holman, 1994, pg. 230). The U.S. Bureau of the Census (1995) reported specifically that marrying under the age of seventeen makes divorces two to three times more likely for women than for those women that marry after the age of 18. The same likelihood of divorce was found for men marrying under the age of 21.

According to the "State of Our Unions" report, (Whitehead & Popenoe, 2006), adolescents do think that marriage is important and they want to stay married to the same person

for their entire lives. However, only 63% of adolescent females and 57% of adolescent males think it is very likely that they will stay married to the same person for their whole lives. There is an obvious discrepancy in what teenagers want in terms of marriage and family and what they think they can achieve.

Adolescent Relationship Competence

Adolescent romantic relationships are currently being studied more than they were in the past. There are many studies that look at areas of adolescent individual development and contextual factors that affect adolescent romantic relationships. Many studies focus on a particular factor, such as cognition (Furman & Simon, 2006), parent-adolescent relationships (Smetana & Gettman, 2006), or peer relationships (Kuttler & La Greca, 2004). These factors relate to how certain personal attributes, skills or relationship experiences will affect how the adolescent will behave in or handle a romantic relationship, or in other words, the adolescent's level of relationship competence. Though there are many studies on these different factors, there are few research-based assessments and programs that help adolescents understand what affects their current experiences in romantic relationships and that help them to develop more skills to enhance their relationship competence.

Lack of Adolescent Premarital Education Programs

Montgomery & Sorell (1998) noted the lack of educational programs that address adolescent romantic experiences, despite the fact that relationships that emerge during adolescence can be an opportunity for adolescents to talk about interpersonal needs and practice skills and attitudes that can someday lead to better adult romantic relationships. Their study, involving 195 early adolescents (grades 7-9) and 190 middle adolescents (grades 10-12), illustrated that adolescents do want to learn about and understand what they experience in

romantic relationships. "By attending to the salience that intimacy issues have for early and middle adolescents, professionals can seize an opportunity to foster domain-specific skills in … interpersonal intimacy…" (Montgomery & Sorell, 1998, pg. 688).

The research has shown that adolescents need more guidance in their education about marriage and what they can do personally to increase their overall relationship competence. With increased education about relationships in general, more adolescents are likely to have positive experiences in romantic relationships, which will hopefully lead to having better marriages when they are adults.

Purpose of Thesis

The purpose of this study was to provide adolescents and the professionals (i.e. teachers, counselors, clergy, etc) who work with them a conceptual diagram, based on ecosystemic developmental theory and developmental theory of interpersonal competence, for developing relationship competence in adolescence and a questionnaire for assessing the adolescent's personal level of relationship competence. The development of the questionnaire (READY-A) had three sub-goals: 1) The use of such an questionnaire could help high school educators teach about the important factors that relate to relationship competence, 2) The questionnaire could give adolescents useful information about their individual strengths and challenge areas that would contribute to or detract from their individual level of relationship competence, and 3) The questionnaire could help gather data that can contribute to research on adolescent romantic relationships and make it possible to have data from which marital satisfaction in later life can be predicted from information gathered as early as adolescence.

This study builds off of the work of Young (2002), who created an item pool for an assessment for adolescents involved in romantic relationships. Her work was based on RELATE

(RELATtionship Evaluation), a premarital assessment questionnaire designed for seriously dating, engaged or married couples to learn more about themselves, their partner, and their relationship and to engage in dialogue about their strengths and weaknesses (both couple and individual). It is based on research that discloses the premarital factors found to have the strongest impact on later marital stability and quality (See at: www.relate-institute.org).

READY is a 172-item premarital assessment questionnaire, designed after RELATE, intended to help those individuals who are not in committed relationships, but who desire to be in the future, determine their readiness for a relationship (See at: www.relate-institute.org). Individuals taking READY are provided information that enables them to take a more realistic and objective viewpoint of themselves (that is, their personality, values, and strengths and challenges that influence marital readiness). The READY report provides suggestions to help individuals prepare to be in a successful relationship. This type of questionnaire could be suited for premarital education of adolescents.

However, RELATE and READY are not appropriate for use with adolescents, as stated by Young (2002), for at least two reasons. "The first reason for their age specification regards ethical and legal reporting regulations designed to protect children" (Young, 2002, pg. 6). Because these inventories contain questions regarding sensitive and legal issues (i.e. physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and sexual or criminal activity), they are not available to people under the age of 18. "Second, RELATE [and READY were] not designated for use with adolescents because it was created based on research with adults, usually college-aged students, aged 18 and older" (Young, 2002. p.6).

Because the divorce rates for adolescents who marry is so high, it was decided that developing a version of READY for Adolescents (READY-A) would be more appropriate and

beneficial for use with high school students than would RELATE for Adolescents (RELATE-A). It was a concern that adolescents might use the results of an inventory such as RELATE-A to decide whether or not they should get married to someone they are dating, which is not the purpose of marriage education in high school.

Research Design

The research questions that were answered herein are: 1) What areas of adolescent life contribute to relationship competence? and 2) What are the best items to include in READY-A to assess these areas? In order to answer these questions, the following steps were taken:

1) A review of relevant literature on adolescent romantic relationships was completed.
2) A review of the READY assessment was done to see how READY-A could be used in relation to it (i.e. whether READY-A will be a supplement to READY or a separate questionnaire altogether).
3) The item pool for RELATE-A was revised and edited to make it suitable for READY-A.
4) The new item pool was submitted to a panel of experts to assess face validity and content validity of questionnaire items and to omit items deemed inappropriate, repetitive, or unnecessary. This was a preliminary content analysis.
5) The items were organized and prepared into a questionnaire suitable for administering upon the obtaining of permission from the Brigham Young University IRB to do so with high school students.

Outline of the Thesis

The remainder of this study was organized in the following order:

1) explanation of the conceptual diagram created for RELATE-A and the transition to READY-A (Chapter II),
2) explanation of the connection between READY and READY-A (Chapter II),
3) review of literature on adolescent romantic relationships and factors related to relationship competence in adolescence (Chapter II),
4) description of the criteria for item selection from the item pool created for READY-A, modification of those items in need of it, and the development of new items if necessary (Chapter III),
5) explanation of the procedure for content validation (Chapter III),
6) summarization of the findings of the study and feedback from the panel of experts, review of the implications of the study for clinicians and high school educators, limitations to the study, and recommendations for future research (Chapter IV).

The READY-A Inventory is included as Appendix 3 to the study, page 103.

Chapter II

Review of Literature on Adolescent Romantic Relationships

Adolescent Marriage and Beliefs about Marriage

It has been postulated by many that romantic experiences offer many benefits for adolescents (Davies & Windle, 2000; Downey, Bonica, & Rincon, 1999; Zani, 1993; Brown, Feiring, & Furman, 1999; Feiring, 1996; Kuttler & LaGreca, 2004; Collins, 2003). These benefits include higher self-esteem, opportunities to develop a further sense of self, opportunities to test one's ability to relate interpersonally, individuation from family-of-origin, greater social competence, etc. At the same time, early involvement in serious relationships is a sign of maladjustment and can lead to "higher rates of drug use, minor delinquency, and psychological and behavioral problems, as well as lower levels of academic achievement" (Brown, Feiring, & Furman, 1999, pg.5). Several other studies have had similar findings (Davies & Windle, 2000; Kuttler & LaGreca, 2004; Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbrunner, & Collins, 2001).

While it is known that romantic relationships during adolescence have both positive and negative experiences to offer an adolescent, one of the possible results of adolescent romantic relationships is a concern. That is, adolescent marriage. Both adolescent marriage and adolescent childbirth predict marital instability, with adolescent marriage being the stronger predictor (Teti & Lamb, 1989). Yet adolescents continue to marry in the face of such grim chances of marital survival.

In the "State of Our Unions" project report (Whitehead & Popenoe, 2006), teens were asked about their beliefs concerning marriage, family, and monogamy. The results suggested that the great majority of them do want to get married some day and feel that marriage and family life is "extremely important" (82% for females, and 70% for males). However, only 63%

of adolescent females and 57% of adolescent males think it is very likely that they will stay married to the same person for their whole lives. Even more disturbing is the fact that only 32% of high school senior females and 38% of high school senior males stated that they "agreed or mostly agreed that most people will have fuller and happier lives is they choose legal marriage rather than staying single or just living with someone" (Whitehead & Popenoe, 2006).

The Missing Link

Call, Reidel & Hein et al (2002), in an article describing societal trends and their implications for adolescents in the 21st Century, noted that society is changing families in a way that undermines the security found within healthy family life which is essential for healthy identity formation (the main developmental task of adolescence, according to Erikson, 1959). This inevitably affects what adolescents learn about creating a good family life. Some of the noted changes were changes in family structure (i.e. increasing number of women employed outside the home, rise in the numbers of adolescents and children being raise in single-parent, divorced or other family arrangement,etc), which alter the environment that adolescents grow up in (Call, Riedel & Hein et al, 2002). These changes give adolescents the opposite of what they need, which is "families and caring communities that surround, nurture and encourage them to make good choices and act in ways that enhance their healthy development" (Call, Riedel & Hein et al, 2002, pg. 88). Therefore, adolescents end up with constraining beliefs, such as believing that "the presence of a parent in the home during a child's formative years" is not important and that cohabitation is acceptable (Whitehead & Popenoe, 1999), while research states that it is inversely related to marital stability (Larson& Holman, 1994). It would appear, then, that one of the missing links our society is facing is the proper education of adolescents in

the realm of marriage and family relations, which includes how to personally prepare to have a healthy romantic relationship.

Premarital Education of Adolescents

The need for quality preventive marriage education is being recognized more and more (Silliman & Schumm, 1999). Professionals who work with and are knowledgeable about families and marriage have a responsibility, and should feel a duty, to better understand what factors have an influence on marital stability and quality. Their expertise needs to be employed to provide successful family life education and premarital counseling for those who are considering marriage (Larson & Holman, 1994), *especially* if they are adolescents.

As stated by Young (2002), family educators, clergy, and counseling professionals throughout the United States are working hard to promote stable and happy marriages through the education of youth and couples. Some states, such as Florida, are now mandating that in order for high schoolers to graduate, they must take a life skills class which includes the topic of "marriage and relationship-based skills education" (Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act of 1998). Despite the fact that no research has been done to show the outcome of premarital education of adolescents, there is much research to show that premarital education is beneficial to couples who are engaged or are planning to marry someday (Young, 2002; Silliman & Schumm, 1999; Stahmann & Heibert, 1997; Williams, Riley, Risch, & Van Dyke, 1999; Carroll & Doherty, 2003).

It is important to note that premarital education for adolescents is and should be different from premarital education for older, engaged couples. Because many high school students have not yet reached their full capacity for cognitive, emotional, and physical maturity, adolescent premarital programs need to be tailored to their needs and interests. Adolescents want to be

married to the same person for their whole lives. They want to have happy marriages, but they are skeptical about their abilities to do so (Whitehead & Popenoe, 2006). Young (2002) stated the goal of adolescent premarital education well: "Premarital educators should address adolescent concerns and fears of marital dissolution by arming them with relationship skills and knowledge that will decrease the chances of divorce" (pg. 3).

The fact is that early adolescents, comprised of mostly high school students, are not looking at their romantic relationships from the viewpoint of "This could be the one." Most adolescents actually state the opposite—that they are not looking to get married or have families in the near future. In fact, as Young (2002) pointed out, too much commitment actually decreases an adolescent's satisfaction with a romantic relationship (Feiring, 1996; Levesque, 1993; Brown, 1999). Therefore, premarital educators that work with adolescents should not teach the material in such a way that assumes adolescents are evaluating, or encourages them to evaluate, their current relationships as possible marriage material.

What, then, should be included in premarital education for high school students? Because most high schoolers are not ready for or immediately entering marriage, the theme should be on gaining knowledge about marriage, improving or gaining interpersonal skills, defining their own attitudes and beliefs about marriage, learning how to choose a good partner, and other topics that are developmentally appropriate (Stahmann, & Salts, 1993). Roscoe, Diana, & Brooks (1987) stated that educating young people about marriage and family life is likely to "increase adolescent's knowledge of the dating experience, broaden their consideration of numerous aspects of persons who may be deemed desirable partners, better prepare them for interactions with partners and make their dating experiences more rewarding and enjoyable" (pg. 67). These authors are in essence talking about helping them to develop relationship

competence. A better experience in romantic relationships and higher rates of marital stability and quality (when they reach the appropriate age for marriage) should be a long-term goal for the premarital education of adolescents.

Why Premarital Education for Adolescents?

While some may still question the importance of adolescent romantic relationships, researchers are suggesting that adolescence may be the best time to intervene (Call, Reidel, Hein, et al., 2002; Downey, Bonica & Rincon, 1999). Because adolescents are moving towards greater independence, they are starting to try out new identities and new ways of doing things. They begin to "make decisions and develop habits with lifelong implications for their health and well-being. The patterns of behavior begun in adolescence, both health-enhancing and compromising behaviors, carry through to adulthood" (Call, Reidel, Hein, et al., 2002, pg. 72). Dysfunctional patterns from their own families are less likely to be cemented into an adolescent's way of doing things, compared to an adult who never knew relationships could be any different than those he experienced at home (Downey, Bonica & Rincon, 1999). In addition, "early romantic experiences are believed to play a central role in the development of the self and the ability to be intimate with significant others" (Feiring, 1996, pg. 181). The relational patterns (both familial and romantic) learned in adolescence may influence the experience of future romantic relationships, perhaps extending as far into the future as marriage (Brown, Feiring & Furman, 1999; Feiring, 1996).

This leads right to the point that adolescence is also a critical time period for the development of good mental health (Call, Reidel, Hein, et al., 2002). Brown, Feiring, and Furman (1999) stated that "few phenomena have as profound an impact on the young person-both in the immediate and in the long term" (pg. 14) as do romantic relationships in adolescence.

Adolescents who are plagued by bad experiences in romantic relationships will probably not do as well as others in regards to their development of "self" and their ability to attach to and trust others. They may be more likely to develop depression or be involved in delinquent behavior. Much of this pain can be avoided if adolescents are given the opportunity to learn about what is important in a relationship and how to interact in healthy ways with others. The "uniqueness" of adolescence as a "turning point" for behavioral change should be taken advantage of in order to help adolescents be more likely to achieve the happy marriages that they want (Call, Reidel, Hein, et al., 2002).

Premarital Assessment of Adolescents

It has been noted that premarital inventories can be useful for couples as a means of getting feedback on their relationship and a tool to begin much needed discussion about those things that are likely to impact marital stability and quality (Williams, Riley, Risch & Van Dyke, 1999). Young (2002) suggested that one way to improve premarital education of high school students is to use a comprehensive premarital questionnaire, as long as it is tailored to the needs of adolescents. Stahmann & Salts (1993) outlined the basic ways to tailor premarital education to adolescents, namely by focusing on gaining knowledge about marriage, improving or gaining interpersonal skills, defining their own attitudes and beliefs about marriage, learning how to choose a good partner, and other topics that are developmentally appropriate.

Although some researchers have found adolescent romantic relationships to be surprisingly similar to adult romantic relationships (Levesque, 1993), others have pointed out that applying concepts of adult love to adolescent love may completely miss the uniqueness of adolescent romance (Shulman & Kipnis, 2001). The creation of an inventory suited to high school students learning about marriage and family would then be a step in the right direction.

The Need for More Research on Adolescent Romantic Relationships

Many researchers in the area of adolescent romance have noted the lack of research on adolescent romantic relationships (Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Levesque, 1993; Feiring, 1996; Schulman & Scharf, 2000; Collins, 2003; Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbrunner & Collins, 2001; Shulman & Kipnis, 2001), though there are many societal signs that tell us that the research is very much needed. One such sign is the high occurrence of adolescent marriage, divorce, and childbirth. Another reason to get more research is that the environments that adolescents are growing up in are changing over time (Call, Reidel, Hein, et al, 2002). More adolescents are experiencing single-parent families, parental divorce, parental cohabitation, and the coming and going of parents' significant others. This is the opposite of what adolescents actually need: strong family and community associations, which help them to increase resiliency and coping skills and make it more likely that they will choose healthy behaviors. These environmental changes may be likely to affect the opportunities and choices that adolescents have for good health (emotional, physical, and mental) in the future (Call, Reidel, Hein, et al, 2002). Adolescent mental, emotional, and physical health is likely to affect their romantic endeavors in the present and future.

Call, Reidel, Hein, et al. (2002) give several other reasons for us to be concerned about adolescent romantic relationships, again related to their health. While adolescents have been getting physically healthier, there is no evidence that their mental health is improving. Some evidence for this is that suicide is the leading cause of death in the adolescent age group in many nations. Adolescents also jeopardize their health and their future by their patterns of sexual behavior (Call, Reidel, Hein et al, 2002). Romantic relationships relate to all of these areas.

The Function of Adolescent Romantic Relationships

If the argument is being made that adolescent romantic relationships are important, it would be necessary to know what adolescent romantic relationships entail and the function of dating in adolescence. Brown, Feiring & Furman (1999) state that a romantic relationship, in general, usually is composed of a voluntary relationship in which there is an ongoing pattern of interaction, some form of attraction, and in which the people involved acknowledge some kind of connection with each other. There are no set definitions of romantic relationships, or at least any set definition would seem unwise, because there are many variations resulting from individual, developmental, cultural, and historical influences (Brown, Feiring & Furman, 1999).

The functions of dating in adolescence are even more varied than the definitions of romantic relationships. A major task of adolescence is to develop and solidify one's personal identity, and intimacy is thought to be one of the most important experiences for adolescents (Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbrunner & Collins, 2001). Research has noted that dating and romantic relationships appear to be a mechanism for working through matters of identity and individuation and other components of the self (Brown, Feiring & Furman, 1999; Zani, 1993). Some of the purposes or functions of adolescent dating are: recreation, autonomy seeking, status seeking, sexual experimentation, social skills practice, courtship, socialization, mate selection, companionship, intimacy, identity formation, individuation, and positive appraisal of the self (Davies & Windle, 2000; Feiring, 1996; Zani, 1993). Social and communication skills that can be gained through adolescent dating are negotiation, reciprocity, intimacy and disclosure (Davies & Windle, 2000). In fact, Davies & Windle (2000) state that dating patterns may be one of the key components to achieving autonomy from family and closeness to the peer group.

Although adolescent romance appears to be a transitory stage that does not mature until later, "it would be incorrect to assume that adolescent romance is not as serious as young adulthood romantic relationships" (Shulman & Kipnis, 2001). Romantic relationships in adolescence are important because they are the means to start working on some of life's most important tasks and developing skills that are necessary to have a full and happy life. By assuming that adolescent romance is not as important as more mature love relationships, researchers have missed out on the majority of the activity that individuals are involved with during adolescence (Brown, 1999).

Why Adolescent Romantic Relationships have been Ignored in Research

Why has adolescent romance been ignored? Several authors attempt to explain. According to Brown, Feiring, and Furman (1999), there are five reasons, four of which will be briefly stated. They are that 1) adolescent romantic endeavors do not easily fit within the basic premises of dominant theories of social or interpersonal development; 2) adolescent romance at the surface seems too frivolous for serious study; 3) studying adolescent romance would require researchers to fully understand teenage peer culture, which is "notoriously evanescent" (pg. 11); and 4) research on adolescent romance has been eclipsed by research on sexuality (Shulman & Scharf, 2000, agree with this argument).

Collins (2003), in an article explaining the developmental significance of adolescent romantic relationships, supported the notion that adolescent romantic relationships have been ignored because they seem trivial and transitory. He also added a few more myths that have kept researchers away from adolescent romance. These are 1) the idea that adolescent romantic relationships are simply evidence for the influence of other social systems that they are engaged with (i.e. family and peers) and that are more accessible; and 2) the notion that the only reason

romantic experiences should be noticed is that they predict maladaptation of some form. This is not true, as much of the research show that there are both good and bad consequences of adolescent dating (Zani, 1993; Brown, Feiring & Furman, 1999; Feiring, 1996; Davies & Windle, 2000; Kuttler & LaGreca, 2004; Collins, 2003; Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbrunner & Collins, 2001).

Shulman & Kipnis (2001) agree that one of the reasons for the lack of research on adolescent romance is that adolescent relationships are "casual, less intense, and short-lived" (pg. 337). They also stated other reasons. For example, there is not a good conceptualization of adolescent romantic relationships as a result of the lack of interest in or focus on the topic. In addition, they report that some researchers have tried to apply concepts from adult romantic relationships to adolescent romantic relationships. However, "application of these concepts…may not capture the unique nature of adolescence" (pg. 338). It is therefore necessary to develop more research on adolescent romantic relationships themselves so that the "uniqueness" can be discovered, appreciated, and linked to the already known premarital predictors of marital quality and stability.

Young (2002) stated that there were not any studies known to her about which factors in adolescence are able to predict marital quality or stability. I was also unable to find any such research. Given that there is not much to go on for adolescent romantic relationships, it may be a good idea to start with what is already known about marital relationships and then see what connections are similar in adolescence (Furman, Feiring, & Brown, 1999). Much research has already been done in regards to premarital predictors of marital quality and stability for college age students and older. Researchers have been successful in identifying some of the most important predictors for this age group (Larson & Holman, 1994).

The problem, again, is that there is a "uniqueness" about adolescent romantic relationships that would not be taken into account if all research on adolescent romantic relationships was based on studies of adult romantic relationships. Thus, the premarital research that has been done for adults must be looked at with that caution in mind as one begins comparing it to adolescents. As Young (2002) stated, the hypothesis that adolescent romantic relationships do have the same premarital predictors should not be taken as true without being tested. Also mentioned was the likelihood that additional developmental sub-factors (i.e. the development and use of abstract thought) that may not affect adults will indeed impact adolescents since they are still developing cognitively, emotionally, and socially (Young, 2002).

Explanation of the Conceptual Diagram of RELATE-A

In response to the need to develop a questionnaire that addresses the qualitative difference between adolescent romance and the (typically) mature romance of adults who are considering marriage, Young (2002) created an item pool that, after being tested on a sample, would eventually comprise the questionnaire entitled "RELATionship Evaluation for Adolescents" or RELATE-A. One of her purposes in doing so was to help adolescents learn about their personal and relational protective and risk factors that predict high marital quality and stability. A thorough review of literature led to the creation of a conceptual diagram of RELATE-A. This diagram was modeled after the work of Larson & Holman (1994), who did a review of literature of premarital predictors of marital quality and stability for adults.

Young (2002) found that there are three general areas that have an impact on adolescent premarital relationship competence, stability, and satisfaction for adolescents, which is what RELATE-A would be able to predict. These are 1) Individual Characteristics, 2) Couple Dynamics, and 3) Contextual Factors. The Individual Characteristics that comprise this

subsection of her work are cognitive abilities (imaginary audience, personal fable, abstract thinking, and ability to take a third person perspective), emotional abilities (sensitivity and concern for others, seeking interpersonal closeness, and sharing emotional experiences), rejection sensitivity (the expectation of rejection and overreaction when rejection is perceived),

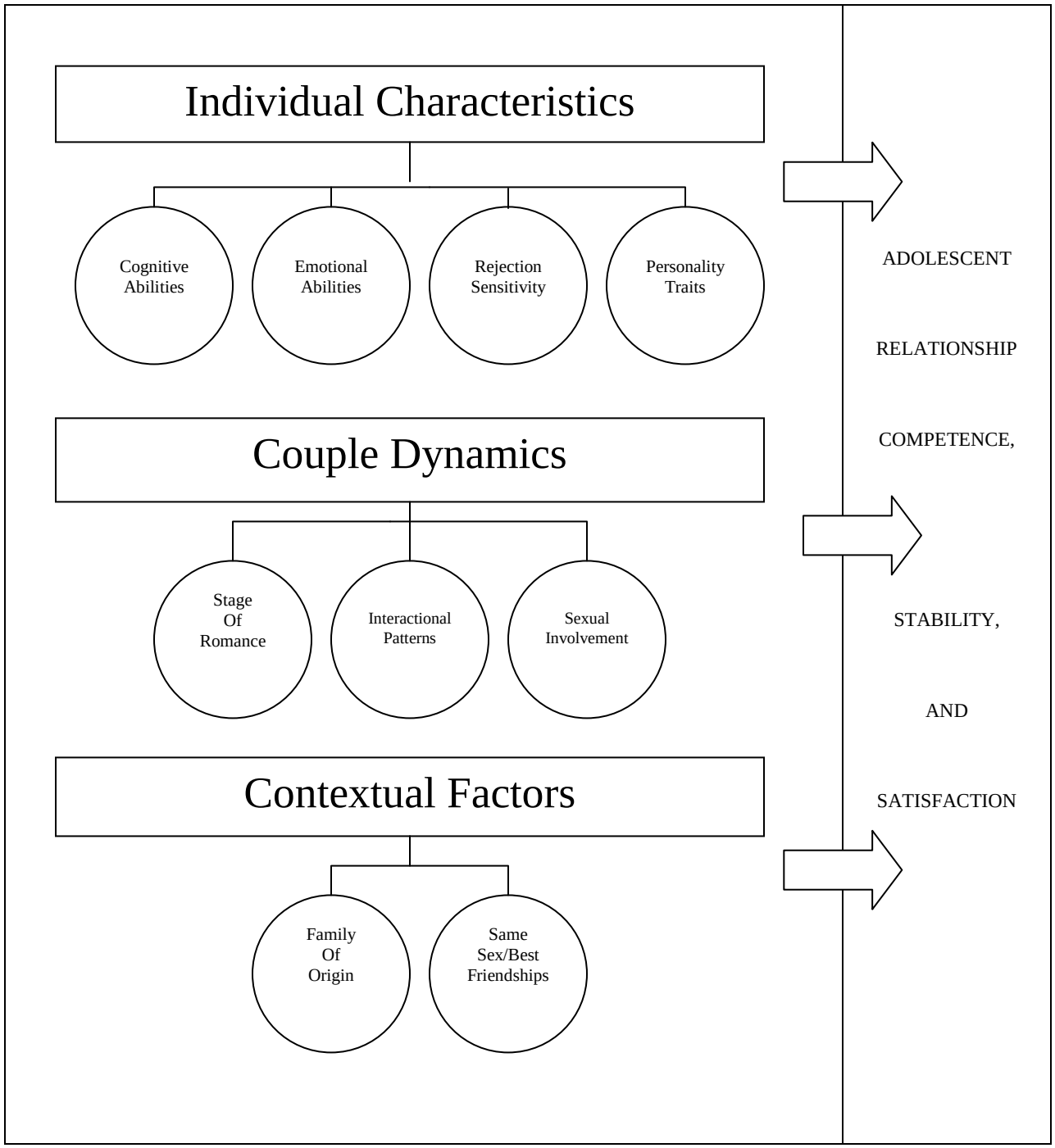


Figure 1. Conceptual Diagram of RELATE-A (Young, 2002)

and personality traits (depression, self-confidence, eroticism, aggression, and nurturance). Phase or stage of romance (interactive level with partner, characteristics important in a date, and advantages and disadvantages for dating), interactional patterns, which she called "relationship quality" in her item pool (jealousy, commitment, communication, emotional support, togetherness, passion, painfulness, specialness, exhilaration, growth, appreciation, tolerance, and relationship satisfaction-all items in this section were taken directly from Levesque's (1993) untitled questionnaire), and sexual involvement (age at first sexual experience, reasons for sexual experience, nature of the sexual relationship, and other questions taken from a section of the Behavioral Systems Questionnaire (BSQ) (Furman & Wehner, unpublished questionnaire)) make up the section on Couple Dynamics. The Contextual Factors that impact adolescent relationship outcomes according to Young's (2002) study are family of origin, restated as "parent-child relationships" in her item pool, and same-sex or best friendships, restated simply as "friendships" in her item pool (attachment, caring, affiliation- the same questions, also taken from the BSQ, were used to measure both parent-child relationships and friendships- and pregnancy/children, written by Young, 2002).

Transition to READY-A

In the process of continuing Young's work, it was decided that, given the statistics on adolescent marriage, childbearing, and divorce, it would be best to change the inventory to be more fitting for all adolescents, whether in a relationship or not. The main motivating factor was the concern that adolescents who scored well on the RELATE-A questionnaire with their partner would somehow get the idea that he or she is ready to get married and can handle married life. READY, as explained earlier, is for those who are not currently in a serious relationship, but who desire to be in the future. Thus, the individual taking READY is allowed a close look at

objective feedback on his or her personal attributes that would detract from or contribute to a healthy marital relationship. The READY-A inventory has the same purpose, except that it gives feedback on attributes the contribute to or detract from relationship competence. A questionnaire to personalize the information that adolescents learn about in their adult roles classes (covering topics of marriage, parenting, communication, etc.) would be a useful and appropriate tool. It is the hope of the researcher that this personalization will make the material covered therein more exciting and useful to the adolescent, giving him or her more reason to pay attention and implement what he or she is taught. Like Young (2002), the current researcher has the goal of helping these young and hopeful individuals learn about ways to develop relationship competence.

This work will be similar to that of Young (2002) in that most of the areas she deemed important to adolescent romantic relationship satisfaction, stability, and competence are important to include in READY-A. Since READY-A is a questionnaire for all adolescents, whether in a relationship or not, the "stage of romance" and "interactional patterns" in the couple dynamics section do not need to be measured. However, because adolescent "sexual involvement" has the potential to have a large impact on the adolescent's life (i.e. adolescent pregnancy), it needs to be included in the questionnaire and has been changed to "sexual conservatism", in order to fit the new conceptual diagram for READY-A (see page 29).

Since Young's review of literature is so recent (2002), the review of literature in this work was done for the purpose of updating with more recent research. It was important to know if the new research agreed with what had been found earlier and if new information had been found that should be considered in the creation of READY-A. A hope of the researcher is to

provide a means whereby some of the obstacles in doing research on adolescents will be able to be overcome so that more research can be done.

I echo Young (2002) in restating that:

> "The following summary of research will focus exclusively on what is known about adolescent dating relationships. It is assumed that difficulties of adolescents and their romances may translate to marital difficulties for them later, but there is no known longitudinal data testing this. The development and use of the [READY-A] questionnaire will facilitate the testing of this assumption" (pg. 10).

Explanation of the READY Questionnaire

READY was developed to aid those individuals who are not currently in a romantic relationship, but who wish to be in the future, identify risk and protective factors that may predict future relationship satisfaction. Those factors will help the individual know what they can work on in order to increase the likelihood of success in future relationships. There are 172 inventory items in READY, which focus on "the four major areas influencing marital satisfaction: personality/values, family and friend support, communication skills, and upbringing/background" (See at: www.relate-institute.org). The READY questionnaire takes about a half hour to complete, and then a report is generated and available for printing.

The READY report includes color bar graphs showing how the individual sees himself in eight areas of personality; reflections on the individual's attitudes towards roles, sex, children, religion, etc.; ideas on how the individual's childhood experiences have shaped his/her current relationship style; identification of personal strengths and challenges influencing the individual's overall relationship readiness; and tips for improving the individual's relationship readiness and preparing oneself for future relationships (www.relate-institute.org). The benefits of taking the

READY questionnaire include gaining insight into oneself and one's relationship style and getting specific information that the individual can use to take a close look at (and perhaps get help for) his or her personal problems, challenges, and concerns relating to relationships.

The four major areas that influence marital satisfaction for adults include personality/values, family and friend support, communication skills, and upbringing/background. The personality characteristics that are measured by READY include kind, sociable, calm, organized, flexible, mature, happy, and esteem. The values section measures attitudes towards marriage, roles, employment, materialism, togetherness, children, and religiosity/spirituality. It also asks the person to choose one of the following as his/her most important value: warm relations with others, self-respect, security, fun-enjoyment-excitement, sense of belonging, being well-respected, self-fulfillment, and sense of accomplishment. In addition, there is a lifestyles factors table, gathering information such as age, drug and alcohol use, sexual preference, etc. The individual's sexual values (i.e. "As long as we're in a committed relationship, sexual intercourse is acceptable before marriage.") are also measured.

For family background, there are several different things that are measured, as well: family quality, parent marriage, relationship with father, relationship with mother, influence of family in the present, autonomy, and family stressors. Additional family background variables are assessed, such as being raised by both parents, one parent because of divorce or death, an adoptive family, etc. The individual is asked to indicate the conflict resolution style that best describes his or her parent's way of handling conflict and his or her own style of conflict.

Communication skills are another important part of being ready to be in a successful romantic relationship. This area measures empathy, love, ability to send clear messages,

soothing of self and others, being non-critical, level of respect for others, tendency to withdraw during arguments, and feeling overwhelmed in conflict.

All of the areas measured that are listed above are combined in READY to form six different profile scales, specifically "Kindness/Flexibility," "Emotional Readiness," "Family Background," "Effective Communication," "Conflict Resolution," and "Religiosity/Spirituality." The Kindness/Flexibility scale combines the scores on the kind and flexible scales. The Emotional Readiness scale combines the scores on happy, calm, mature, and esteem scales. Family quality, parent's marriage, and influence of family scales combine to make up the Family Background scale. The Effective Communication scale combines the scores on empathy and clear sending. Non-critical and respect scales make up the Conflict Resolution scale. And, finally, the Religiosity/Spirituality is calculated using the religiosity/spirituality scale.

Also included in the report is a "Challenge Checklist." This checklist includes factors that have a "proven track record as challenges or risk factors for couples who desire to have lifelong, high quality relationships" (www.relate-institute.org). The factors listed are: age, parents-divorced, parents-negative conflict resolution, violence in family background, personal alcohol use, personal drug use, willingness to cohabit, willingness to have extramarital affairs, personal use of violence in current relationship, personal use of sexual pressure in current relationship, other's use of violence in current relationship, and other's use of sexual pressure in current relationship. READY is included as Appendix 1 to this study on page 96.

How READY-A will be used in relation to READY

There are several areas of READY that would be suitable for use in READY-A. First and foremost, it must be noted that the questions about sexual abuse and violence on READY will be dropped from READY-A because of legal concerns mentioned in Chapter One.

All of the "Personality Characteristics Scales," (kind, sociable, mature, happy, esteem, etc.) were included in READY-A. Of the "Values Scales," relationship readiness was included in READY-A. In addition, the entire section of items on the adolescent's family of origin used on READY-A was taken directly from READY. The majority of the items come from the Family Processes section of READY, which includes an overall evaluation of family processes, parent's marriage, father-child relationship, mother-child relationship, current impact of family on respondent and relationships, autonomy from family of origin, and parent's conflict type. There are also other demographic type questions included in this section, such as questions about how much education each parent completed.

The questions used from READY may need to be reworded in some instances to be made more understandable to the developing adolescent. The justification for including these parts of READY will be made through the review of literature in this chapter (beginning with the next section, "The Need for More Research…").

With the parts of READY that are used READY-A being established, it can be decided that READY-A will be a separate inventory than READY. READY-A will stand as its own assessment since the whole READY questionnaire does not apply to adolescents. There are enough differences between the two inventories to have them be separate, even though some of the same items are used.

Relationship Readiness and Competence

The READY Inventory provides suggestions on a young adult's level of relationship readiness. "Readiness" is an idea that is very closely tied to "relationship competence". Since a purpose of READY-A was to point toward the level of an adolescent's relationship competence, it seemed necessary to clarify what is meant by both of these terms. No studies on adolescent

relationship readiness were found. There were a few studies found on perceived marital readiness among emerging adults and college age students. The definitions stated by each study and the factors found to be important will be briefly reviewed.

Stinnett (1969) did not give an exact definition of relationship readiness. He conceptualized marital readiness as being related to marital competence, which he defined as one's capacity to perform marital roles in such a manner that fulfills the needs of one's partner in the marital relationship. Therefore, success in marriage would be related to one's readiness to carry out those roles. He developed the Readiness for Marital Competence Index (RMCI) in order to assess single individuals' self-perceived degree of readiness to meet the four basic needs that made up relationship competence: love, personal fulfillment, respect, and communication. The factors that he found to be positively related to perceived readiness for marriage were: happiness in the parent-child relationship, democratic authority pattern in the family, individuals with stay at home mothers, being engaged, and a high degree of emotional stability.

Larson (1988) gave a clearer definition of relationship readiness. He stated that perceived readiness for marriage was a subjective evaluation of one's readiness to take on the responsibilities and challenges of marriage. He used a revised version of the RMCI (removing the ten items that were the least correlated with the RMCI total score) to test his hypotheses on marital readiness. He found three variables to be related to marital readiness: gender (with women perceiving themselves more ready), romanticism (with individuals who considered themselves to be highly romantic perceiving themselves more ready), and completion of a marriage preparation course (with those having completed a course one marriage preparation perceiving themselves more ready).

Holman & Li (1997) developed a theoretical model of marital readiness based on the relationship between premarital factors and perceived readiness for marriage. They used the PREParation for Marriage (PREP-M) Questionnaire (a tool designed to assess premarital relationships) to test their model. The Readiness for Marriage subscale was used to measure the individual's perception of marital readiness. Those factors that were found to be related to readiness for marriage were sociodemographic characteristics, background factors, individual traits, and significant others. Thus, marital readiness seemed to have a large foundation in contextual factors and on the quality of the couple interaction.

Badger (2005) extended the criteria for marital readiness to include those things that emerging adults believe to be necessary and important for being ready for marriage. However, a clear definition of readiness for marriage was not found. She joined in and recruited participants for an ongoing study called "Project R.E.A.D.Y." (Researching Emerging Adults Developmental Years), the focus of which was to "conduct research on the attitudes and behaviors among emerging adults related to the transition to adulthood and the transition to marriage and to develop effective methods of outreach to better educate emerging adults on how their current life decisions influence their later development and marriage relationships" (pg. 31). Those factors found to be most important to the participants were family capacities (the ability to carrying out family roles) and interpersonal competency in relationships (the ability to form and maintain personal relationships).

The studies mentioned above all looked at different aspects of perceived marital readiness. READY -A, however, is not about being ready for marriage, but having relationship competence in adolescence. The idea of competence was drawn from Carroll, Badger, and Yang (2006).Using developmental theories of interpersonal competence; they developed a

multidimensional model of marital competence. This model "integrates multiple factors from both the intrapersonal and interpersonal domains of human development and facilitates the linking of family background, individual and couple factors in the investigation of marital success or failure" (Carroll, Badger & Yang, 2006, pg. 1002). Developmental perspectives of interpersonal competence state that there are two forms of development. First, there is chronological development. This type of development deals with stages that are set and expected, such as moving from childhood to adolescence. The second type is "intrapersonal and interpersonal competence evidenced in how one deals with oneself and interacts with others" (Carroll, Badger & Yang, 2006, pg. 1008). This type of development is "maturational" and is unpredictable, based on "how well an individual moves through life" (Carroll, Badger & Yang, 2006, pg. 1008). Developmental competence theory holds that personality development takes place largely within the family, where socialization is the means of developing competence. In their model, marital competence is made up of two primary domains: interpersonal competence, dealing with one's "ability to effectively communicate and negotiate within a premarital or marital relationship", and intrapersonal competence, dealing with "personal security, or the ability to love self" and "other-centeredness, or the ability to love others" (pg. 1009).

Their study used RELATE inventory as their measurement tool. As described earlier, READY was built off of RELATE, and READY-A was built, in part, off of READY. The model contains many of the same factors covered in READY-A. Therefore, the definition they give of marital competence was adapted here to define relationship competence in adolescence. It is easy to see that readiness and competence are both very complex issues that cannot be defined in one definition or explained with one factor.

In this study "relationship competence" was defined as the level of interpersonal competence of the adolescent in relating with family and friends (determined by the self-reported answers on the READY-A questionnaire to the "Contextual Factors" section) and the type of intrapersonal traits affect how the adolescent relates to others (determined by the self-reported answers to the section of READY-A on "Individual Characteristics"). It is believed that enhancing relationship competence will enhance an adolescent's level of readiness for a romantic relationship. Though the terms are so closely related, using the terminology of "relationships competence" rather than "relationship readiness", adolescents can be taught about important relationship skills and values without feeling like they should start looking to be in a serious relationship. These skills can be taught and emphasized for use in all relationships, rather than just romantic relationships.

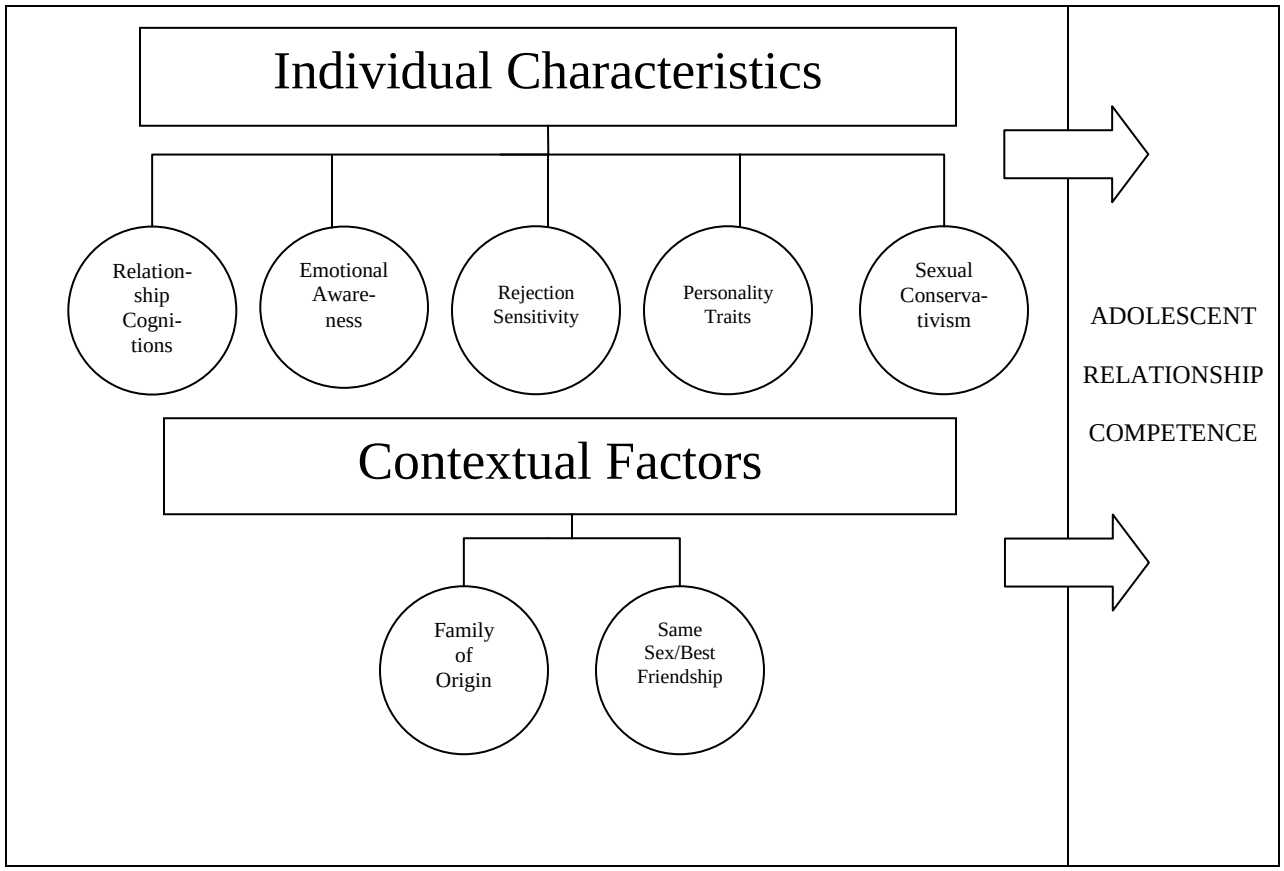
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this model used two types of developmental theories: Ecosystemic developmental theory and developmental theory of interpersonal competence (explained on page 27). Ecosystemic developmental theory, as can be understood from the name, combines the ecosystemic and developmental approaches. Ecosystemic theory sees the life course as an evolving system that changes according to internal and external influences on the system (Holman, 2001). Developmental theory emphasizes the possibility of change. It takes into account the elements of time, change and continuity (Holman, 2001). This is the major theoretical framework through which adolescence is viewed in general.

Putting these together and relating them to adolescent relationship competence, we can say that adolescence is a developmental time period where one's competence in relationships is seen as changing across time depending on both internal and external forces on the individual

adolescent. The changes that take place during adolescence are important in developing competence for romantic relationships. For example, an adolescent's ability to see from a third person perspective (covered under the sub-section of "relationship cognitions") will affect how well he or she is able to empathize, which is an important skill in romantic relationships. Another example would be the adolescent's developing the ability to deal with strong emotions effectively. This is also critical in romantic relationships. Application of this theory is based on the idea that adolescence is a great time to start teaching relationship competence because adolescents are developing the ability to learn from previous experience, thus, having an opportunity to modify their level of relationship competence.

Figure 2: Conceptual Diagram of READY-A



Developmental theory of interpersonal competence is also relevant to READY-A. Both types of development, chronological (in this case, adolescence) and interpersonal and intrapersonal competence, are taken into account in this study. The previous life experiences one has had up to adolescence and the experiences in adolescence will affect relationship competence in the future. In terms of chronological development, READY-A emphasizes that certain skills (such as managing one's emotions) continue to develop across time. Adolescents are not expected to be perfect at them but can increase their relationship competence by increasing knowledge and skill in these areas. Intrapersonal competence is measured in READY-A by the sub-factors under "Individual Characteristics". Interpersonal competence is measured by sub-factors under "Contextual Factors."

Individual Characteristics and Adolescent Romantic Relationships

The first area to be explored in the assessment of adolescent relationship competence is the individuality of each partner, including his or her personal characteristic and maturity (Young, 2002). The same areas that were identified by Young (2002) will be reviewed. The first point made was that one of the best predictors of marital dissatisfaction and divorce is young age at the time of marriage (Young, 2002; Cate & Lloyd, 1992; Holman, 2001). Most adolescents are not at the level of maturity that a healthy marriage requires. Therefore, those who are most likely to divorce are teenagers, and this usually happens quickly (within the first five years of marriage) (Cate & Lloyd, 1992; Young, 2002). Young (2002) pointed to the National Marriage Project (Whitehead & Popenoe, 1999) as making the logical connection between readiness for marriage and age at marriage. It shows that "the chances for marital stability and happiness in marriage increase and level off by delaying marriage from the teenage years until at least the early 20's" (Young, 2002, pg. 11). The recent trend towards delaying

marriage to a later age (mid to late twenties) has been statistically linked to the recent decline in divorce rates (from 60% to 45%).

What is it that adolescents are not yet able to do which makes them so much less likely to survive in marriage? Younger adolescents (those in this study are defined as being in high school-roughly between the ages of 14 and 18) are still going through major changes in their cognitive, emotional, and social capabilities. The developmental changes that take place during adolescence are necessary for the development and maintenance of healthy intimate relationships in adulthood. Research agrees that older age and the ability to have a deeper relationship are associated with each other (Young, 2002; Brown, 1999; Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Connolly & Goldberg, 1999). The following is a review of specific individual characteristics that correspond with relationship competence, namely relationship cognitions, emotional awareness, rejection sensitivity, personality traits, and sexual conservativism.

Relationship Cognitions and Adolescent Romantic Relationships. Adolescence is a period of newness in the cognitive arena. As adolescent's mature, they develop cognitive abilities that are necessary for the formation and maintenance of an intimate relationship. Young (2002) points out that as a result of these new cognitive skills, adolescents are able to evaluate relationships, despite all of the emotion that goes along with romance. While there are many changes in adolescent's cognitive abilities in general, we will only cover those directly related to relationships, or in other words, "relationship cognitions." Relationship cognitions influence how adolescents understand and think about those relationships in which they are involved. For this work, the specific relationships being evaluated are romantic relationships.

Furman, Simon and Bouchy (2002) stated that adolescence is a particularly interesting time period because of the onset of formal operational thought, which allows adolescents to gain

personal insight and to reflect. Piaget (1972) believed that formal operational thought is completely achieved between the approximate ages of 15-20. Gottman & Mettetal (1986) outline four categories of formal operational thought: thinking about possibilities, thinking about hypotheses, thinking ahead, and thinking about the process of thinking. The ability to think in these manners will increase an adolescent's ability to compare their experiences to another's experience in romantic relationships. Thus, some of the destructive patterns or cycles that adolescents may have grown up with and may think are normal, can be broken if adolescents are educated otherwise (i.e. domestic violence, divorce, etc).

From the types of categories of formal operational thought mentioned above, it is clear that the central feature is abstract thought. Abstract thinking helps adolescents to reevaluate and update their views about romantic relationships (Young, 2002). These views are only useful when they are open to being updated when experience proves a certain idea to be false (Furman & Simon, 1999). Whereas children are thought to need concrete experiences in order to change views of relationships, adolescents become more able to use abstract thought to do the same (Furman & Simon, 1999). Abstract thinking enables the adolescent to "compare several complex mental representations simultaneously" and to "contemplate their own internal worlds of thoughts and feelings and compare them with those of others" (Furman & Simon, 1999, pg. 87).

Because adolescents are at a point where they can begin to do this, it is important that we give them the opportunity to do so and show them the importance of evaluating a relationship on the basis of the things that research shows "really matter." This is another reason why adolescence may be the perfect time to begin premarital education. They are at a point where they can hear and make use of information that could lead to happier marriages in future! To

illustrate this point, Montgomery & Sorell (1998) did a study involving 195 early adolescents (grades 7-9) and 190 middle adolescence (grades 10-12), investigating their dating experience and their experiences of being "in love". One of the findings of this study showed that "both boys and girls indicate later ages for their first experience of being in love with every additional year of age", which "offers evidence that with additional life experience, adolescents revise and narrow their prototypical conception of what it means to be "in love" (pg. 685).

The importance of the cognitive skills gained in normal adolescent development cannot be underestimated for romantic relationships. These cognitive advances make it possible to maintain such a relationship. The necessity of these developments is easier understood in the context of the "relational views" of the adolescent. Furman & Simon (1999) speak of relational views as representations of relationships, similar to schemas, scripts, prototypes and working models. These representations are thought to direct a person's behavior and serve as a basis for predicting and interpreting other's behavior. Much of the changes that occur in adolescent thinking affect these views (Furman & Simon, 1999), which in turn affect the adolescent's lived experience in a romantic relationship. A more recent study (2006) by the same researchers examined how adolescents' and their romantic partners' romantic working models and relational styles were related to their interactions with each other. In this study, 65 couples (dating 6 months or longer) were observed interacting. Their working models assessed in interviews, and relational styles were assessed by self-report questionnaires. The results of the study show that even though these representations or views of romantic relationships are just starting to develop, they still influence or are influenced by romantic interactions. The authors stated that "expectations can lead to responses from others that are consistent with those expectations" (Furman & Simon, 2006, pg. 600). The working models were predictive of behavior, partner's

behavior and dyadic behavior. However, there were fewer links between relational style and observed behavior.

The changes in relationship cognitions that will be discussed are adolescent egocentrism (including imaginary audience and personal fable), abstract thinking, perspective taking, and dealing with positive and negative traits of others.

One of the key features of the adolescent time period is that of adolescent egocentrism, or the idea that adolescents become very self-conscious and believe that other people pay just as much attention to their lives as they themselves do. In other words, adolescents have a tendency to see themselves as the center of their world-and everyone else's. Elkind (1976) stated that there are certain types of thinking that make up adolescent egocentrism. These are imaginary audience and personal fable.

"Imaginary audience" is the first example of adolescent thinking covered by Young (2002) that affects romantic relationships. Applied to romantic relationships, imaginary audience is the unrealistic idea that "real or potential romantic partners are as concerned with their behavior and appearance as they are themselves" (Furman & Simon, 1999). A teenager who believes this will falsely assume that their partner notices every small thing about what they say, do, or wear, and may thus become so preoccupied with having the right image that he/she is unable to pay attention to the partner. Thus, the relationship becomes more a means of managing one's image (Brown, 1999; Furman & Simon, 1999). This would surely impede the potential for intimacy. It may also block one's ability to be who he or she really is, or to even find one's identity if one is over involved in the romantic relationship at too early an age (Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbrunner, & Collins, 2001). Young (2002) noted that in order to have true intimacy, one must be able to be honest, which involves being true to oneself. This may not

happen while one is preoccupied with maintaining a certain image. Imaginary audience, therefore, will have a negative affect on how one views his or her romantic relationships. The degree to which an adolescent still adheres to imaginary audience is related to his or her relationship competence, with a lower level of imaginary audience thinking being indicative of a greater level of competence.

Another area addressed by Young (2002) was the "personal fable", or the thought that "they are so unique that no one, particularly parents and adults, could possibly relate to or understand their experiences and feelings" (pg. 13). Thus, when a young teenager is caught between friends and his family, and chooses to spend time with his friends, he may think in response to his parents anger, "They just doesn't get it. They'll never understand me." This type of thinking is typically outgrown towards the end of adolescence, thanks to the increased ability to think abstractly. As a result, adolescents are able to make links across the different relationships they have, be it with parents, friends, or a significant other (Young, 2002). Rather than claiming that no one understands, an adolescent may begin to wonder if her parents and ex-boyfriends could have a point about her being "obnoxious". Again, this opens the opportunity to halt destructive ways of being and relationship patterns. The adolescent is now able to learn from, and view differently, past relationships, including romantic ones (Young, 2002). Again, a smaller amount of personal fable thinking would be indicative of a higher level of relationship competence.

The ability to take another person's perspective is a new skill developed during adolescence (Furman & Simon, 1999). Inherent in this ability is the ability to have empathy for another, which is known to be a "key ingredient to successful relationships" (Young, 2002, pg. 13). Another course of action for an example mentioned above, relating to one's ability to take a

third person perspective, would have been for the adolescent to understand his parent's frustration with him being gone all the time. He may still choose to spend time with his friends, but would not be mad at his parents for being mad at him. Thus, the adolescent is able to see different possibilities for the motivations behind the actions of others and will be less likely to overreact. This generalizes into the adolescent's romantic relationships, as well. The adolescent's views of relationships will change depending on if he or she is able to have good experiences with empathy and if he or she takes advantage of the opportunity to practice looking at a situation from a third-person perspective. The more able and willing an adolescent is to think from another's perspective, the higher the level of relationship competence.

An adolescent's ability to deal with things that are contradictory within themselves (Gottman & Mettetal, 1986) is another area impacting how they think about romantic relationships. For example, an adolescent can learn to appreciate that most people (parents, friends, and romantic partners) have both positive and negative personality traits. They can still hang out with that friend who is funny, but also kind of annoying, and have a good time. In terms of romantic relationships, it is necessary to be able to deal with both positive and negative personality traits since no one is perfect and since every relationship will have its difficulties stemming from personality differences. Being accepting of both the positive and negative traits in others (within certain limits-for example, an adolescent should not be accepting of abuse in any form) increases an adolescent's relationship competence.

There are some potential negatives that arise out of the adolescent's newly developing abilities that should be noted. Furman & Simon (1999), in a book chapter about "cognitive representations of adolescent romantic relationships," state that these cognitive advances make adolescents more likely to make cognitive errors as they try to gain control over the application

of these skills to new situations that are full of emotion, such as romantic endeavors. Adolescents may be more likely to "overpersonalize their experience with real or potential romantic partners", may experience "undifferentiation in romantic relationships" and "overdifferentiation in parental relationships" (Furman & Simon, 1999, pg. 90). Gottman & Mettetal (1986) state that the best way to view this time period is changing across all domains, as adolescents begin to think about things they have never considered before in great detail and usually with a lot of emotion. They also make the important note that this cognitive development happens because of expectations placed on the adolescent to be competent. Adolescents who are allowed to have opportunities to experience romance can reinforce or change their expectations about relationships, gained from increased cognitive ability, with real life experience.

Imaginary audience, personal fable, abstract thinking, perspective taking, and the ability to deal with a person's positive and negative personality traits all affect whether or not an adolescent is developing relationship competence. READY-A measures the overall "relationship cognitions" based on these five features.

Emotional Awareness and Adolescent Romantic Relationships. Intimacy in relationships is in large part dependent on one's emotional development (Young, 2002). An important development in adolescence is learning to integrate logic with emotion (Gottman & Mettetal, 1986), learning how to use both to make better choices. The goal of the fusion of logic and emotion is to be able to "figure out the emotional world of interpersonal relationships" (Gottman & Mettetal, pg. 202). Emotions are essential for adolescents to understand and use to their advantage because, though emotions are not bad by nature, they do have the potential to effect one's decision making and behavior in a negative and powerful way (Larson, Clove & Wood, 1999).

The developmental challenge in terms of emotions deals with "learning to sort out feelings from reality" (Larson, Clove & Wood, 1999, pg. 38). Emotions can be tricky because on one hand they can provide urgent information about our needs, yet on the other hand this urgency needs to be put into perspective against less prominent information that might be overshadowed by the strong emotions (Larson, Clove & Wood, 1999). With this in mind, it would be important to know about how emotions develop and change during adolescence.

Larson, Clove & Wood (1999), in a review of literature, begin by identifying components of emotional reasoning that develop during or just before adolescence. These include the ability to separate emotions from the situations that bring them about, to distinguish between their emotions and those of others, to think about other's intentions and consider them in emotional evaluations, to recognize that two different emotions can occur at the same time, and to figure out complex emotional states, such as bliss or resentment. It is not expected that early adolescents will be able to do these things well, as these things are hard for adults to do sometimes. However, these skills do develop and increase across adolescence.

How do these seemingly individualistic emotional abilities play out in relationships? This question can be answered in the concept of emotional intelligence, defined as a type of social intelligence in which one is able to track the emotions of self and other, to differentiate between different types of emotions, and to use these abilities to direct thoughts and actions (Salovy & Mayer, 1990). Goleman (1995), the author of *Emotional Intelligence*, believed that emotional intelligence was comprised of four main areas: developing emotional self-awareness, managing emotions, reading emotions, and handling relationships. After reviewing the literature on adolescent romantic emotions, the areas of developing emotional self-awareness, managing

emotions and reading emotions in others seem to be the most relevant to the purposes of READY-A, and will thus be conceptualized as being part of overall "emotional awareness."

Developing emotional self-awareness is a process that continues to happen across the life span (Larson, Clove & Wood, 1999). Some of the skills involved are the ability to recognize and name one's emotions, to separate feelings from actions, and to connect the link between thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Adolescents begin to recognize if their choices are being directed through thoughts or emotions, to see the consequences of different choices, and to apply this new knowledge to decisions they face at that stage in life (i.e. drugs, sexual activity, etc). Zani (1993) stated that intimacy is associated with a willingness and ability to process emotional experiences, which leads to greater emotional self-awareness. Emotional maturity is given the opportunity to expand as adolescents seek out chances to be close to another person and to share emotional experiences (Young, 2002; Collins & Sroufe, 1999). These skills begin to set the stage for an adolescent to experience genuine intimacy in relationships.

Managing emotions includes the ability to express, control, and limit emotions when appropriate. One thing that is known to be important in successful relationships is the ability to express emotion, which requires one to understand and handle emotions appropriately. Mutual self-disclosure allows the partners to be OK with the fact that they feel emotions differently and under different circumstances and allows couples to be more aware of themselves (Zani, 1993). Some emotions that adolescents need to learn how to handle are anxiety, anger, sadness, and loneliness. The ability to endure intense emotions, rather than running from them or escaping them, will help adolescents gain emotional maturity (Young, 2002; Collins & Sroufe, 1999).

Reading emotions entails accurately assessing the emotions of others and taking another person's perspective. Emotional maturity is expanded as adolescents develop sensitivity and

concern for the well-being of others (Young, 2002; Collins & Sroufe, 1999). Adolescent's who try to read emotions and understand others are developing their ability to feel and act on empathy. This ability to understand and respect another's emotions is important in developing relationship competence.

One risk worth mentioning, relating to emotional development, is that when adolescents are overwhelmed by the demands of commitment and intimacy at too young of an age, there is a risk of experiencing a "premature crystallization of identity" that limits the "socioemotional growth" of the adolescent (Davies & Windle, 2000, pg. 92). Overinvolvement in dating at age 16 is associated with decreased emotional health (Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbrunner & Collins, 2001). Thus, dating too early may thwart the adolescent's ability to rise to his/her full "emotional stature," or in other words, to gain increasing emotional maturity throughout adolescence.

Relationship competence is increased as adolescents gain greater emotional awareness. READY-A measures how an adolescent's level of emotional awareness through items concerning the development of emotional self-awareness, managing emotions, and reading emotions. The more self-aware, able to manage emotions, and able to read the emotions of others an adolescent is, the higher the level of relationship competence.

Rejection Sensitivity and Adolescent Romantic Relationships. Rejection sensitivity is defined as "anxious expectations of rejection in situations that afford the possibility of rejection by sensitive others" (Downey & Feldman, 1996, pg. 1329). Downey, Bonica & Rincon (1999), in a chapter on rejection sensitivity in adolescents state that "individuals who anxiously or angrily expect, readily perceive, and react intensely to rejection are rejection sensitive" (pg. 149). Rejection sensitivity is based on Bowlby's attachment theory and affects romantic

relationships in the following process: Parents meet a child's needs with rejection, thus the child becomes sensitive to rejection and learns to place high value on avoiding rejection. It becomes very hard to express needs or vulnerabilities to significant others, to the point that it produces anxiety. The anxiety makes the person hypervigilant for signs of rejection so much that even minimal or ambiguous cues are perceived as intentional rejection. Feelings of rejection then prompt both affective and behavioral overreactions (Downy & Feldman, 1996).

The danger of rejection sensitivity is that it leads individuals to behave in ways that weaken their ability to maintain a supportive and satisfying close relationship (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey, Bonica & Rincon, 1999). In a study examining parent-adolescent conflict and late adolescent's attachment anxiety and depressive symptoms as predictors of late adolescent's romantic relationships, Reese-Weber & Marchand (2002) reported that those adolescents who experienced more anxiety resulting from abandonment or rejection would experience fewer positive and more negative conflict resolution behaviors in their romantic relationships. The level of anxiety was found to predict the degree to which people would attribute hurtful intents to their partner's insensitive behavior (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Some of the gender differences for reacting to rejection sensitivity are that men who are sensitive to rejection are more likely to show jealousy and women are more likely to be more hostile and more emotionally unsupportive towards their partner (Downey & Feldman, 1996). In an article summarizing the finding of a series of four studies on how rejection sensitivity undermines relationships, results showed that rejection sensitive people tend to be less satisfied in their relationships and to magnify their partner's level of dissatisfaction with the relationship (Downey & Feldman, 1996).

What about the rejection sensitive adolescent? How would he or she go about initiating and maintaining a romantic relationship? Downey, Bonica & Rincon (1999) state that in order to protect oneself from the "rejection that is expected and feared, the youth may avoid or limit his involvement or investment in romantic relationships…which entails lost opportunities for attaining the sense of being accepted that has been missing from the adolescent's life" (pg. 149). The adolescent also loses the opportunity to fine-tune some of the social skills that make it more likely to experience acceptance, such as those involved in intimacy, sharing, autonomy and self-disclosure (Downey, Bonica & Rincon, 1999). Another strategy that rejection sensitive adolescents may use to enter into a romantic relationship is to try too hard in securing intimacy and unconditional love. Their emotional well-being "may be entirely dependent on how the romantic relationship is going" (Downey, Bonica & Rincon, 1999, pg. 162).

The rejection sensitive adolescent typically displays three identifiable behaviors: a) interpreting insensitive behaviors of their partner as intentional rejection, b) feeling consistently unhappy and insecure in the relationship, and c) conducting him/herself in ways that reduce the partner's satisfaction (Downey, Bonica & Rincon, 1999; Young, 2002). Young (2002) gives the example of the rejection-sensitive adolescent female who, after experiencing typical conflict, responds with hostility, saying hurtful words and letting her temper escalate. Non-rejection-sensitive adolescent females were more satisfied with their relationship after conflict than were rejection-sensitive adolescent females, and rejection-sensitive adolescent females' male partners remained angry for longer time periods after conflict (Young, 2002).

There are several ways that rejection-sensitive older adolescents manage rejection by their partner. The first is by coercing the partner to stay in the relationship (Downey, Bonica & Rincon, 1999). They may use threats or aggression to induce the partner to stay in the

relationship, limit the partner's social contact so as to make the person dependent on them, or threaten to harm themselves. The second means of dealing with rejection is by complying with a demanding partner (Downey, Bonica, and Rincon, 1999). The adolescent in this case may give in to the partner's pressure to engage in sexual intimacy, continue with sexually intimate behaviors in the belief that it will strengthen the partner's commitment, or put up with actions that may compromise the person's safety. They may also engage in harmful behaviors to reach ideal standards of physical attractiveness. The third way to cope with rejection is to internalize the emotional trauma, which is manifested by "symptoms of depression, including social withdrawal, dejection, hopelessness, anger, hostility, or aggression" (Young, 2002, pg. 16).

The most recent study on rejection sensitivity brought out a factor linked with rejection sensitivity and depression, namely self-silencing behaviors (Harper, Dickson & Welsh, 2006). Silencing the self is an idea stating that "individuals whose sense of self is relationally based and who initiate and maintain relationships in self-sacrificing ways are particularly vulnerable to depression. Self-silencing individuals suppress their personal voice and opinions in order to maintain intimate relationships" (pg. 460) Because of the lack of self-expression, the adolescent loses his sense of who he really is. Without this knowledge, he will put up a front of who he believes his partner wants him to be in an effort to increase intimacy. However, this only lessens possibility of having a truly intimate relationship (Harper, Dickson & Welsh, 2006). The data used in this study came from STARR (Study of Tennessee Adolescent Romantic Relationships). 211 adolescents and their romantic partners participated in this particular study, which involved numerous self-report measures and three videotaped conversations. The results of the study indicated that those adolescents who were rejection-sensitive reported using a higher number of

self-silencing behaviors than those who were not sensitive to rejection. Thus, self-silencing is also likely to be part of rejection sensitivity.

Rejection sensitivity may be normal while an adolescent is just beginning to date or in early adolescence because adolescents are working on the tasks of autonomy and identity (Young, 2002). Issues of acceptance by peers and romantic partners are especially significant at this point in time. When the rejection-sensitivity continues into late adolescence, the potential for problems arises. READY-A assesses rejection sensitivity through items that ask him or her to rate how much s/he agrees with statements about whether s/he feels anxious or confident in different interpersonal situations with friends. The higher the level of rejection sensitivity, the lower the level of relationship competence.

Personality Traits and Adolescent Romantic Relationships. One of the most important pieces of the adolescent romantic relationship puzzle is that of personality traits. Research has shown that certain personality traits can aid in predicting whether or not a person is hard to live with (Larson & Holman, 1994), or in some cases, even be around. For example, a person may be inclined to twist relationship events in such a way that agrees with one's point of view or to dramatize negative relationship events. Larson & Holman (1994), in a review of literature, came to four conclusions regarding the role of personality traits in predicting marital satisfaction, one of which is that "There are some fairly stable personality traits and mental health factors that influence marital stability and quality" (pg. 231). Other researchers have stated that the few studies that have been done regarding the quality of adolescent romantic relationships suggest that similar personality traits may influence these relationships as do those of adults (Collins, 2003; Regan & Joshi, 2003). In a small study, designed to answer the question "Do younger individuals possess similar desires with regard to potential mates as do adults?", it was found that

when adolescents were looking for a long-term partner with whom they would make a commitment, the qualities sought after are those that are mental in nature, such as humor and intelligence (Regan & Joshi, 2003). When looking for someone with whom they could have a casual sexual relationship, more external, physical qualities were desired (Regan & Joshi, 2003). Both of these findings are similar to research on adult preferences.

Positive personality traits were found to be one of the most frequently reported likes about one's dating partner in adolescence (Feiring, 1996). Personality traits are also thought to possibly shape the selection of partners and course of relationships (Davies & Windle, 2000). In the developmental perspective, dating is seen as a training ground for adolescents to further develop their personalities and the social skills that go with them. It is important to keep in mind that the context from which the adolescent is coming is that of forming an identity and becoming autonomous (Erickson, 1959).

There was only one study found by both Young (2002) and the author that followed adolescents through marriage (Skolnick, 1981). The results were used to predict what adolescent characteristics correlated with later marital quality. However, one would quickly note that this is a dated research study, the results of which may no longer generalize to today's adolescents. I follow Young (2002) in stating that since it was the only one of it's kind, it's findings will be briefly summarized here (for a more thorough review, see Young, 2002). Skolnick (1981) evaluated the subjects of her study four times ("early adolescence", "later adolescence", "early adulthood" and "later adulthood"), each time measuring six aspects of personality: self-confidence, nurturance or hostility, sexual expression, cognitive ability, conventionality of thought, and aggression. She found that "self-confidence, aggression, and sexual expression in adolescence were each strongly correlated with marital outcomes" (Young, 2002, pg. 18). Those

who were less confident were more likely to either be dissatisfied (men) or divorced (women). Nurturance (rather than aggression) in personality predicted marital satisfaction in that those who were most nurturing were most satisfied and vice versa. The most distinguishing characteristic from adolescence that set apart the divorced and those who stayed married was eroticism in sexual expression. Skolnick (1981) stated that "By early adolescence, the divorced were distinctly more interested in the opposite sex, [and sexually] undercontrolled, eroticizing, talkative, gregarious, self-indulgent, and self-dramatizing" (pg. 287).

Other studies have found similar results. Self-confidence does indeed affect adolescent romantic relationships (Roscoe, Diana & Brooks, 1987; Zani, 1993; Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbrunner & Collins, 2001). Other personality traits, such as being pleasant, cheerful, dependable, honest, and affectionate, were rated by adolescents as having more value than prestige factors (Zani, 1993; Roscoe, Diana & Brooks, 1987). An early transition to sexual activity was found to be associated with those personality types that fit into the insecure attachment category (Collins & Sroufe, 1999).

Another useful area that was spoken of by several researchers was that of emotional health (Collins, 2003; Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbrunner & Collins, 2001). Depression was found to be related to an adolescent's use of conflict resolution strategies, with depressed adolescents using more negative and fewer positive conflict resolution behaviors in their romantic relationships. Depression manifested itself through hostility, irritability, dysphoria, and withdrawn behavior (Reese-Weber & Marchand, 2002).

Larson & Holman (1994) stated that many of the ineffective methods of communication and behavior exchange that recent researchers have noted in dysfunctional couples may be viewed as partially resulting from the personality characteristics of the partner. Though they

were speaking of an older population, it seems logical to assume the same would apply to adolescents. Given the importance of personality traits in forming and maintaining healthy relationships, personality characteristics will be assessed in READY-A. The items in this section will be taken directly from the READY inventory. According to a study by Draper & Holman (2005) to determine if the Big Five personality factors (surgency, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness) could be reliably extracted from the 24 descriptive adjectives and phrases used in RELATE under "Section 1: Personal Characteristics", 23 of the 24 items in RELATE fit well into the Big Five pattern and the seven subcategories in RELATE can be renamed into the five personality factors. As a reminder, the READY inventory items in this section are exactly the same as the RELATE items, except that the person is not asked to rate their partner since READY is not for those in a relationship. Therefore, these items are well founded in research.

Sexual Conservativism and Adolescent Romantic Relationships. Sexuality is a highly researched area of adolescence, to the point that it overshadows romantic relationships in adolescence (Brown, Feiring, Furman, 1999; Feiring, 1996). Sexual experiences during adolescence are considered normative by researchers (Graber, Britto & Brooks-Gunn, 1999; Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Meschke, Zweig, Barber & Eccles, 2000; Shulman & Scharf, 2000) and important by adolescents themselves (Graber, Britto & Brooks-Gunn, 1999). There tends to be a "let sleeping dogs lie" attitude towards adolescent sexuality and a belief that adolescents are sex-crazed (Katchadorian, 1990). However, research states that most (but not all) adolescent sexual experiences occur in the context of a committed relationship (Katchadorian, 1990; Graber, Britto & Brooks-Gunn, 1999; Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Davies & Windle, 2000; Kuttler & LaGreca, 2004; Kaltila-Heino, Kosunen & Rimpela, 2003).

According to The National Center for Health Statistics (1997), 75% of adolescent girls (ages 15-19) who have had intercourse were steady dating their partner. Adolescents report having some sexual experience by the age of 15 (Feiring, 1996; Shulman & Scharf, 2000), with the average age for first sexual intercourse being about 16 years old (Collins & Sroufe, 1999). Adolescence would seem to be the best time to study the development of sexuality because this is when many individuals experience first intercourse (Meschke, Zweig, Barber & Eccles, 2000)

Despite its prevalence, there does not appear to be benefits that result from engaging in sexual intercourse during adolescence. For example, Kaltiala-Heino, Kosunen & Rimpela (2003) report that early sexual activity "more likely reflects problems in adolescent development than successful adolescent passage" (pg. 533). They state that it is associated with both previous and current antisocial behavior and more frequent reports of depression. In fact, in their study, the severity of depression increased with the advances in sexual activities. Meschke, Zweig, Barber & Eccles (2000) stated that adolescent girls engaging in early sexual activity are more likely to have more partners, have sex with high-risk men, and are at greater risk for contracting an STD.

Young (2002) pointed out that "certain circumstances of adolescent sexual involvement may indicate emotional problems in one or both partners" (pg. 25). She supports her argument with the research of Collins & Sroufe (1999), who, in a chapter about capacity for intimate relationships in adolescence, stated that those who engage in early sexual relations are likely to have insecure attachments with their parents or primary caregivers. They stated that one's relationship history, including both caregiver and peer relationships, may be associated with both the likelihood of primary sexual relationships and with the timing of beginning sexual intercourse. Insecure attachments make early sexual experience more likely to happen. Those

with secure attachments are expected to understand that sex has a role in deepening intimacy and are unlikely to be promiscuous or casual in their sexual behaviors (Collins & Sroufe, 1999).

There are certain variables listed in the research that predict the onset of sexual activity in adolescence. One of them is, as previously stated, relationship with primary caregiver or parents (Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Meschke, Zweig, Barber & Eccles, 2000; Katchadorian, 1990). A healthy and loving relationship with parents makes it more likely that adolescents will delay sexual activity. Several studies also noted that the sexual activity of peers has an impact on when adolescents begin to engage in sexual activity (Meschke, Zweig, Barber & Eccles, 2000; Zani, 1993; Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Katchadorian, 1990). The more sexually active the friends are, the more likely the adolescent is to also engage in sexual activity. Puberty also influences the onset of sexual activity, with earlier pubertal developments making it more likely for boys than for girls to engage in it (Katchadorian, 1990; Meschke, Zweig, Barber & Eccles, 2000).

However, cultural and moral constraints may have a stronger pull than pubertal development. Religious affiliation was linked with sexual conservatism or restraint (Katchadorian, 1990). Emotional maladjustment, as described earlier, is linked with being more socially deviant, which also makes it more likely that an adolescent will engage in sexual activity (Katchadorian, 1990, Meschke, Zweig, Barber & Eccles, 2000). Personality factors such as lower intellectual ability and academic achievement, along with a lack of goal setting for education, were also linked to early sexual experience (Katchadorian, 1990). Because adolescents report that sexual intercourse is usually not “premeditated” but rather tends to just happen, it would seem that degree of impulsivity and the ability to delay gratification also play into whether or not they will engage in sexual intercourse (Katchadorian, 1990).

Based on the research stated above, adolescents who have good relationships with their families and who have strong religious beliefs are likely to be sexually conservative rather than sexually promiscuous. These adolescents are also likely to have better emotional health and to feel better about themselves. Thus, the section on "sexual conservatism" should be positively correlated with good family relationships and self-esteem. For the purposes of this study, "sexual conservativism" is defined as having a conservative attitude towards sexuality. For example, someone with a sexually conservative attitude would believe that sex should be reserved for marriage. It is measured by asking how much the adolescent agrees or disagrees with statements about whether or not teenagers are emotionally ready for sex and under what conditions it's OK to be involved in a sexual relationship (i.e. "People should wait until they are married before having sex."). The level of relationship competence should increase with the level of sexual conservativism.

Premarital research on predictors of marital satisfaction for adults states that those who have premarital sex are more likely to get divorced (Larson & Holman, 1994). Adolescents will eventually be there, so they need to understand the consequences of deciding to engage in premarital sexual intercourse. Sex education in schools (or perhaps the lack of good sex education in schools-see Katchadorian, 1990), adolescent divorce and adolescent childbearing rates, and the amount of adolescent premarital sexual intercourse all point to the need for greater education for adolescents in this area. READY-A may be a useful tool to begin having that conversation with adolescents who are learning about marriage and family.

Contextual Factors in Adolescent Romantic Relationships

Adolescents must be understood in terms of their context-their background, or in the case romantic relationships, their history of relationships with others. There is much research stating

that adolescent romantic relationships are related to their relationships with their friends and their families (Reese-Weber & Marchand, 2002; Brown, 1999; Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Shulman & Scharf, 2000; Collins, 2003; Furman, Simon & Bouchey, 2002; Grover & Nangle, 2003; Feiring, 1996; Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson & Collins, 2005). Expectations that adolescents hold for their romantic relationships are often formed by what they see in their families (by their parent's relationship), their friends, and in the media (Young, 2002; Scharf & Mayseless, 2001; Reese-Weber & Kahn, 2005). Because expectations of romantic relationship affect one's experience in romantic relationships, and because these expectations are shaped by family and friend interactions, adolescent familial relationships and friendships need to be assessed in READY-A.

Family of Origin and Adolescent Romantic Relationships. There has been a lot of research in the recent years about how an adolescent's family of origin can affect his or her romantic relationships (Conger, Cui, Bryant & Elder, 2000; Steinburg, Davila & Finchman, 2006; Scharf & Mayseless, 2001). However, we will begin with a review of how the family of origin affects young adults relationships according to premarital research. Larson & Holman (1994) stated that family of origin factors are important in their role of partially determining interpersonal processes. Some of these are related to the family's emotional environment. They stated that the family environment contributes to an adult child's marital stability and happiness. For example, women who ended up divorced were "more likely to have come from tense, less close, and unstable families than women who did not divorce" (pg. 230). Though they found parental divorce to have little predictive power, what did predict lower marital quality was conflict in the family of origin. Expressiveness in the family of origin predicted higher relationship quality (Larson & Holman, 1994). These issues (family environment and conflict) were discussed in research relating to adolescent romantic relationships.

Several researchers agreed that a supportive family environment contributed to an adolescent's ability to maintain intimate relationships (Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Reese-Weber & Marchand, 2002; Zani, 1993; Shulman & Scharf, 2000; Furman, Simon & Bouchey, 2002). Because the home is the first place that children are exposed to in order to learn about relationships, the "rules" that they pick up from watching their parents are those that they tend to follow in their own relationships, even though they are trying to differentiate themselves from their parents. Thus, if these "rules" originate from a healthy and supportive family environment, they will probably be more beneficial to the adolescent as he or she engages in intimate relationships with others.

Collins & Sroufe (1999) conceptualized the relationship between early relationships and the capacity for closeness as having three parts: 1) a positive relationship with caregivers should lead to positive relationships with others, 2) such relationships provide an opportunity to learn reciprocity, and 3) a history of responsive care and being supported in the effort to achieve autonomy enable a child to develop a sense of self-worth and true autonomy. From this sense of self-worth and autonomy are thought to spring behaviors that are likely to influence future partners for the better.

One study that supports this conceptualization was done by Scharf & Mayseless (2001). They studied adolescent males' capacity for romantic intimacy, with best friend, and marital and parental relationships as the possible precursors. Eighty-five male adolescents (ranging from 17-18 years old at time of first assessment) and their parents were interviewed and filled out questionnaires when the adolescents were high school seniors. The researcher's discovered that all of these relational contexts contributed to the capacity for romantic intimacy. Specifically, the marital relationship of the parents of the adolescent affected the parent adolescent

relationship, which then contributed to the social competence of the adolescent. When there was a positive parent-adolescent relationship, the adolescent was more socially competent, which contributed to his or her ability to have intimacy in romantic relationships and to have higher quality friendships. Overall, the higher the quality of relationships in each of these three areas contributed to the adolescent's capacity for intimacy (Scharf & Mayseless, 2001).

The ways that parents relate to teens have been found to influence several aspects of their lives in relation to romantic relationships. It was stated that since adolescents have little experience in romantic relationships, they could be especially dependent on their representations of their parent's relationship for their expectations of their own relationships (Furman, Simon & Bouchey, 2002). Scharf & Mayseless (2001) stated that "parent's intimate behaviors may serve as a model of ways to communicate, express affection, and resolve conflicts with close partners" (pg. 381). Thus, parents provide an example of how to live an affectional relationship (Zani, 1993). Katchadorian (1990) stated that the way parents relate to teens affects that young person's sexual behavior, with those having supportive relationships delaying sexual activity and those experiencing poor communication and lack of support from their parents being more likely to engage in early sexual activity. The timing of involvement in dating is associated with dysfunctional families and peer groups of adolescents (Collins, 2003; Downey, Bonica & Rincon, 1999).

In one study about autonomy and relatedness in African American families, results showed that adolescents growing up in "stably married, two-parent biological family reported later onset of romantic activity, and those who experienced closer relationships with their parents reported more supportive relationships with their romantic partners"(Smetana & Gettman, 2006,

pg. 1350). This study also showed that those who were close to their parents were able to maintain romantic relationships for longer periods of time five years later.

In addition, a study involving 104 undergraduate and graduate students showed that those who feel alienated from their mothers are likely to exhibit more relationally aggressive behaviors in romantic relationships, perhaps because they were unable to learn the skills for creating and maintaining intimacy (Linder, Crick & Collins, 2002). Those whose parents give love conditional to the adolescent fulfilling their expectations may get into a relationship just to please the parents, while those whose parents are neglectful or overly rejecting may give up on ever being accepted by their parents and seek acceptance from a romantic partner (Downey, Bonica & Rincon, 1999).

Several other studies showed the impact of an adolescent's family of origin on his/her romantic relationships. Reese-Weber & Marchand (2002) conducted a study about which family and individual characteristics predicted an adolescent's conflict resolution behaviors. They asserted that "an adolescent who has practiced maladaptive resolution strategies in the home environment may use similar strategies to resolve conflicts outside of the home" (pg. 198). The "Managing Affect and Differences Scale" (MADS) was used to assess late adolescent's perceptions of typical conflict resolution strategies in their mother-adolescent, father-adolescent, and adolescent-romantic partner relationships. They found that those adolescents who had more positive conflict resolution behaviors with their parents also have more positive conflict resolution behaviors in their romantic relationships. Those who had more negative patterns with their parents also had more negative patterns with their romantic partners (Reese-Weber & Marchand, 2002). A more recent study examined familial predictors of sibling and romantic partner conflict resolution (Reese-Weber & Kahn, 2005). This study, though it was done with

late adolescents (college students, N = 272), also supported the notion that those with more positive conflict resolution patterns with parents had more positive conflict resolution patterns with their romantic partners. Conflict resolution strategies of both the parents with each other and the parents and the adolescent will be assessed in READY-A using items taken directly from READY.

Furman, Shulman & Bouchey (2002) stated that "adolescent's views of friendships and romantic relationships were found to be consistently related, as were their views of friendships and parent-adolescent relationships. The links between representations with parents and romantic partners were somewhat inconsistent" (pg. 249). There could be several explanations for this. One option is that the link between parent-adolescent relationships and adolescent romantic relationships is indirect. Parental relationships influence friendships, which then influence romantic relationships. More support for this conceptualization was found in a study by Scharf & Mayseless (2001). In addition, this idea is supported by a study by Conger, Cui, Bryant & Elder (2000), following adolescents from the 7th grade into adulthood, who found that "nurturant-involved parenting" during in adolescence predicted romantic behaviors in early adulthood that were warm, supportive and low in hostility. These behaviors were also positively associated with relationship quality for early adult couples (Conger, Cui, Bryant & Elder, 2000).

Another option, however, is that adolescent's who do not see a link between their relationships with their parents and their relationships with a romantic partner have not developed the cognitive skills necessary to do so.

Parental conflict not only affects the adolescent's conflict style and style of interacting, but it also affects their expectations about marriage, according to one study. Steinburg, Davila, & Finchman (2006) did a study involving adolescent females from two parent intact families

about how the daughter's perception of parental conflict affected whether or not they expected to get a divorce someday. Results showed that "girls who reported more negative perceptions of parental conflict were less comfortable with closeness with their parents, which in turn was associated with expecting unhappiness and divorce in their own marriage" (pg. 344). When these adolescents perceived high levels of interparental conflict, it seems that they are unable to feel close to their parents which, in turn, is associated with pessimistic feelings about their own future relationships. When adolescents don't feel closeness in their family relationships, this sometimes leads them to look elsewhere to find it, and at the same time, not believe that their relationships will work out in the end (Steinburg, Davila, & Finchman, 2006). "Unfortunately, this process may set up a self-fulfilling prophecy: adolescents seek out closeness in maladaptive ways, only to have their pessimistic beliefs confirmed" (Steinburg, Davlia & Finchman, pg. 344).

Brown (1999) stated that the family may play a less central role than that which would be expected because it cannot be assumed that parents are knowledgeable or concerned about their adolescent's romantic endeavors. The parent-child relationship seems to contribute to the child's ability to be close and intimate with others, but friendships may contribute more to the development of other qualities, such as reciprocity and mutual intimacy, that are central to romantic relationships (Shulman & Scharf, 2000). It is nonetheless important to know that parents remain an important source of support for adolescents even as the significance of peers increases (Furman, Simon & Bouchey, 2002).

The aspects of family of origin that READY-A needs to include are the quality of the relationship with parents (including the perceived support from parents), the style of conflict with parents, and the emotional climate of the family in general. Good relationships with parents, positive conflict resolution strategies, and a positive emotional climate in the home lead

to higher levels of relationship competence. The items in this section come directly from READY under the title of "family processes."

Same-Sex/Best Friendships and Adolescent Romantic Relationships. While a child's first experience with relationships, and how love and relationships are played out, is in the home, friendships offer a more egalitarian relationship where the qualities necessary for a romantic relationship can be further developed. As a child nears and enters adolescence, the majority of their interactions tend to switch from family-oriented to peer-oriented (Shulman & Scharf, 2000). Adolescents rely on their peers for advice and support. They tend to work out their identities, goal, and dreams in the context of the peer network (Brown, 1999). The developmental period in which the most growth occurs in a way that facilitates and encourages interpersonal relatedness is during adolescence, and friendships are a "critical venue" for this to take place (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999).

Young (2002) stated that adolescent romantic relationships may be more similar to friendships than to attachment relationships (i.e. with parents) because of adolescent's tendency to be less satisfied with a romantic relationship when it involved higher levels of commitment. Another reason is that romantic relationships and peer relationships share more characteristics than do relationships with parents. For example, adolescents are not able to "pick" their parents, and often do not feel that their parents understand them. Friendships, however, are more equal because friends do get to "pick" each other, allow each other to make their own decisions, and are a big source of support to each other. There is also a shared domain of intimacy and companionship that does not take place in the parental relationships (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999). Mutual sharing and commitment are also a part of this relationship with friends as adolescents get older (Collins & Sroufe, 1999). Collaboration, co-construction, reciprocity, and

symmetrical interchanges are also seen as characteristics shared by friendships and romantic relationships (Furman, Simon & Bouchey, 2002). Young (2002) thus concluded that in order to see how a person will handle a romantic relationship in adolescence, it may be helpful to assess their perceived quality of their friendships.

There is a lot of research to back up that statement. Friends provide adolescent's with the opportunity to meet and interact with romantic interests, to get involved in and recover from those relationships, and to learn from the experience of romantic relationships (Brown, 1999; Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Furman & Simon, 1999; Zani, 1993; Grover & Nangle, 2003; Feiring, 1996; Kuttler & LaGreca, 2004). Since the actual romantic relationship experience of the adolescent is influenced by the quality of other interpersonal relationships (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson & Collins, 2005), and because the affective intensity experienced with a romantic partner is related to quality of relationship with a same-gender close friend (Shulman & Scharf, 2000), it would be logical to assess for relationship quality. The Minnesota Study of Risk and Adaptation from Birth to Adulthood (Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson & Collins, 2005) supported this statement, saying that "measures of earlier peer competence…were consistently related to dating outcomes" (pg. 185). Specifically, the "observation-based 'friendship' score significantly related to felt security in one's dating relationship" (pg. 185).

There are many other ways in which friendships affect adolescent romantic relationships, most importantly, the development of relationship and conflict resolution skills (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Downey, Bonica & Rincon, 1999). Some of those listed are negotiating closeness, intimacy, sharing, sensitivity, caregiving, support, extensive companionship, disclosure, perspective-taking skills, empathy, altruism, and the ability to deal with and express

emotions (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Downey, Bonica & Rincon, 1999; Feiring, 1996; Furman & Simon, 1999; Davies & Windle; 2000; Kuttler & LaGreca; 2004, Zani, 1993). The development of these skills is necessary for the formation and maintenance of romantic relationships because they lay the foundation for intimacy, which becomes increasingly central to social competence (Collins & Sroufe, 1999).

As mentioned earlier, conflict resolution styles used in the family of origin are likely to be used both with friends and with romantic partners. Shulman, Tuval-Mashiach, Levran, & Anbar (2006) did a study examining the predictors of longevity among 40 late adolescent couples (mean age = 17 years). From the findings, it was made clear that the length of romantic relationships depends on the quality of how the couple handled conflict. "Adolescent partners who are able to negotiate differences in a constructive manner within a positive atmosphere establish a relationship that is mutually rewarding and increasingly satisfying" (Shulman, Tuval-Mashiach, Levran, & Anbar, 2006, pg. 584). As the process repeats itself and becomes more solid within the relationship, communication becomes emotionally rewarding and partners become more committed to each other (Shulman, Tuval-Mashiach, Levran, & Anbar, 2006). Because this is an important factor for adolescent romantic relationships, READY-A needs to assess communication skills. This would best be done while having the adolescent think of how he or she handles conflict with his or her best friend.

Other ways that friendships affect romantic relationships are in the timing of first intercourse & level of sexual involvement (Katchadorian, 1990; Connolly & Goldberg, 1999). Good social adjustment necessitates good relationships with friends (Feiring, 1996). One's level of status and belonging in the peer group is also connected to an adolescent's level of romantic involvement (Kuttler & LaGreca, 2004). Similarly, another study found that when an

adolescent perceives him or herself as being alienated from peers, he or she is more likely to exhibit and be the victim of relational aggression (Linder, Crick & Collins, 2002).

READY-A measures the perception of the quality of same-sex friendships that an adolescent experiences. The better quality of friendships one is able to maintain and the better one is able to communicate, the higher the level of relationship competence. READY-A also assesses the way in which the adolescent communicates with his or her best friend. Some of the interpersonal skills mentioned above (i.e. empathy, sharing emotion, etc) are assessed by the emotional awareness questions on READY-A.

Summary of Literature Review

The RELATE/READY premarital questionnaires combine the well-researched premarital factors that contribute to marital quality and stability to help couples (RELATE) or single persons (READY) evaluate their capacity for healthy relationships. READY is able to tell people what areas will be strengths in a committed relationship and which will likely create challenges. While these and other premarital questionnaires have been created for people over 18, research needs to be done to help adolescents evaluate their own strengths and challenges that would influence healthy relationship functioning (Young, 2002). Though research on adolescent romantic relationships is still in early stages, enough has been given to help create such a questionnaire for adolescent readiness for romantic relationships.

The factors that have been considered are based on research relating to the formation of another adolescent premarital questionnaire called RELATE-A (Young, 2002). The areas that are assessed on READY-A are similar to those looking to be assessed by RELATE-A. The subfactors labeled “interactional patterns” and “stage of romance” and the whole “couple dynamics” were dropped since READY-A’s main purpose is to help adolescent’s evaluate their

relationship competence rather than the health of a current relationship. A few of the labels were changed from the RELATE-A model in order to help clarify what exactly was being measured. The first one that was changed from RELATE-A was that of "cognitive abilities." This was changed to "relationship cognitions" on READY-A to clarify that we were assessing areas of cognition in the context of relationships. The subfactor "emotional abilities" on RELATE-A was changed to "emotional awareness" for READY-A. This name clarifies which "emotional abilities" READY-A measures. The subfactor "sexual involvement" from RELATE-A was moved to the factor entitled "Individual Characteristics" on READY-A. The name and purpose of this subfactor have been changed to assess an adolescent's beliefs about "sexual conservatism", rather than his or her actual practices. This was done in order to make it easier to have access to a population on which to do a pilot test for READY-A. The last change that was made from RELATE-A to READY-A was in that which was being assessed. RELATE-A was assessing "adolescent relationship competence, stability and satisfaction." READY-A will assess adolescent relationship competence.

READY-A is made of two over all factors: individual characteristics, or those aspects and abilities of the individual that influence relationship readiness, and contextual factors, or (in this assessment) the adolescent's background of relationship experiences with family and friends. Each of these will be quickly summarized here. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual model of READY- A. The first of the two factors is "Individual Characteristics", which is made up of five subfactors: relationship cognitions, emotional awareness, rejection sensitivity, personality traits, and sexual conservativism. "Relationship cognitions" refer to cognitive tendencies and abilities that emerge during adolescents which influence relationship competence. These are adolescent

egocentrisim, imaginary audience, personal fable, perspective taking, and the ability to deal with contradictory parts of people.

"Emotional awareness" includes the development of emotional self-awareness, managing emotions, and reading emotions. As Young (2002) stated, cognitive and emotional abilities may be the most critically related to relationship skills because they are most likely to change as the adolescent ages. Better developed cognitive and emotional abilities are likely to result in a better ability to handle romantic relationships, or in other words, the a higher level of relationship competence. These are the two factors that most heavily influence couple interactional processes and that distinguish adolescent romantic relationships from their older dating counterparts (Young, 2002).

Rejection sensitivity is defined as "an anxious expectations of rejection in situations that afford the possibility of rejection by sensitive others" (Downey & Feldman, 1996, pg. 1329). Rejection sensitivity is expected to diminish over time in healthy adolescents. A near or complete absence of rejection sensitivity for an adolescent will help him or her to be better prepared for romantic relationships.

The "personality traits" section will use the items in the READY inventory. These are based largely on premarital research for adults. However, there were similar findings for adolescent preferences in personality traits. This includes kindness, happiness (vs. depression), maturity, extroversion, etc.

Finally, "sexual conservativism" will be assessed. Because it is difficult to do research with adolescents and sexuality, it was thought wiser to measure the beliefs about sexual conservatism since beliefs are likely to influence actions.

The second area, “Contextual Factors,” should include questions pertaining to the family of origin (the family the adolescent grew up in, specifically, the adolescents relationships with their parents or guardian) and their peer network, especially the best-friend relationship. Relating to the family, the adolescent’s style of conflict management with his/her parents will need to be assessed because research has shown that an adolescent is likely to use the same conflict resolution style with a romantic partner that his or her parents use with him or her. The adolescent’s perception of the emotional climate of the home/family will be measured. The adolescent’s perceived quality of friendships and his or her style of communication with friends will also be measured.

Questions from these factors will be helpful to adolescents and professionals as they meet the goals of READY-A to 1) help high school educators and counselors teach about the important factors that relate to relationship competence; 2) give adolescents useful information about their individual strengths and challenge areas that would contribute to or detract relationship competence; and 3) contribute to the much needed research on adolescent romantic relationships and the prediction of marital satisfaction from information gathered earlier in an individual’s life.

Chapter III

Methods: The Process of the Development of the READY-A Inventory

The development of READY-A contained several steps. Since Young (2002) did a comprehensive review of literature and built an item-pool for RELATE-A, the first step involved in creating READY-A was to update the literature review. The information found was summarized in the second chapter of this work. The next steps included creating, modifying, and selecting the items to be included in READY-A, designing a procedure for content validation, and then organizing the items into a format suitable for immediate use upon the obtaining of permission to do so.

Item Creation, Modification, and Selection

As mentioned earlier, all items created were based on the literature review of research on adolescent romantic relationships. The item pool created by Young (2002) was the starting point for creating the items for READY-A. Since RELATE-A and READY-A have very similar purposes (the only difference is that READY-A is not intended for use with couples), some of the items created by Young (2002) were still suitable. Specifically, there were items in the section entitled cognitive abilities (title changed to "relationship cognitions") that are used for READY-A. The items for the personality traits and family of origin section were reviewed and compared to the items on the READY Inventory to see which are more suitable for use on READY-A. The rest of the items for READY-A were created by the author. The items in the section on sexual involvement (taken from an unpublished questionnaire by Furman & Wehner) were omitted and rewritten to reflect "sexual conservativism" because asking direct questions about an adolescent's sexual involvement might be quite difficult to get consent on from the Institutional Review Board and from parents. Young (2002) used previously created

questionnaires in her item pool for the sections on contextual factors (parent-child relationships and same sex/best friendships) (Furman & Wehner, unpublished questionnaire) and rejection sensitivity (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Those questionnaires were not used on READY-A because it was thought better that READY-A should stand on it's own rather than use items from other authors that would need to be approved of for use on READY-A. Instead, the author created items on her own for those sections.

As recommended by previous researchers (Higgins, 2001), a large pool of potential items was created by Young (2002). Her original item pool contained 222 items. This is recommended because items will naturally be omitted in the process of evaluating them for use in the questionnaire. Items chosen for the questionnaire need to have face validity, or in other words, it must be clear from reading the question what the question is intending to measure. Therefore, the items were evaluated for face validity when they were reviewed, written, or revised by the author, and when reviewed by university faculty members who are experts on premarital education (experts are described under section entitled Procedure for Content Validation).

In order to be included in the questionnaire, there are several criteria which each item must meet. These criteria include: being worded clearly and concisely, being understandable to the average adolescent (written at an 8th grade reading level, as is the READY Inventory), having face and content validity, and assessing one of the seven identified areas of adolescent relationship competence.

There are two major sections on the READY-A Inventory, as seen in Figure 2: Individual Characteristics and Contextual Factors. Individual Characteristics is made of Relationship Cognitions, Emotional Awareness (called "Emotional Intelligence/Reasoning" prior to review by the panel of experts), Rejection Sensitivity, Personality Traits and Sexual Conservativism (called

"Beliefs about Sexuality" prior to review by the panel of experts). "Contextual Factors" consists of "Family of Origin" and "Same Sex/Best Friendships". The process of going from Young's item pool to the item pool that was submitted to the panel of experts will now be described in greater detail.

Relationship Cognitions Young's section on "cognitive development" originally contained a total of 14 items. These were divided into 4 subsections entitled "belief in 'imaginary audience'" (3 items), "abstract thinking to update views and beliefs about relationships" (5 items), "belief in the 'personal fable'" (3 items), and "third person perspective" (2 items). When submitted to the panel of experts for review, several changes had been made to this section. The section was retitled "relationship cognitions" to reflect more specifically what was covered in this section. "Belief in the 'imaginary audience'" and "belief in the 'personal fable'" were put under the heading "adolescent egocentrism." All 6 of the original items under these sections were submitted to the panel. An example of the items measuring "belief in the imaginary audience" is "Most teenagers are more worried about how they than about how I look." An example of the items that measure "belief in the personal fable" is "I find myself doing the same rude things to my friends that I do to my family."

The five original items under the "abstract thinking" sections were also submitted to the panel (i.e. "Every relationship is different."). The two original items under "third person perspective" were also submitted, but the title was changed to "perspective taking", meaning the ability to take a third person perspective (i.e. "When I disagree with someone I wonder if I might be mistake and the other person could be right."). The author added a section entitled "contradictory elements", or the ability to accept both good and bad characteristics of an individual. This section contained three items, all created by the author (i.e. "I would date

someone who is fun most of the time, but sometimes a little annoying."). This section ended up with a total of 16 items upon submission to the panel. All items in this section were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with the adolescents being asked to rate how much they agree with each statement (i.e. Strongly Disagree, Disagree, It Depends, Agree, Strongly Agree).

Emotional Intelligence/Reasoning The section on "emotional abilities" underwent many changes before it was submitted to the panel of experts. Young (2002) originally had 9 items in this section. These items were divided into three subsections, namely "sensitivity and concern for others" (3 items), "seeking interpersonal closeness" (2 items), and "sharing emotional experiences" (4 items). After finding more research on adolescent emotions, the author decided to change the name of the section to "emotional intelligence/reasoning", which is more specific in naming the ways adolescents should to be developing emotionally. It includes developing emotional self-awareness, managing emotions, reading emotions of others and handling relationships.

Three items, all created by the author, were submitted under the section of "emotional self-awareness" (i.e. "I can usually name the feelings that I have."). The section "managing emotions" was comprised of six items when submitted to the panel. Three of these items were written by Young (2002) and were taken from her section on "sharing emotional experiences" (i.e. "I feel uncomfortable when someone cries in front of me."). The other three were created by the author (i.e. "When I feel intense emotions, I try to push them away."). The section on "reading emotions" contained five items when submitted to the panel of experts. Three of these items were taken from Young's (2002) section on "sensitivity and concern for others" (i.e. "People seem to overreact to their problems."). The other two items were created by the author (i.e. "I can usually tell when my friends are feeling sad or mad."). Finally, the section on

"handling relationships" was made up of five items, three of which came from Young's (2002) section on "seeking interpersonal closeness" (i.e. "I prefer to spend my free time alone.") and one from the section on "sharing emotional experiences" (i.e. "My friends and family talk to me about things that make them feel sad or scared."). The other two items were created by the author (i.e. "My friends turn to me when they need help solving problems."). The section on "emotional intelligence/reasoning" contained a total of 19 items when submitted to the panel of experts. All items in this section were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with the adolescents being asked to rate how much they agree with each statement (i.e. Strongly Disagree, Disagree, It Depends, Agree, Strongly Agree).

Attachment Style The section that came next in the items submitted to the panel was a section on "attachment style." Attachment style was discussed in much of the research on adolescent romance. There were eight items in this section, all of which were created by the author (i.e. "I can count on my parents to be there for me when I need them."). Young (2002) did not have a section on attachment in her item pool. All items in this section were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with the adolescents being asked to rate how much they agree with each statement (i.e. Strongly Disagree, Disagree, It Depends, Agree, Strongly Agree).

Rejection Sensitivity Next came the section entitled "rejection sensitivity." Young's pool contained 23 items in this section. There were four items under the subheading "concern about rejection by partner", one item under the subheading "commitment to the relationship", and 18 items under the subheading "Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire". All 23 items in this section came from Downey and Feldman's (1996) questionnaire. Rather than going through the process of getting legal permission to use those items, the author decided to create her own items for this section (i.e. "I often believe that others do not really want me around."). Ten items were

submitted to the panel of experts for this section. All items in this section were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with the adolescents being asked to rate how much they agree with each statement (i.e. Strongly Disagree, Disagree, It Depends, Agree, Strongly Agree).

Personality Traits "Personality traits" was the next section on the questionnaire submitted to the panel of experts. Young (2002) wrote 13 items for this section. There were two items under the subheading of "depression", four items under the subheading "self-confidence", two items under the subheading of "eroticism", three items under the subheading of "aggression", and two items under the subheading of "nurturance." These five categories were obtained from the only article Young (2002) was able to find that followed adolescents into marriage and discussed what personality traits were found in those likely to stay married or get a divorce (Scholnick, 1981). However, this information is clearly dated. It was decided that in order to remain tied to the original READY report, the items from that questionnaire could be used on READY-A. Research has shown that these items correlate with the Big Five Personality Factors, which have been used for studies involving adolescents. Therefore, these items were suitable for this assessment. The two items under the "depression" subheading were submitted to the panel (i.e. "I am more grumpy and get angry easier than other kids my age."), along with 28 items taken directly from the READY inventory, all measuring aspects of personality (kindness, extroversion, calmness, organized, flexibility, maturity, happiness, and self-esteem).

Also included in this section were two items on substance abuse, four items concerning religious orientation, six items on the importance of marriage, and three items on relationship readiness. All of these were taken directly from READY as well. There were a total of 45 items submitted to the panel for this section on "personality traits." The items from READY asking about specific personality traits were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (i.e. Never, Rarely,

Sometimes, Often, Very Often), with the adolescents being asked "How much do these words or phrases describe you?" The same 5-point Likert scale was used for the substance abuse items, with the adolescents being asked how frequently they use either alcohol or illegal drugs. The religious orientation (i.e. "Spirituality is an important part of my life."), attitude towards marriage (i.e. "Being married is among the one or two most important things in life."), and relationship readiness sections (i.e. "I feel emotionally ready to be in a close committed relationship.") were all rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with the adolescents being asked to rate how much they agree with each statement (i.e. Strongly Disagree, Disagree, It Depends, Agree, Strongly Agree).

Beliefs about Sexuality The next section submitted to the panel of experts was entitled "Beliefs about Sexuality." In Young (2002), this section came under "Couple Relationship Dynamics," which covered areas of "relationship stage/phase" (written by Young (2002), 4 items), "relationship quality" (items taken from Levesque's untitled questionnaire, 1993, 83 items), and "sexual involvement" (5 items written by Young (2002), 21 items taken from the BSQ, Furman & Wehner, unpublished questionnaire). This section was deleted for READY-A because READY-A is not intended for use with couples. However, because sexuality is a big part of adolescence and has a big effect on those adolescents who participate in sexual activities, it was thought that sexuality should still be covered somehow on READY-A. Therefore, the section "beliefs about sexuality" was added to the section of "Individual Characteristics" on READY-A. There were eight items submitted to the panel under this section (i.e. "Teenagers are usually emotionally ready to have sex."), all of which were written by the author. All items in this section were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with the adolescents being asked to rate how

much they agree with each statement (i.e. Strongly Disagree, Disagree, It Depends, Agree, Strongly Agree). This concludes the section on "Individual Characteristics".

The next section, Contextual Factors, consists of Family of Origin and Same sex/Best Friendships. Young (2002) had two subheadings, "parent-child relationships and friendships" and "pregnancy/children". There were 50 items in the "parent-child relationships and friendships", all of which were taken from Furman & Wehner (unpublished questionnaire), which fell under the categories of "attachment", "caring" and "affiliation." . The "pregnancy/children" section contained only one question. This section was completely redone in order to better suit the purposes of READY-A.

Family of Origin The " Family of Origin" items were all, except one, taken directly from the READY Inventory. There are 16 items that gather demographic type data about the adolescent's family (i.e. "How much money does your father make per year?", "How much education has your father completed?"), 4 items about family stressors (i.e. "In my immediate family, there are financial strains, such as job loss, bankruptcy, large debts or going on welfare."), 18 items on family processes (i.e. "We have a loving atmosphere in my family", "My parents currently encourage me to be independent and make my own decisions."), 4 items on parent's conflict style, and one item on parent-adolescent conflict style (this item was the one not taken directly from READY). There were a total of 43 items submitted to the panel in this section.

Same Sex/Best Friendships The section on "Same Sex/Best Friendships" was the next section submitted to the panel of experts. Thirteen items were submitted to the panel under the subheading "Perceived Quality of Friendships" (i.e. "I have good relationships with my friends."). (i.e. Strongly Disagree, Disagree, It Depends, Agree, Strongly Agree). with the

adolescent being asked how much they agree or disagree with the each statement (i.e. Strongly Disagree, Disagree, It Depends, Agree, Strongly Agree). Thirteen items were also submitted to the panel under the subheading "Communication with Friends." The adolescent was asked to finish the sentence "When problems arise in your relationship with your best friend,…" with each item given (i.e. "…I pretend like nothing is wrong."). The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (i.e. Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often). All 26 items were written by the author.

The last section submitted to the panel of experts were demographic items, such as gathering the age, gender, and race of the adolescent taking the questionnaire. There were six items in this section.

All together that makes for 180 items that were submitted to the panel of experts for use on the READY-A inventory. It was expected that a number of these would be dropped and/or edited through this process of review by the panel of experts.

Procedure for Content Validation

The APA Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (1985) stated that content-related validation "demonstrated the degree to which the sample of items…on a test are representative of some defined universe or domain of content. The methods often rely on expert judgment to assess the relationship between parts of the test and the defined universe…" (pg. 10). Therefore, following the creation of the pool of items deemed suitable for READY-A, a panel of experts on premarital relationships and/or adolescence was identified to read the items and give feedback regarding the content and face validity of the items. General impressions and suggested revisions were requested from the experts reviewing the item pool. The panel of experts consisted of two professors from Marriage and Family Therapy and two from the

Marriage, Family, and Human Development. All are members of the RELATE Institute Board and all have extensive knowledge on the RELATE/READY Inventories and premarital education and research.

Once the feedback from the panel of experts was received and reviewed, the item pool was modified so as to contain only those items agreed on by the panel. The revised items were then organized into a questionnaire format similar to READY/RELATE, which will be suitable for use once permission is received to do the pilot testing or when a suitable sample can be found.

Chapter IV

Results and Discussion

Summary of Findings

Through the steps followed in this study, seven factors were identified as being important to include in the creation of an inventory that would be useful to adolescents as they begin to learn about what it takes to develop relationship competence. The result of this project is the READY-A Inventory, presented in Appendix 3. The items were organized under the same titled factors and sub-factors found in Figure 2, which is located on page 29. To review briefly, the first factor "Individual Characteristics," includes the sub-factors of relationship cognitions, emotional awareness, rejection sensitivity, personality traits and sexual conservativism. The second factor, "Contextual Factors," includes the sub-factors of family of origin and same sex/best friendships. The personality traits and family of origin sections were taken directly from the READY inventory. In addition, there were several other questions taken directly from READY that were seen as necessary to include in READY-A. These were the demographics and the items on alcohol/drug use.

These items were reviewed by a panel of experts and deemed suitable for use in the further development of READY-A. The vast majority of the items used a five-point Likert-style response (Strongly Agree, Agree, It Depends, Disagree, Strongly Disagree; or Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often), just as is used in the original RELATE & READY inventories.

READY-A was designed to be used separately from READY, though 81 of the 141 items come directly from READY. The READY inventory is designed to help young adults learn about their personal strengths and challenge areas that will contribute to success in romantic relationships. Because adolescence is the developmental period in which most people begin to

have experiences in romantic relationships, it is important that there be an instrument that can also help adolescents learn about what strengths and challenges they have personally that will likely affect their romantic relationships. When adolescents learn about these things, they can then begin to make changes that will help them develop relationship competence. This will help them to be more ready and able to engage in healthy romantic relationships in the future. Thus, READY-A can contribute to preventative work in the study of marriage and family.

Feedback from the Panel

The panel of experts gave valuable feedback on the initial item pool that was developed. They were presented with the items organized into their various categories. As they reviewed the items, they gave suggestions for changes in wording. They also gave ideas as to which items were repetitive, unnecessary, or not a good measure of the category it was listed under. This led to the item pool of 180 items being narrowed down to 141 items. Under "individual characteristics", the "relationship cognitions" section ended up with 18 items, the "emotional awareness" section ended up with 11 items, the section on "rejection sensitivity" contained 6 items, the section on "personality traits" contained 33 items, and the "sexual conservativism" section contained 5 items. Under "Contextual Factors", the section on "family of origin" ended up with 53 items, and the "same sex/best friendship" section ended up with 10 items. For a further breakdown of subscales and the specific item numbers of each subscale, see Appendix 2.

The verbal and written feedback of the panel of experts indicated that they felt the inventory items had face validity and would be useful to adolescents as they learn about their own strengths or challenge areas that could affect their romantic relationships. In addition, there seemed to be an adequate number of items in order to establish content validity, as well, based on the feedback received. Their feedback will now be shared in greater detail.

Relationships Cognitions Though, the panel did not have an specific comments on the adolescent egocentrism (made up of "imaginary audience" and "personal fable"), the author did make some changes to this part. It seemed upon closer review of Young's (2002) definition of "personal fable" that the items she used in this section do not match what personal fable actually is. For example, she wrote that it is the inability to think abstractly to observe links in relationships. However, personal fable is a sense of uniqueness to the extent that the adolescent believes that no one else understands what the he or she is going through. Therefore, the author wrote four new items for this section (i.e. "Other people usually do not understand when I try to tell them how I feel.").

Several changes were made in the "abstract thinking" section. The items Young (2002) used for "personal fable" were moved to this section. This section was clarified to measure the adolescent's ability to observe similarities and differences in relationships with important people in his/her life (i.e. family relationships compared to peer relationships, or one romantic relationship compared to another, etc). Three items were omitted from this section. The item "I believe all relationships are a lot like my parents' relationship has been" (written by Young, 2002) was deemed "problematic because of the reference to the parent's relationship." This panel member stated that the adolescent would likely react to that rather than to the item itself. The other item that was deleted was "I get along the same with everyone I know" (written by Young, 2002). This item was said to simply be a "bad item" by one of the panel members. The item "People who treat others poorly do not treat those they date that way" (written by Young, 2002) was dropped because it seems unclear. Several items were also revised. For example, the item "Teenagers who say mean things to their parents will probably say mean things to the person they marry" was revised to read "Teenagers who say mean things to their parents will probably

say mean things to the people they date." This was done because the focus of this inventory is not marriage, but rather dating relationships. Unclear wording of other items were also revised. For example, the item "The more relationships I have, the more I think the way my relationships go will always be the same" was revised to read "The more relationships I have, the more I think that my relationships will always be the same."

The only comment from the panel about the section on "perspective taking" was that it needed another item added to the list. Therefore, the item "When someone explains their side of an argument, I can usually understand how they might be feeling" was added to the inventory. One of the other two items was revised to better match the title "perspective taking". For example, the item "When my friend tells me about a bad day, I feel sorry for him or her" seems more like a measure of empathy rather than the ability to see from another's perspective. It was revised to read "When my friend tells me about a bad day, I can understand why he/she might be upset." The other item was revised to be worded more clearly.

The last sub-section in the Relationship Cognitions section is "Contradictory Elements", or the ability to accept both good and bad characteristics in an individual. There were no changes made to this section. The "relationship cognitions" section ended up with 18 items total.

Emotional Awareness This section was called "Emotional Intelligence/Reasoning" when it was submitted to the panel of experts. However, verbal feedback indicated that this heading would be problematic because of the word "intelligence." It was advised to revise the name. Based on further feedback from the panel, the original items submitted were "trying to measure too many different concepts with too few items." Therefore, this section was simplified to only a few basic concepts by deleting some items and was retitled "Emotional Awareness."

The section on "emotional self-awareness" changed completely to better reflect it's definition: the ability to recognize and name one's emotions and to separate feelings from actions. All of the items submitted to the panel were changed. A few examples of new items are "The feelings inside of me are often confusing", "I can usually recognize which feelings I have", and "I always act the same way that I feel." There are four items in this subsection of emotional self-awareness.

The section on "managing emotions" also changed quite a bit. When submitted to the panel it included knowing how to handle the emotions of others. However, it was decided to only measure the adolescent's ability to handle his or her own emotions because handling others' emotions is a skill that is developed much more during adulthood. The adolescent needs to be able to manage his or her own emotions before he can handle others'. All of Young's (2002) items were dropped from this section. Only one of the author's original items in this section was kept ("It's hard for me to express my feelings to others."). One other item was revised from "When I feel intense emotions, I try to push them away" to "When I have strong feelings, I try to push them away." This was done to simplify the language so that it is easier to be understood. Two new items were added to this section, both written by the author ("I am usually comfortable with the feelings I have" and "I am aware of healthy ways to deal with strong feelings.") There are four items in this sub-section.

About the section on "reading emotions", the panel stated that it may not hold together well because they were not measuring the same concept. Only one of the five items submitted was kept, but even that item was revised. It went from reading "I can usually tell when my friends are feeling sad or mad" to reading "I can usually tell when my friends are feeling sad." All other items submitted to the panel were dropped in order to stay precisely with one concept.

The two new items added are “It’s hard for me to tell when my friends are mad at me” and “I know what to look for in order to tell how someone is feeling.” Both were written by the author. This sub-section ended up with three items.

The last section submitted to the panel on “handling relationships” was deleted because the panel stated that it was “way too much to try to measure” in just a few items. It was decided that this section could be covered better under the section of “communication with friends”, which is under the heading “Same sex/Best Friendships”, which falls under Contextual Factors. The section “Emotional Awareness” ended up with a total of 11 items.

Attachment The feedback from the panel indicated that the “attachment” section was also too broad of a concept to be covered and noted that my items only measured parent-child attachment. Another comment from a panel member read “There are good established scales for measuring attachment styles. Is this one of them?” This indicated that in order to use these items, it would be necessary to administer an already published questionnaire that measures parent-child attachment in addition to READY-A when the pilot study is done. It was decided that this section was not necessary. In addition, there are items being used from READY that ask questions about the parent-child relationship, so this information could be taken from there. Tobler (2002) did a study on the concurrent validity of RELATE (which again is almost identical to READY), which assessed specifically whether the subscales of Relationship with Mother and Relationship with Father (items 111-116 on READY-A) correlated with an individual’s attachment style. The hypothesis that individuals with secure attachment would have more stable and rewarding relationships with their parents was supported by the study. Thus, these items can be seen as reliable measures of attachment. With this being established, the attachment section was dropped from the READY-A inventory. It seems that a better idea would

be to do the same type of testing that Tobler (2002) did, but also making sure that these items also have a high correlation with parent-adolescent attachment rather than parent-adult child attachment.

Rejection Sensitivity The section on "rejection sensitivity" under went several changes after receiving feedback from the panel of experts. Ten items were originally submitted. The panel indicated that this was too many items and that this section needed to be shortened to three or four items. However, the author decided to include six items in READY-A in case the pilot study proved that an of the items did not work. Three items were omitted because they were deemed as "bad items" by the panel (i.e. "I could ask someone that I just met to go out on a date with me without getting too nervous", "It's hard for me to ask my parents to buy me things for school"). One other item was also deleted ("I get nervous when I approach a group of people to eat lunch with."). One panel member indicated that wording used on several of the items ("I get nervous to..") seemed awkward and suggested rewording it. The author decided to use the phrase "I feel nervous when…" instead, which seemed to read better. Several other items were also revised in order to be more specific or to read easier. For example, "I don't share my opinions often because I worry that other's will not agree or will think I'm dumb" was changed to read "I often worry that people will think I am dumb if I share my opinions." Again, this section ended up with a total of six items.

Personality Traits The items in this section were taken directly from the READY inventory. As already established items, they did not receive very much feedback in terms of being in need of editing. Several items were dropped based on the feedback received. The two items on depression (i.e. "I am more grumpy and get angry easier than other kids my age.") were dropped because two different panel members noted that they was probably not necessary, since

a depression scale is included in the READY items, as well as an item on irritability. The items measuring "Religious Orientation", which also came directly from READY, were also dropped, as the author did not find research that related an adolescent's religious orientation or spiritual to how healthy his or her romantic relationships tended to be. This was seen by the panel of experts as more of a measure for marital readiness rather than adolescent relationship competence.

The same feedback came from the panel about the items that measure "attitude towards marriage" (i.e. "Being married is among the one or two most important things in life."). Therefore, these items were dropped from READY-A, as well. A total of 12 items were dropped from this section, leaving a total of 33 items in the "Personality Traits" section of READY-A.

Sexual Conservatism When submitted to the panel of experts, this section was titled "Beliefs about Sexuality." It was revised based on feedback from the panel that this title was too general and that it did not really get at what the author was trying to measure. "Sexual conservativism" was one of the suggested titles, and the author decided after looking closer at the items, that this title would be appropriate. This is especially true since research points to sexual conservativism (having a conservative attitude towards sexuality) in adolescence being indicative of healthier self-image and relationships. One item ("Adults worry too much about teenagers having sex together.") was deemed as a bad item by the panel, and was dropped. Two other items were dropped ("Sex is mostly for fun" and "Sex is a way of expressing love to another person"), just from the need to downsize the number of items on the scale. This section ended up with a total of five items. This is the last subsection in the "Individual Characteristics" section of READY-A.

Family of origin This section was the first of two that comes under "Contextual Factors". These items were also taken directly from READY, with only the tense of the verbs

being changed to match the present, rather than the past. Three items were added to this section based on information from the panel that they were going to be added to the READY inventory. These items get information on people that came into and out of the family the adolescent is growing up. These items are "Did your biological parents ever marry?", "Did your biological parents ever divorce?", and "How old were you when your parents divorced?"

There was one question dropped from this section, which asked the adolescent to match one of the styles of parents' conflict with each other with the parent-adolescent style of conflict. However, when a panel member asked, "Where is the evidence that parent-child conflict looks like marital conflict?", the author realized that there was none. Instead, the author came up with several new items asking the adolescent to rate how often different positive and negative conflict resolution skills were employed between him/her and his/her parents. There are three positive conflict resolution tactics (i.e. talking about the problem calmly, listening to understand each other's point of view and working together to solve the problem) and three negative conflict resolution tactics (i.e. yelling at each other, becoming defensive, and stomping out of the house/room before the fight is over), for a total of six items. The idea is to see whether positive tactics are used more often than negative tactics. This is based on research that showed that when higher amounts of positive conflict resolution tactics were used in parent-adolescent relationships, higher amounts of positive conflict resolution tactics were used in adolescent romantic relationships. This section ended up with a total of 53 items.

One other change was done based on feedback from the panel of experts. There is a section which measures family stressors (i.e. emotional problems, financial strain, serious physical illness or injury, alcohol or drug addictions), for which the adolescent was asked how often these stressors occurred in his/her family. However, a panel member thought that this

section should be reworded to ask the adolescent "In my immediate family, how much stress is created by the following?" The Likert scale was changed to read "No Stress", "A little stress", "Some stress", "A lot of stress", "Overwhelming stress" and "This never happened in my family." This recommendation was seen as an improvement to the items and was adopted.

Same-Sex/Best Friendships There were two subsections included in this section of READY-A. The first is "Perceived quality of friendships." Thirteen items were originally submitted to the panel under this section. However, the panel recommended that all but three of them be dropped because only three items would be needed. The three items that were kept were "I have at least a few friends that I consider to be close to me", "I have good relationships with my friends", and "I believe that my friends really like me." The second subsection is called "Communication with friends." Thirteen items were submitted in this section as well. Only six of these items were kept for READY-A, again because only a few items are needed per scale. One of the six items was divided into two separate items because it was not measuring just one concept ("I try to really listen and understand what he/she is saying" was split into "I try to really listen to what he/she is saying" and "I try to understand his/her point of view." Additionally, a panel member recommended that more instructions be added to this section, asking the adolescent to think of a specific friend, who is considered either his/her best friend or friend that they know better than just "casually" as he/she answers the questions. This recommendation was followed, and the instructions were added. The "Same-Sex/Best Friendships" section ended up with a total of 10 items.

It would be important to note that though the inventory has already been reduced in size, further research (a pilot study administering READY-A to adolescents) would likely lead to a

further reduction in the number of items. This is because the factor analysis and measures of internal consistency could reveal more about which items are needed or not needed.

Implications

READY-A is an instrument that can be useful both clinically and educationally. It can be used by therapists who work with adolescents who are considering marriage or who are married. This could be an eye-opening experience as those adolescents learn what is required to be able to maintain a healthy relationship. Clinicians should be ready to give adolescents tools they can use to overcome their challenge areas.

The biggest foreseen use of READY-A, however, is in educational settings. READY-A can be used by Family Life Educators who run programs for adolescents or by high school teachers who teach classes on preparing for marriage and parenting. Adolescents will likely be interested in learning about romantic relationships, as this is the time period in their lives where they begin to have real experiences with this and can thus apply the information that they are learning. As previously stated, most adolescents want to get married and plan to remain in that marriage for their entire lives, yet they lack the confidence that they will be able to do it. And more than likely, they also lack the skills that will enable them to do so. Thus, READY-A can be a springboard into covering such topics, especially since each adolescent will receive his or her own personal feedback report, and into developing relationship competence.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study is that the panel of experts was chosen by convenience sample. In addition, it only consisted of three people. All were male, Caucasian, married and Latter-Day Saint. The lack of diversity could make it so that varying perspectives on religion, ethnicity, etc, may not have been taken into account. Since READY-A is not religiously or

ethnically based, this would very likely not have an effect on the outcome of the study. All panel members are very familiar with premarital research and with the RELATE/READY inventories, which is why they were chosen as panel members.

Another limitation was that permission was denied by the university research board (IRB) for the request to do a pilot study with adolescents. This would be something that would need to be obtained before further progress can be made with READY-A.

Recommendations for Future Research

The READY-A Inventory has been developed and prepared to the point of being ready to administer for pilot testing upon the obtaining of permission to do so. The first step that would need to be taken would be to find a sample of at least 200 adolescents in order to complete a pilot study of the items. The next step should be both first and second order factor analysis to validate the different scales created for READY-A and to drop items that cross-load on more than one factor. Third, an assessment of the internal consistency reliability of the different scales should be performed. This can be done using Cronbach's alpha. After this is done, the READY-A inventory items should be narrowed down again. Lastly, this final version of READY-A should be tested again with adolescents to establish its validity and reliability. At that time, READY-A should be helpful to adolescents, educators, researchers, pre-marital therapists and others who are interested in helping adolescents learn the skills necessary to form and maintain healthy relationships.

The task that may be the hardest to address is simply getting a sample with which to do a pilot study. Those who work with READY-A in the future may be interested in going through a high school to obtain a sample. It is recommended that researchers allow plenty of time for this to happen, as it is not a quick process. Other options would be to find a convenience sample or

find a way to administer the inventory online. For the internet option, the researchers would need to find a way to obtain parental consent before adolescents take the inventory. It is recommended that the adolescents receive some kind of small monetary reward (i.e. gift card or cash) for their participation in the pilot study.

An area of interest would be the area of attachment in adolescence. The author considered doing a section on attachment for READY-A. However, there are questions in the Family of Origin section that seem to get at attachment (i.e. My father and I are able to share our feelings on just about any topic without embarrassment or fear of hurt feelings.). One way to find out if these questions (items 111-116 on READY-A) measure attachment would be to administer these questions, along with already created instruments that measure parent-adolescent attachment. Then statistics could be run to see if they measure the same thing or not. If not, perhaps a section on attachment could be added to the READY-A inventory. A study has been done on adults that took RELATE (Tobler, 2002), but there has not been one done with adolescents.

The issue of different ethnic groups must also be briefly discussed. The majority of the journal articles reviewed in this study were done on middle class, Caucasian adolescents. Therefore, this assessment has been created to be tested on the same population. It would be necessary in the future to test the applicability of this inventory on other adolescent ethnic groups. It would be interesting to do research on how cultural ideas of healthy romantic relationships affect the same areas of adolescent relationship competence in other cultures. Unique historical and contextual factors, such as where and how people are raised and their views on marriage, need to be studied in order to determine their impact on the assessment items. Cultural identity, which emphasizes “the expansion of personal consciousness in relation to the

cultural context in which one is embedded" (Cardona, Busby & Wampler, 2004), may eventually be added as an underlying factor to the whole conceptual model of READY-A.

In addition, as further research is conducted on the area of adolescent romantic relationships, additional items may need to be generated and tested in areas that may not have been covered in this study. It would also be of interest to researchers to follow some of the adolescents who take this study for period of time (i.e. one or two decades) to see how their romantic relationships turn out in adulthood. Thus, predictive abilities may be able to be established with READY-A.

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Appendix 1. The RELATionship Evaluation: READY

Version: 2.0
Questions in the order they appear on the test:

Not Displayed Here:
This section contains filtering questions
(Will only be displayed if all of these are true: age is not answered)
age. Age

Section A:
Questions in this section deal with you, your personality, and your attitudes
How much do these words or phrases describe you?
v1. Considerate
v2. Talkative
v3. Sad and blue
v4. Open minded
v5. Fight with others/lose temper
v6. Organized
v7. Loving
v8. Quiet
v9. Fearful
v10. Feel hopeless
v11. Flexible
v12. Act immature
v13. Messy
v14. Kind
v15. Shy
v16. Tense
v17. Depressed
v18. Easy going
v19. Easily irritated or mad
v20. Friendly
v21. Outgoing
v22. Nervous
v23. Adaptable
v24. Worrier
How frequently do you use:
v25. Alcohol?
v26. Illegal drugs?
How do you feel about yourself?
v27. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
v28. I think I am no good at all.
v29. I feel I am a person of worth.
v30. I am inclined to think I am a failure.
About your religious orientation:
v31. Spirituality is an important part of my life.

v32. How often do you pray (commune with a higher power)?
v33. Some doctrines or practices of my church (or religious body) are hard for me to accept.

Section B:
Please answer the following questions about your values, attitudes, and beliefs as they apply to yourself or to your current or future marriage.
v34. It is perfectly normal never to want to get married.
v35. I do not like the idea that husbands and wives can specialize in different household responsibilities.
v36. In my marriage it would not bother me if the wife earned more income than the husband.
v37. Money may not buy happiness in a family, but it sure doesn't hurt.
v38. It creates problems for spouses if they go for a few days without spending much time together as a couple.
v39. Sexual intercourse is the most bonding experience you can have in marriage.
v40. One of the main reasons to get married is to have children.
v41. Being married is among the one or two most important things in life.
v42. A husband should help out some with the housework, but a wife should organize what needs to be done and when.
v43. It would be an acceptable arrangement for the husband to stay home to care for young children while the wife earns the paycheck.
v44. It is important to me that my family has the finer things in life.
v45. In marriage, having time alone is more important than togetherness.
v46. Sexual intercourse in marriage is as much a duty as a source of personal pleasure.
v47. Using artificial or chemical birth control methods (the pill, spermicide, condom, etc.) is acceptable in marriage.
v48. If I had an unhappy marriage and neither counseling nor other actions helped, my spouse and I would be better off if we divorced.
v49. Mothers have more natural ability than fathers in relating to infants and toddlers.
v50. The husband's and children's needs should come before a job or career for a wife.
v51. Having money and lots of things has never been important to me.
v52. Married couples do not need to share many of the same recreational interests or hobbies with each other.
v53. If I am married, I would not have a love affair with someone else.
v54. Permanent birth control through surgical operation for either husband or wife is acceptable if my spouse and I decided to have no more children.
v55. Once I make the choice to marry, divorce is never an option.
v56. The father should spend as much time as the mother caring for infants and toddlers.
v57. A mother should feel free to pursue a career or job even when there are preschool age children in the home.
v58. I plan to earn an income that makes my family financially well off.
v59. It is important for a husband and wife to have many of the same friends, and to like each other's friends.
v60. As long as we're in a committed relationship, sexual intercourse is acceptable before marriage.
v61. Legal abortion is an acceptable method of preventing an undesirable birth.
v62. Marriage involves a covenant with God, not just a legal contract recognized by the law.

v63. If a husband and wife disagree about something important, the wife should give in to her husband because he is the main leader of the family.
v64. A couple should delay having children until other important issues are worked out first.
v65. Living together is an acceptable alternative to marriage.
v66. Husbands and wives should discuss important decisions and reach an agreement they both like before taking action.
v67. Husbands and wives should both carefully look for bargains before buying something they want.
v69. Your sexual preference is:
v70. How much education have you completed?
v71a. Your current personal yearly gross income before taxes & deductions:
v72. Your race or ethnic group is:
v72o. If you chose other, please specify:
v73. Your religious affiliation is:
v73o. If you chose other, please specify:
v74. How often do you attend religious services?
v76. I most prefer to have___children during my lifetime.
v77. What is the ONE thing listed that is MOST important to YOU?

Section C:
Questions in this section deal with your family background
For how many years while you were growing up (to age 18) did you live in each of the following types of families?
v78a. Single Parent (Because of Divorce)
v79a. Single Parent (Because of Death)
v80. Both biological parents.
v81a. Biological Parent & Step Parent
v82a. Single Parent (Never Married)
v83. A foster family.
v84a. Adoptive Parents
v85a. A Relative other than a parent
v85b. Biological Parent and partner (not married)
v85c. Single Adoptive Parent
v544. Did your biological parents ever marry?
v545. Did your biological parents ever divorce?
Sometimes family conflicts can lead to physical acts that are violent. These acts may include slapping, pushing, kicking, hitting hard with a fist, hitting with objects or other types of violence.
v86. Considering all of your experiences while growing up in your family, how would you rate the general level of violence in your home?
v87. From the following list of family members, select the one person who was the most violent toward you.
v88. How violent toward you was the person you selected in the previous question?
v89. How often was your father violent toward your mother?
v90. How often was your mother violent toward your father?
v91. How often were you violent in your family?

Sometimes in families sexual activities occur that are inappropriate. These acts include a parent or siblings fondling a child, a parent or siblings engaging in sexual intercourse with a child, or some other type of inappropriate sexual activity.
v92. From the following list of family members, select the one person who was most sexually abusive toward you.
v93. How often was the person you selected in the previous question sexually abusive toward you?
v94. How often was someone outside your family (not your partner) sexually abusive toward you?
v95. How often were you sexually inappropriate to a family member?
v96. How often did inappropriate sexual activities occur between other family members, but not directly involving you?
Following are questions about your mother (or the person who is mother to you), your father (or the person who is father to you), and the family in which you spent your growing-up years.
v97. Please tell us whom you have in mind as you answer questions about your family.
v98. Please tell us whom you will have in mind as you answer questions about your mother.
v99. Please tell us whom you will have in mind as you answer questions about your father.
v100. What is your father's current yearly gross income before taxes and deductions?
v101. What is your mother's current yearly gross income before taxes and deductions?
v102. How much education has your father completed?
v103. How much education has your mother completed?
In my immediate family, while I grew up...
v104. There were family members who experienced emotional problems such as: severe depression, anxiety attacks, eating disorders, or other mental/emotional problems.
v105. There were financial strains such as loss of jobs, bankruptcy, large debts, or going on welfare.
v106. There were physical strains such as a member(s) being physically handicapped, hospitalized for a serious physical illness or injury, or becoming premaritally pregnant.
v107. There were one or more family members who struggled with addictions to alcohol or other drugs.

Section D:
(Will only be displayed if all of these are true: v545 is = 1)
v546. How old were you when your parents divorced?
(Will only be displayed if either of these are true: v544 is = 2 v545 is = 1)
v547. How many romantic partners did your mother have between your date of birth and your eighteenth birthday?
v548. How many romantic partners did your father have between your date of birth and your eighteenth birthday?
How much do you agree with the following statements about your family, based on your years growing up?
v108. From what I experienced in my family, I think family relationships are safe, secure, rewarding, worth being in, and a source of comfort.
v109. My father was happy in his marriage.
v110. My father showed physical affection to me by appropriate hugging and/or kissing.

v111. There are matters from my family experience that I'm still having trouble dealing with or coming to terms with.
v112. My parents currently encourage me to be independent and to make my own decisions.
v113. From what I experienced in my family, I think family relationships are confusing, unfair, anxiety-provoking, inconsistent, and unpredictable.
v114. My mother was happy in her marriage.
v115. My mother showed physical affection to me by appropriate hugging and/or kissing.
v116. There are matters from my family experience that negatively affect my ability to form close relationships.
v117. My father participated in enjoyable activities with me.
v118. We had a loving atmosphere in our family.
v119. My mother and I were able to share our feelings on just about any topic without embarrassment or fear of hurt feelings.
v120. My parents currently try to run my life.
v121. My mother participated in enjoyable activities with me.
v122. All things considered, my childhood years were happy.
v123. I would like my marriage to be like my parents' marriage.
v124. My father and I were able to share our feelings on just about any topic without embarrassment or fear of hurt feelings.
v125. I feel at peace about anything negative that happened to me in the family in which I grew up.
v126a. Below are four common ways of handling disagreements or conflict in relationships. Please choose the ONE that best represents how your mother, or mother figure, usually handled conflict.
v127a. Below are four common ways of handling disagreements or conflict in relationships. Please choose the ONE that best represents how your father, or father figure, usually handled conflict

Section E:
Questions in this section deal with your perceptions of yourself in relationships with close others
v543. With how many partners have you had sexual relations?
v131. How many times have you been divorced?
v132. Which best describes your current dating status?
How much do you agree with the following statements about yourself?
v300. I feel emotionally ready to be in a close, committed relationship
v301. With regard to sexual intimacy, I feel ready to be in a close, committed relationship
v302. With regard to communicating with others, I feel ready to be in a close relationship
v303. I feel financially ready to be in a close, committed relationship
v304. All things considered, I feel ready to be in a close, committed relationship
How are YOU in relationships with close others (e.g. parents, siblings, friends, roommates, etc.)?
v186. I discuss my personal problems with close others.
v187. I include others in my life.
v188. When I talk to close others I can say what I want in a clear manner.
v189. I understand other's feelings.
v191. I struggle to find words to express myself to close others.
v192. I am able to listen to others in an understanding way.

v194. I sit down with people who are close to me and just talk things over.
v195. I show a lot of love toward others.
v196. I talk over pleasant things that happen during the day when I am with others.
v197. In most matters, I understand what others are trying to say.
How are YOU when you have a conflict with someone who is close to you (e.g. parents, siblings, friends, roommates, etc.)?
v198. I don't censor my complaints at all. I really let others have it full force.
v199. I have no respect for others when we are discussing an issue.
v200. I think, "It's best to withdraw to avoid a big fight."
v201. Whenever I have a conflict with others, I feel physically tense and anxious, and I don't think clearly.
v202. When I am in an argument, I recognize when I am overwhelmed and then make a deliberate effort to calm myself down.
v203. I use a tactless choice of words when I complain.
v204. When I get upset I can see glaring faults in others' personalities.
v205. I think that withdrawing is the best solution.
v206. I feel physically tired or drained after I have an argument with others.
v207. While in an argument, I recognize when others are overwhelmed and then make a deliberate effort to calm them down.
v208. There's no stopping me once I get started complaining.
v209. When others complain, I feel that I have to "ward off" these attacks.
v210. I don't want to fan the flames of conflict, so I just sit back and wait.
v211. Whenever I have a conflict with someone, the feelings I have are overwhelming.
v212. I've found that during an intense argument it is better to take a break, calm down, then return to discuss it later.
v213. I feel unfairly attacked when others are being negative.
v214. I withdraw to try to calm down.

Section F:
Sometimes differences in relationships may lead to slapping, pushing, kicking, hitting hard with a fist, hitting with an object, or other types of violence. With this in mind:
v244. How often are others violent toward you in current close relationships?
v245. How often are YOU violent in any of the ways mentioned above in current relationships?
Sometimes individuals feel pressured to participate in physically intimate behavior when they don't want to. Please answer the following questions about this issue.
v246. How often have you been pressured against your will to participate in intimate sexual activities (such as fondling, oral sex, or intercourse) by OTHERS?
v247. How often have others been pressured against their will to participate in sexual behaviors (such as fondling, oral sex, or intercourse) by YOU?
Please answer the following questions about marriage preparation classes, workshops, counseling, and so forth:
v270. Have you been involved in a class, workshop, or counseling designed to help you prepare for marriage?
v271. How helpful was the class, workshop, or counseling in preparing you for marriage?

Appendix 2: Table of Scales, Subscales, Number of Items and Item Numbers on READY-A

Name of Scale/Subscale	Number of Items in Scale/Subscale	Item Numbers on READY-A
Demographics	5	1-5
Individual Characteristics:		
Relationship Cognitions	**18**	**6-23**
Imaginary Audience	3	6-8
Personal Fable	4	9-12
Abstract Thinking	5	13-17
Perspective Taking	3	18-20
Contradictory Elements	3	21-23
Emotional Awareness	**11**	**24-34**
Emotional Self-Awareness	4	24-27
Managing Emotions	4	28-31
Reading Emotions	3	32-34
Rejection Sensitivity	**6**	**35-40**
Personality Traits	**33**	**41-73**
Kindness	4	41-44
Extroversion	4	45-48
Calmness	4	49-52
Organized	2	53-54
Flexibility	4	55-58
Maturity	3	59-61
Happiness	3	62-64
Self-Esteem	4	65-68
Substance Abuse	2	69-70
Relationship Readiness	3	71-73
Sexual Conservativism	**5**	**74-78**
Contextual Factors:		
Family of Origin	**53**	**79-131**
Family Structure	14	79-92
Family Stress	4	93-96
Family Demographics	7	97-103
Family Processes:		
Overall evaluation of family processes	4	104-107
Parent's Marriage	3	108-110
Father-Child Relationship	3	111-113
Mother-Child Relationship	3	114-116
Current impact of family on respondent and relationships	3	117-119
Autonomy from Family of Origin	2	120-121
Parent's Conflict Type	4	122-125
Parent-Child Conflict Resolution Methods	6	126-131
Same Sex/Best Friendships	**10**	**132-141**
Perceived Quality of Friendships	3	132-134
Communication with Friends	7	135-141

Appendix 3

READY for Adolescents (READY-A) Inventory

Instructions:
Please answer all items by circling the appropriate answer. You may use a pen or a pencil. The questionnaire takes approximately 45 minutes to complete. After you have completed the questionnaire, please bring it to the front of the room and give it to the researcher or a teacher. Thank you for your help in this research effort.

All information in this questionnaire will be kept strictly confidential. Because we do not ask information that could lead to your identification as an individual, know that your answers are completely anonymous. Please answer all items thoughtfully and honestly.

Section 1: Demographics

Please provide the following information about yourself:

1. How old are you?	a. 14 b. 15 c. 16 d. 17 e. 18 f. 19
2. What is your gender?	male female
3. What grade are you in?	a. 9th (freshman) b. 10th (sophomore) c. 11th (junior) d. 12th (senior)
4. Your race or ethnic group is:	a. African (Black) b. Asian c. Caucasian (White) d. American Indian e. Latino (Mexican American, Puerto Rico, Cuba, etc) f. Mixed/biracial g. Other (please specify)_____
5. Your religious affiliation is:	a. Catholic b. Protestant (Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Baptist, etc) c. Jewish d. Latter-Day Saint (Mormon) e. Buddist f. Hindu g. Sikh h. Other (please specify) _____ i. None

Section 2: Individual Characteristics

Relationship Cognitions:

How much do you agree with the following statements:

6. The kids my age notice small details about me, like if I get a pimple or wear the same clothes twice in one week.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)

7. The kids at school don't ever forget the small embarrassing things I do.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
8. Most teenagers are more worried about how they look than about how I look.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
9. No one else has experienced the same things in life that I have.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
10. Other people usually do not understand when I try to tell them how I feel.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
11. There are people in my life who understand me and what I am going through.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
12. I do not tell others how I feel since they usually don't understand me anyway.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
13. I find myself doing the same rude things to my friends that I do to my family.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
14. Teenagers who say mean things to their parents will probably say mean things to the people they date.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
15. The more relationships I have, the more I think that my relationships will always be the same.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
16. Every relationship is different.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
17. Everybody treats me the same way.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
18. When my friend tells me about a bad day, I can understand why he/she might be upset.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
19. When I disagree with someone, I wonder if I might be wrong and if the other person might be right.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
20. When someone explains their side of an argument, I can usually understand how they might be feeling. (This does not mean that you have to agree with them, simply that you understand how they feel.)	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
21. Most people have both good and bad things about them.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
22. I am comfortable with both the fun and annoying parts of my friends' personalities.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
23. I would date someone who is fun most of the time, but sometimes a little annoying.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)

Emotional Awareness:					
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?					
24. The feelings inside of me are often confusing.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
25. I can usually recognize the feelings I experience.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
26. I always act the same way that I feel.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
27. Sometimes I do things just because of the way I feel.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
28. It's hard for me to express my feelings to others.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
29. I am usually comfortable with the feelings I have.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
30. When I have strong feelings, I try to push them away.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
31. I am aware of healthy ways to deal with strong feelings.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
32. I can usually tell when my friends are feeling sad.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
33. It's hard for me to tell when my friends are mad at me.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
34. I know what to look for in order to tell how someone is feeling.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
Rejection Sensitivity:					
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?					
35. I often think that my friends do not really want me around.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
36. I am confident that other people usually like me.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
37. I often worry that people will think I'm dumb if I share my opinions.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
38. I feel nervous when I ask my friends for help when I need it.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
39. I feel nervous when I call up friends to see if they want to hang out.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
40. When my best friend gets mad at me, I feel nervous about talking to him/her.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)

Personality Traits: How much do these words or phrases describe you?					
41. considerate	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
42. loving	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
43. kind	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
44. friendly	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
45. talkative	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
46. quiet	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
47. shy	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
48. outgoing	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
49. worrier	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
50. fearful	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
51. tense	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
52. nervous	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
53. organized	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
54. messy	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
55. open minded	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
56. flexible	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
57. easy going	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
58. adaptable	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
59. fight with others/lose temper	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)

60. act immature	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
61. easily irritated or mad	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
62. sad and blue	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
63. feel hopeless	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
64. depressed	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
65. I take a positive attitude towards myself.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
66. I think I am no good at all.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
67. I feel I am a person of worth.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
68. I am inclined to think I am a failure.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
How frequently do you use:					
69. alcohol?	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
70. illegal drugs?	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
Relationship Readiness: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?					
71. I feel emotionally ready to be in a close committed relationship.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
72. With regard to communicating with others, I feel ready to be in a close relationship.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
73. Overall, I feel ready to be in a close, committed relationship.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
Sexual Conservativism: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?					
74. Teenagers are usually emotionally ready to have sex.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
75. Teenagers are often pressured by their peers to have sex.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
76. It's OK to have sex with someone before you get married.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)

77. Having sex before marriage can cause relationship problems for a person later on.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
78. People should wait until they are married before having sex.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)

Section 3: Contextual Factors

Family of Origin:

For how many years (yrs) have you lived in each of the following types of families?

79. Single parent (because of divorce)	0 yrs (a)	1 - 3 yrs (b)	4 - 6 yrs (c)	7 - 9 yrs (d)	10 - 12 yrs (e)	13 - 15 yrs (f)	16 - 17 yrs (g)	18 yrs (h)
80. Single parent (because of death)	0 yrs (a)	1 - 3 yrs (b)	4 - 6 yrs (c)	7 - 9 yrs (d)	10 - 12 yrs (e)	13 - 15 yrs (f)	16 - 17 yrs (g)	18 yrs (h)
81. Both biological parents.	0 yrs (a)	1 - 3 yrs (b)	4 - 6 yrs (c)	7 - 9 yrs (d)	10 - 12 yrs (e)	13 - 15 yrs (f)	16 - 17 yrs (g)	18 yrs (h)
82. Biological parent & step parent (because of divorce)	0 yrs (a)	1 - 3 yrs (b)	4 - 6 yrs (c)	7 - 9 yrs (d)	10 - 12 yrs (e)	13 - 15 yrs (f)	16 - 17 yrs (g)	18 yrs (h)
83. Biological parent & step parent (because of death)	0 yrs (a)	1 - 3 yrs (b)	4 - 6 yrs (c)	7 - 9 yrs (d)	10 - 12 yrs (e)	13 - 15 yrs (f)	16 - 17 yrs (g)	18 yrs (h)
84. A biological parent & partner (not married)	0 yrs (a)	1 - 3 yrs (b)	4 - 6 yrs (c)	7 - 9 yrs (d)	10 - 12 yrs (e)	13 - 15 yrs (f)	16 - 17 yrs (g)	18 yrs (h)
85. Single parent (never married).	0 yrs (a)	1 - 3 yrs (b)	4 - 6 yrs (c)	7 - 9 yrs (d)	10 - 12 yrs (e)	13 - 15 yrs (f)	16 - 17 yrs (g)	18 yrs (h)
86. Single adoptive	0 yrs (a)	1 - 3 yrs (b)	4 - 6 yrs (c)	7 - 9 yrs (d)	10 - 12 yrs (e)	13 - 15 yrs (f)	16 - 17 yrs (g)	18 yrs (h)
87. A foster family	0 yrs (a)	1 - 3 yrs (b)	4 - 6 yrs (c)	7 - 9 yrs (d)	10 - 12 yrs (e)	13 - 15 yrs (f)	16 - 17 yrs (g)	18 yrs (h)
88. Adoptive parents	0 yrs (a)	1 - 3 yrs (b)	4 - 6 yrs (c)	7 - 9 yrs (d)	10 - 12 yrs (e)	13 - 15 yrs (f)	16 - 17 yrs (g)	18 yrs (h)
89. A relative other than a parent	0 yrs (a)	1 - 3 yrs (b)	4 - 6 yrs (c)	7 - 9 yrs (d)	10 - 12 yrs (e)	13 - 15 yrs (f)	16 - 17 yrs (g)	18 yrs (h)

90. Did your biological parents ever marry?	yes (a)	no (b)
91. Did your biological parents ever divorce?	yes (a)	no (b)

For question 92, write the number in with your pen or pencil.

92. If your biological parents did divorce, how old were you when it happened? _____

In your immediate family, how much stress was created by the following?						
93. Family members who experience emotional problems such as: severe depression, anxiety attacks, eating disorders, or other mental/emotional problems.	No Stress (a)	A Little Stress (b)	Some Stress (c)	A lot of Stress (d)	Overwhelming Stress (e)	This never happened in my family (f)
94. Financial strains such as loss of jobs, bankruptcy, large debts, or going on welfare.	No Stress (a)	A Little Stress (b)	Some Stress (c)	A lot of Stress (d)	Overwhelming Stress (e)	This never happened in my family (f)
95. Physical strains such as being physically handicapped, hospitalized for a serious physical illness or injury, or becoming pregnant outside of marriage.	No Stress (a)	A Little Stress (b)	Some Stress (c)	A lot of Stress (d)	Overwhelming Stress (e)	This never happened in my family (f)
96. One or more family members who struggle with addictions to alcohol or other drugs.	No Stress (a)	A Little Stress (b)	Some Stress (c)	A lot of Stress (d)	Overwhelming Stress (e)	This never happened in my family (f)

Following are questions about your mother (or the person who is a mother to you), your father (or the person who is a father to you), and the family with which you are living.

97. Please tell us whom you will have in mind as you answer questions about your mother.	a. Adoptive mother b. Biological mother c. Foster mother d. Grandmother e. Step-mother f. Another female mother figure g. I really don't have anyone I consider a mother.
98. Please tell us whom you will have in mind as you answer questions about your father.	a. Adoptive father b. Biological father c. Foster father d. Grandfather e. Step-father f. Another male father figure g. I really don't have anyone I consider a father.
99. Please tell us whom you will have in mind as you answer questions about your family.	a. A family of biological and step-parent and siblings. b. My adoptive family. c. A family made of only one biological parent and siblings. d. A family made of my biological parents and biological siblings. e. A family made up of other relatives. f. A foster family. g. I am not living in a family setting.

100. How much money does your father make per year?	a. not applicable/I don't know b. under $5,000 c. $5,000-$14,999 d. $15,000-$24,999 e. $25,000-$29,999 f. $30,000-$39,999 g. $40,000-$49,999 h. $50,000-$74,999 i. $75,000-$100,000 j. over $100,000					
101. How much money does your mother make per year?	a. not applicable/I don't know b. under $5,000 c. $5,000-$14,999 d. $15,000-$24,999 e. $25,000-$29,999 f. $30,000-$39,999 g. $40,000-$49,999 h. $50,000-$74, 999 i. $75,000-$100,000 j. over $100,000					
102. How much education has your father completed?	a. less than high school b. high school equivalency (GED) c. high school diploma d. some college, not currently enrolled e. some college, currently enrolled f. associate's degree g. bachelor's degree h. graduate or professional degree, not completed i. graduate or professional degree, completed					
103. How much education has your mother completed?	a. less than high school b. high school equivalency (GED) c. high school diploma d. some college, not currently enrolled e. some college, currently enrolled f. associate's degree g. bachelor's degree h. graduate or professional degree, not completed i. graduate or professional degree, completed					
How much do you agree with the following statements about your family, based on your personal experience?						
104. From what I experience in my family, I think family relationships are secure, rewarding, worth being in, and a source of comfort.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
105. From what I experience in my family, I think family relationships are confusing, unfair, anxiety-provoking, inconsistent and unpredictable.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
106. We have a loving atmosphere in our family.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
107. Overall my childhood/teen years have been happy.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)

108. My father is happy in his marriage.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
109. My mother is happy in her marriage.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
110. I would like my marriage to be like my parent's marriage.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
111. My father shows physical affection to me by appropriate hugging and/or kissing.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
112. My father participates in enjoyable activities with me.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
113. My father and I are able to share our feelings on just about any topic without embarrassment or fear of hurt feelings.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
114. My mother shows physical affection to me by appropriate hugging and/or kissing.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
115. My mother participates in enjoyable activities with me.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
116. My mother and I are able to share our feelings on just about any topic without embarrassment or fear of hurt feelings.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
117. There are matters from my family experience that I'm having trouble dealing with.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
118. There are matters from my family experience that negatively affect my ability to form close relationships.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
119. I feel at peace about anything negative that has happened to me in my family.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
120. My parents currently encourage me to be independent and make my own decisions.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)
121. My parents currently try to run my life.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)	Does not apply (f)

How often do each of the following describe how your parents handle conflict with each other?

122. In my parent's marriage, conflicts are fought on a grand scale, and that is okay, since their making up is even grander. They have volcanic arguments, but they are just a small part of a warm, loving marriage. Although they argue, they are still able to resolve their differences. In fact, passion and zest for fighting actually lead to a better marriage with a lot of making up, laughing, and affection.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
123. In my parent's marriage, conflict is minimized. They think it is better to "agree to disagree" rather than end up in discussions that will result in dead-lock. They don't think there was much to be gained from getting openly angry with each other. In fact, a lot of talking about disagreements seems to make matters worse. They seem to feel that if you just relax about problems, they will have a way of working themselves out.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
124. In my parent's marriage, when they are having conflict, they let each other know their opinions are valued and their emotions valid, even if they disagree with them. Even when discussing a hot topic, they display a lot of self-control and are calm. Once they both understand each other, they calmly try to persuade the other or find a compromise.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
125. My parents argue often and hotly. There are a lot of insults back and forth, name-calling, put downs, and sarcasm. They don't really listen to what the other is saying, nor do they look at each other very much. One or the other of them can be quite detached and emotionally uninvolved, even though there may be brief episodes of attack and defensiveness. There are clearly more negatives than positives in their way of handling conflict.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)

How often do you and your parents use the following conflict resolution methods with each other?

126. Talking the problem over calmly.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
127. Becoming defensive.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
128. Working together to solve the problem.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
129. Yelling at each other.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
130. Listening to each other to understand each other's position.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)

131. Stomping out of the room/house before the fight is over.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
Same Sex/Best Friendships How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?					
132. I have friend(s) that I consider to be close friend(s).	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
133. I have good relationships with my friends.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
134. I believe that my friends really like me.	Strongly Disagree (a)	Disagree (b)	It Depends (c)	Agree (d)	Strongly Agree (e)
Think about your best friend of the same gender as you (or a friend of the same gender that you know more than just casually) as you answer the following questions. "When problems arise in my relationship with my best friend, …"					
135. I talk to him/her about it.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
136. I have a hard time letting him/her know how I feel.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
137. I try to really listen to what he/she is saying.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
138. I try to understand his/her point of view.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
139. I try to avoid talking about it.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
140. I am not afraid to tell him/her "like it is."	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)
141. I pretend like nothing is wrong.	Never (a)	Rarely (b)	Sometimes (c)	Often (d)	Very Often (e)