

The Development of Feeling Norms Underlying Romantic Love among Adolescent Females*

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This paper examines the development of feeling norms underlying romantic love among early adolescent females. On the basis of data from in-depth interviews, transcriptions of naturally occurring discourse, and field notes, we find that girls not only acquire cultural knowledge about romantic love, but also develop several feeling and expression norms to deal with their own concerns about romance. These norms involve the relative importance of romantic relationships and the appropriate object of romantic feelings. Girls also use a variety of discourse strategies to communicate normative information and to reinforce feeling norms to friends, ranging from playful language activities to more serious modes of discourse. Yet, even though girls obtain normative information about romantic love, they do not always abide by feeling and expression norms. Instead, they sometimes respond to these norms with resistance and defy them intentionally. This finding suggests that emotion norms constrain, but do not determine, adolescent females' affect and behavior. The relevance of adolescence for romantic socialization in particular and for emotion processes more generally is discussed.

In American society, love is an important emotion (Cancian 1985, 1987; Cancian and Gordon 1988; Hochschild 1983a; Swidler 1980). Like other feelings, romantic love is a social sentiment, for which a cultural label and a set of ideological beliefs exist (Gordon 1981). Embodied in ideological beliefs about love are "feeling norms" which guide individuals' romantic feelings and behaviors (Hochschild 1979, 1983a).¹ Feeling norms that underlie romantic love not only influence

whether we should or should not love (Hochschild 1983a), but also help us identify the appropriate object of romantic feelings. Yet in spite of the importance attached to love in American culture, we know little about the content of the feeling norms that govern romantic love and the ways in which cultural knowledge about love is acquired socially.

Sociological research on emotion at both macro and micro levels of analysis has emphasized the normative aspects of love in America. Swidler (1980) examined historical change in the ideology of love (i.e., beliefs about the experience and expression of love), which she argues is linked to changing conceptions of adulthood in Western culture. According to Swidler, current beliefs about love emphasize individualism, self-actualization, and independence, in contrast to earlier beliefs, which emphasized social commitment, self-sacrifice, and dependence.

Like Swidler, Cancian and Gordon (Cancian 1985, 1987; Cancian and Gordon 1988) examined historical change in the content of love ideology, which they claim is due to structural transformations in the family and economy. They argue further, however, that even though contemporary love ideology emphasizes self-development (as opposed to

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¹ Feeling norms are social norms that prescribe the appropriate intensity, duration, and target of emotions in social situations and relationships (Gordon 1981; Hochschild 1979). For a detailed description and analysis of sympathy norms, see Clark (1987). Stearns and Stearns (1986) and Cancian and Gordon (1988) provide insightful discussions of historical changes in emotion norms regarding anger. For an examination of historical change in social norms concerning grief, see Lofland (1985).

self-sacrifice), the polarization of gender roles since the nineteenth century continues to encourage females' preoccupation with love and interpersonal relationships and males' preoccupation with occupational achievement for self-fulfillment.

Other research focuses on the ways in which individuals express and experience love. This research emphasizes the normative nature of love at the social psychological level. Cancian (1985, 1987) found that husbands and wives prefer styles of expressing love that are consistent with gender stereotypes. Whereas wives tend to express love through emotional closeness and verbal expression, husbands tend to express love by giving instrumental aid and through sex. Yet because American culture recognizes only the feminine style of love, Cancian argues that females continue to be viewed both by themselves and by others as more skilled at love than males, a situation that creates conflict between men and women in marriage.

Whereas Cancian focused on the expression of love, Hochschild examined romantic feelings. Like Cancian's study, Hochschild's research underscores gender differences in love and highlights the importance of romantic feelings to women. In her study of college students (1983a), she found that females were more likely than males to give a greater degree of attention to the love experience. Females also were more likely than males to engage in "emotion work" with respect to love. That is, when their actual feelings departed from feeling norms, women were more likely to report that they consciously manipulated their feelings by either evoking the emotion (e.g., trying to fall in love) or suppressing the emotion (e.g., trying to fall out of love), so that their feelings would coincide with social norms. According to Hochschild, women attend more to love and perform more feeling work on love because they lack control over the courtship process, even while they depend on marriage for structural mobility.

Overall, the research discussed above suggests that love, like other emotions, is shaped by cultural beliefs, which include feeling norms.

Individuals continually interpret, evaluate, and modify their feelings (and expressions) according to existing beliefs about the emotion (Gordon 1981; Hochschild 1979; Thoits 1989). Yet although these studies provide insight into the normative influences on love, they do not

elaborate the content of feeling norms underlying romantic love in American culture.² Moreover, although an assumption underlying this research is that cultural knowledge about love is acquired socially, research to date has not directly examined affective socialization processes. The absence of research on emotional socialization is striking in view of the observed gender differences in love and the importance that females appear to attach to romance in American society.

This paper examines the development of feeling norms underlying romantic love among early adolescent females. Adolescence is relevant to the study of romantic socialization of females; previous research documents that romance and male-female relationships are important to white adolescent girls. During adolescence, many girls become interested in romance and begin to form romantic relationships (Eder 1988; Eder and Sanford 1986; Griffin 1985; Lees 1986; McRobbie 1978; L. Rubin 1977; Schofield 1982). Research also shows that in adolescence, girls' earlier concerns with academic and athletic achievement are replaced with concerns about being popular, well-liked, and attractive (Rosenberg and Simmons 1975; Youniss and Smollar 1985).

These studies point to the peer group as central for promoting the importance of romance to adolescent females, and suggest that relationships with boys are a means by which girls attain social status and popularity. Whereas some authors emphasize that simply having a boyfriend enhances girls' peer group status, others claim that being in a romantic relationship also validates girls' attractiveness, which in turn increases their popularity and self-image (Holland and Eisenhart 1990; Schofield 1982; Wulff 1988). Yet although adolescence is a period when females become interested in romance and male-female relationships, we argue that during this period, girls also are obtaining normative information about romantic feelings in the context of female friendships. To date, little attention has been given to *how* adolescent females acquire general cultural knowledge about romantic love and develop specific norms to guide romantic feelings.

² Although Cancian's (1987) and Cancian and Gordon's (1988) research provides insight into the content of feeling norms governing love, they focus on norms that guide marital love and do not examine the content of norms underlying nonmarital romantic love.

In this paper we discuss the content of feeling and expression norms underlying romantic love as they emerge in adolescent girls' peer culture. We also discuss the various ways in which feeling norms are communicated to group members. Although adolescent girls may obtain normative information about romantic feelings in other social relationships and in other social contexts—as well as through media such as romance novels, music, television, and films—the focus of this paper is limited to affective socialization processes among peers in school contexts because we do not have data on those other socialization agents. Peer groups, however, are an important source of emotional socialization because of the primacy of these groups to youths. In interaction with peers, young people draw on norms and beliefs that are available in the broader culture and make them meaningful by applying them to their everyday concerns and activities (Corsaro and Rizzo 1988; Mead 1934). By focusing on peer group socialization, we show that while adolescent girls are acquiring cultural knowledge about love, they also are creating and continuously negotiating feeling norms which pertain to the emergent concerns of their peer culture.

DATA AND METHODS

We collected the data for this paper as part of an ethnographic study of adolescent socialization and peer interaction in a middle school. The school that was selected for the study was located in a medium-sized mid-western community. The school enrolls sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, including youths from upper middle-class and lower working-class families. Most of the students were white, but a small number of black youths were enrolled at the school. The school was large, with approximately 250 students in each grade.

Data on peer interaction and relations were collected over a three-year period and involved a variety of methods, including participant observation, audio and audiovisual recording, and in-depth group interviews. Three female researchers observed a total of 10 female peer groups during lunch periods twice a week, over periods ranging from five to nine months. Three of these groups were studied for two years. The groups were representative of groups at different status levels within the school as well as of

different-sized cliques. Data were obtained on high- through low-status peer groups and on peer groups that ranged in size from dyads to groups of 12 members.³

In order to examine groups at each grade level, we observed two eighth-grade groups, three-seventh grade groups, and two sixth-grade groups during the first year of the study. In the second year, we followed two seventh-grade groups into the eighth grade. Because the sixth-grade groups had dissolved by the second year, however, we observed two new seventh-grade groups (consisting of some of the girls from the original sixth-grade groups) in addition to a group of eighth-grade special education students. In the third year, we followed a seventh-grade group into the eighth grade. Table 1 shows the grade level, status level, and size of each group that we observed during each year.

At the beginning of the study, we told the students that we were interested in their lunchroom activities and conversations. Because we spent time with each group and avoided assuming any authority over the students, a high degree of rapport was established. Several weeks into the study, many students felt free to swear in front of us and often assured other students that we were "okay."

After observing groups for a minimum of three months, we made and transcribed audio and/or video recordings of conversations with eight of the groups. In addition, we conducted in-depth interviews on romance with the girls in two groups that had a strong interest in this topic. Field notes and transcriptions of naturally occurring conversations among these girls show that their views about romance were similar to those of girls in other groups that also had romantic interests. We coded each type of data for content relevant to

³ We determined the status levels of the groups through participant observation. Students described those who sat on one side of the cafeteria as "popular" and those who sat on the other side as "grits." We studied four groups that sat on the "popular" side of the cafeteria: one high-status group that consisted of cheerleaders and their closest friends and three medium high-status groups. We also studied six groups on the "grit" side: five medium low-status groups and one low-status group, which consisted of special education students. Group size was determined by the numbers of students who sat with the group for at least one month of the period during which the group was observed. Not all members were present during the entire period, however, and many groups had visitors who sat with the group only occasionally.

Table 1. Grade Level, Status Level, and Number of Members of Each Group Observed in Each Year of the Study

Grade Level	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3		
	8th	7th	6th	8th	7th	6th	8th	7th	6th
Status Level									
High	12 ^a								
Medium high	9	9	2	9 ^b					
Medium low		7.5	12	7 ^b	8,4		8 ^b		
Low				6					

^a In addition to 12 female group members, this group also contained nine male members.

^b Groups that had been observed the previous year.

the topic of romance. We conducted computer searches on the codes in order to identify all references to romance and feeling norms.

Data from interviews, recorded conversations, and field notes are employed in this paper. It is important to combine these various types of data to study thoroughly the development of feeling norms underlying romance. Data from in-depth interviews reveal the girls' current beliefs and norms about romantic love but fail to show how their knowledge is acquired through daily activities. For that purpose we turned to an examination of field notes and transcripts of naturally occurring conversations. These types of data are essential for identifying not only the content of feeling norms that underlie romantic love, but also the processes through which these norms are developed and conveyed in day-to-day interaction. Also, by examining daily speech activities we can examine how emotion norms and beliefs are reflected in actual discourse. Without this level of analysis, it is easy to assume greater conformity to emotion norms than actually exists. Finally, our analysis of field notes helps us identify certain feeling norms which are so taken for granted that they are no longer regarded as constraints.

Although data from all of the groups were analyzed for this paper, some groups of girls were more interested in romance and had more contact with boys than others. Among the girls who had romantic interests, relationships with boys varied considerably. In fact, at this school, the term "going together" was used widely by both girls and boys to refer to a variety of romantic relationships, ranging from those which lasted several months to those which lasted one or two days. In some cases, the girl and the boy spent their lunch period together; in others, the couple had minimal contact at school.⁴ In most

cases, the relationships were brief (less than two weeks) and were limited to some social contact at school, which sometimes included expressions of affection such as hand holding and kissing. Interestingly, even though many of the high-status girls were going with boys, they engaged in fewer conversations about romance than girls in the medium high- and medium low-status peer groups. Most conversations about romance took place when boys were absent, so these girls may have discussed romance less frequently because boys were regular members of their lunch group. The group that discussed romance the least was the low-status group of special education students, none of whom had a boyfriend. Thus, although the feeling norms and the affective socialization processes discussed in this paper are likely to be generalizable to other groups of white adolescent females who are interested in romance and in male-female relationships, they are not meant to reflect the experiences of all girls of this age.

FEELING NORMS UNDERLYING ROMANTIC LOVE IN ADOLESCENT FEMALE PEER CULTURE

We begin with the observation that romantic love was a frequent topic of conversation among the female students. By the seventh grade, most of the girls at the school had become concerned with romance and had begun to form relationships with boys. While the girls were obtaining normative information about romantic love, the feelings and behavior that group members considered appropriate were still in the process of negotiation. Some feeling norms were generally accepted; others were not shared by all group members. An examination of the girls' talk about romantic love revealed that they used a variety of discourse strategies to communicate normative information and clarify feeling norms.

⁴ Often the best friend of the girl and of the boy arranged these relationships by contacting the interested parties over the telephone, so that the couple might not

have had much direct contact either before or after they started "going together."

Norm 1: Romantic relationships should be important, but not everything in life.

Previous research shows that white adolescent females tend to embrace traditional feminine concerns of romance, marriage, and domesticity and to reject both academic and athletic values (Eder 1985; Griffin 1985; Kessler et al. 1985; Lever 1978; McRobbie 1978). Although romance was salient to most of the girls in this study, group members had mixed attitudes about the importance of relationships with boys in relation to their other interests and activities. Some girls thought "they could not live without boys"; others believed that "learning about themselves and their schoolwork" was primary (interview, eighth-grade group, March 30, 1983). Concerns about the relative importance of romantic love required the development of a feeling norm among adolescent females.

One such norm that had begun to emerge in some peer groups was that romantic relationships should be important, but not everything in

life. Many seventh- and eighth-grade girls agreed that relationships with boys were important. Group members, however, also were becoming critical of friends who were perceived as "boy-crazy," a term used by adolescents to describe girls who made boys their primary interest and activity. As the following two examples illustrate, this norm still was being negotiated when the girls were in the eighth grade.

In the first example, one group of girls debates the relative importance of romantic relationships. This exchange was part of an in-depth group interview about romance novels, which many eighth-grade girls liked to read. Ellen, Hanna, Natalie, Peg, and Tricia had been discussing why they liked reading romance novels when the researcher asked them how important romantic love was to them. Ellen began by expressing her view that boys are the most important thing in her life, a view that runs counter to the emerging feeling norm.⁵

- 1 Ellen: Boys [are] the most important thing in my life. That's what I
2 marked it on my value chart today.
3 Hanna: Yes. I know.
4 Researcher: Why? Why are boys the most important // thing?
5 Hanna: Boys, um (pleasure)
6 Ellen: You can't live without 'em!
7 Natalie: You can't live // with 'em and you can't live without 'em!
8 Peg: You can't live with 'em.
9 Ellen: You can too.
10 Tricia: That's // a matter of opinion.
11 Ellen: There is no way—there is no way a girl could live her
12 whole life without a boy.
13 Tricia: I can.
14 Ellen: You can live your whole life without a boy?
15 Tricia: Yeah. // I'm not goin' to, though.
16 Peg: Uh uh!
17 Ellen: (be isolated) you never kissed one or nothin'.
18 Natalie: Lesbies can.
19 Researcher: That's true.
20 Tricia: You wouldn't know, Natalie. ((laughing)) (interview, eighth grade, March 30).

In this example it is clear that group members had conflicting views about the relative importance of romance, and expressed their opinions openly. Yet even though the girls engaged in a normative debate, they expressed conflict in a playful, nonserious way. Rather than responding defensively to Ellen's question in Line 14, Tricia said teasingly that even though she could live without boys, she was not going to do so. In Line 18, Natalie's substitution of the

word "lesbies" for lesbians contributes to the playfulness of this exchange.

⁵ All names are pseudonyms. The following notations are used in the examples from transcripts:

- () refers to an uncertain or unclear utterance or speaker;
(()) refers to nonverbal behavior;
// refers to the point at which the next speaker begins talking during someone else's turn;
//1/ first interruption; //2/ second interruption;
refers to a brief pause.

Whereas normative debates often were carried out in a playful and joking manner, conflict exchanges over normative issues were sometimes quite serious. This was especially true when lighter disputes were unsuccessful at producing normative consen-

sus, as in the next example. The following exchange was part of the same group interview. At this point Ellen not only had stated repeatedly that boys were her central interest, but also had been flirting with some boys at a nearby table.

- 1 Researcher: What about you, Tricia? How do you feel // about it all?
 2 Peg: Ellen, // I'm only teasin', gosh! ((singsong voice))
 3 Tricia: I feel the same way that Peg does. Especially now when
 4 we're just about to go into high school, our grades are more
 5 important than // boys.
 6 Natalie: See, we may be friends // with them, but we're not sluts.
 7 Researcher: Um hum. ((To Tricia))
 8 Hanna: Will you repeat that, please? ((angry voice))
 9 Tricia: No, /1/ you /2/ don't qualify.
 10 Natalie: /1/ I know, but we're not sluts.
 11 Ellen: /2/ () fuck you (you guys)! ((Ellen stomps off, angry
 12 and upset)) (interview, eighth grade, March 30).

In both examples, the girls openly expressed their conflicting views about the relative importance of romance and clarified this feeling norm to group members. In the second example, however, the conflict escalated and became more serious and more heated. Tricia and Peg became annoyed when the emerging norm was violated repeatedly, and engaged in confrontations when their friends' attitudes and behaviors did not match their expectations. In Lines 6 and 10, for example, Natalie accuses violators of this norm of being "sluts." Responses to norm violations are important ways in which group members develop and communicate knowledge about interpersonal and interactional norms (Eder and Sanford 1986; Mehan 1979). Although conflict was not resolved in either of these exchanges, the girls learned through these debates what their friends viewed as appropriate and inappropriate feeling and behavior with respect to this norm. Romantic love was a salient emotion for most of these girls, but several were concerned with setting some limits on its importance.

The Object of Romantic Feelings

According to Gordon (1981, p. 567), "sentiments," such as romantic love, are feelings that are "organized around a relationship to a social object, usually another person." While the girls were developing a norm about the relative importance of romance, they also were acquiring cultural

knowledge about the object of romance. In fact, by the eighth grade, three norms concerning the object of romantic feelings had emerged.

Norm 2: One should have romantic feelings only for someone of the opposite sex.

The most basic feeling norm concerning the object of romance was that one should have romantic feelings only for someone of the opposite sex. By the time they had become actively interested in romance, a norm of heterosexuality had developed in these groups of girls. In contrast to the previously discussed feeling norm, there was considerable consensus for this norm. In view of the general negative view of homosexuality at the school and the label attached to alleged norm violators, it is not surprising that this norm was widely accepted. We found that the girls used a variety of discourse strategies to clarify and reinforce the norm of heterosexuality to friends. The way in which this norm was communicated depended upon whether alleged norm violators were nongroup or group members.

One way in which the norm of heterosexuality was communicated was through gossip about nongroup members' deviant affect and behavior. Girls who did not express romantic interest in boys or who had gender-atypical interests often were the targets of gossip. For example, Sandy and Paula were discussing Sandy's sister in the sixth grade, who did not share their romantic interest in boys and who

was interested in sports and in becoming a mechanic.

Sandy said her sister is extremely different from her and has absolutely no interest in boys—she considers boys pests. Sandy referred to her sister as a tomboy. She said that since her sister is a tomboy, if she liked boys then she would be queer, but on the other hand, if she liked girls then she would really be queer. Then Paula added jokingly that if she didn't like anyone at all she would still be queer. I [researcher] said, "It sounds like she doesn't have a chance" (field notes, seventh grade, May 24).

This example shows that Sandy and Paula were reinforcing a feeling norm of which they had only limited understanding. Girls at this school were establishing violations of the norm of heterosexuality on the basis of gender-inappropriate behavior. Sandy's sister's outward disinterest in boys as well as her nontraditional interests and behaviors were considered by these group members to be deviant with regard to the norm of heterosexuality. Yet, by establishing violations of this norm on the basis of nonstereotypical gender-role behavior, the girls were reinforcing and reproducing existing gender norms that ultimately constrain their own behavior.⁶

In general, it was not uncommon for girls and boys who were not actively pursuing romantic relationships or who routinely engaged in gender-inappropriate behavior to be labeled homosexual. In fact, children at the school who were perceived to be deviant in other ways were the objects of these allegations as well (Evans and Eder 1989). Unpopular students who were viewed as unattractive and/or unintelligent also were singled out for group discussions in which they were accused indirectly of being homosexual.

Annie said, "I'm gonna beat that girl up someday," referring to twins and a little chubby girl in a green sweater who were sitting at the middle of the table pretty far down. So we all turned to look at her and Marsha agreed that she was really disgusting, that "they're gay" (field notes, seventh grade, February 3).

Rather than relying on the display of romantic feelings toward someone of the

same sex as an indication of affective deviance, Annie and Marsha accused these girls of being "gay" solely on the basis of physical appearance.

A second way in which the norm of heterosexuality was communicated was by teasing group members. Humor often was used when the girls confronted their friends about norm violations. Group members frequently teased one another about behaviors that could be interpreted as homosexual, such as close physical contact between friends. Although many girls still viewed close physical contact between friends as acceptable, others were beginning to redefine such expressions of affection as inappropriate.

The little girl with glasses came over and actually sat on Andrea's lap. She's so tiny that she can do this easily, and Andrea laughed and said, "You're really not my type" (field notes, sixth grade, May 20).

Not only did the girls tease one another about overt expressions of affection; they also chided one another about their actual feelings. Statements concerning both positive and negative affect for females were a frequent source of group humor.

. . . they were talking about why would somebody like this particular girl. Debby said, "I wouldn't like her!" Melinda said, "Well, I should *hope* not" (field notes, eighth grade, April 20).

In addition to teasing one another about their feelings and behaviors, group members also chided each other about their best-friend relationships. In fact, adolescence is a period in which female friendships are faced with a dilemma. Even while intimate feelings between close friends usually deepen, girls routinely tease one another about the romantic implications of these relationships.

Julie said something about how Bonnie and somebody were considered her best mates. Right away Mia said, "Ooooh . . ." as this sort of implied that they were gay. Hillary picked up on that and went "Ooooh!" (field notes, eighth grade, April 9).

The final way in which the norm of heterosexuality was communicated was through self-denial. Self-denials often were used to clarify the nature of intimate female friendships. Although many girls at the school continued to have strong positive

⁶ See Berger and Luckman (1967) for a theoretical discussion of both the functions of language in the social construction of reality and the objectification of norms through socialization.

feelings for their female friends, verbal and behavioral expressions of affection frequently were followed by a disclaimer. In light of the pressures for heterosexuality from peers and the seriousness of norm violations, it is not surprising that many girls at the school became quite concerned that their own feelings and behaviors towards their close friends might be perceived by others as homosexual.

Sally was really talkative today, and it was interesting to see her being so talkative. She was going on and on about how somebody would sign her letters "love you queerly." She said, "I always sign my letters 'love you dearly, but not queerly.'" But then she was joking, saying, "I didn't know what that meant," until Mary explained it to her. Then they were joking about how innocent she was and didn't even know what "queer" meant (field notes, seventh grade, March 3).

Whereas self-denials often were humorous, denials of affective deviance with respect to the norm of heterosexuality sometimes were quite serious. The girls were especially self-conscious about expressions of affection that were overt and therefore readily observable. They were concerned that nongroup members would misinterpret these visible signs of affection as romantic.

Alice told me that she had taken a bunch of photographs recently. She said it was embarrassing because most of the pictures were taken when people happened to be hugging and kissing each other, and that she hoped she got hold of the pictures before her mother did when they got back from being developed. She said, for example, "Natalie and another girl were hugging each other in friendship" (which meant that she wanted me to know that that was differentiated from a romantic hug) (field notes, eighth grade, February 7).

Not only was Alice embarrassed by the hugging and kissing in the photographs, but she also was concerned that if her mother saw the pictures, she might interpret these actions as homosexual. By distinguishing between a "friendship" hug and a "romantic" hug, however, Alice clarified both to herself and to the researcher that this behavior was within the realm of acceptable conduct.

Overall the norm of heterosexuality was communicated among adolescent females through gossip, teasing, and self-denials. In these discussions, group members collec-

tively explored what does and does not constitute homosexual feeling and behavior in order to develop an understanding of this feeling norm and of norm violations. Through these discussions, however, the girls not only expressed their own homophobic concerns but also supported and maintained the broader cultural norm of heterosexuality. Many girls at the school continued to value intimate relationships with females; nevertheless they upheld and reproduced what Rich (1980) called "the norm of compulsory heterosexuality."

Norm 3: One should not have romantic feelings for a boy who is already attached.

Another feeling norm that had emerged in regard to the object of romance was that one should not have romantic feelings for a boy who is already attached. A corollary of this norm was that if one had such feelings, they should not be expressed. In most groups, the development of this norm was a direct response to changes in group members' romantic activities. The norm of exclusivity had only minimal relevance during an earlier phase, when the girls were first becoming interested in romance, but this norm had become highly salient by the time they began to form relationships with boys.

Early in the seventh grade, most of the girls talked about the boys they liked,⁷ but often were shy about letting boys know their feelings. As long as romantic activities consisted of only talking about the objects of their affection, the norm of exclusivity had little significance. In fact, during this stage in the development of their romantic activities, it was not uncommon for many group members to like the same boy. Just as they might have other interests in common, sharing a romantic interest in a particular boy was considered to be acceptable, if not appropriate.

Interestingly enough, Marsha and Josephine talked about how they both liked this guy Jack. They pointed him out to me and I [researcher] said, "Oh, oh, you both like the same guy?" They said, "Oh yeah, it's okay. We can do that.

⁷ Although Zick Rubin's (1970, 1973) research shows that "liking" and "loving" are distinct emotional states, the girls in this study used these emotion words interchangeably, especially when referring to their romantic feelings for boys.

We always like the same people, but we don't get mad at each other" (field notes, seventh grade, March 30).

In an interview with another group of

seventh-grade girls, it became clear that the distinction between *liking* and *going with* the same boy is important. The former is permissible; the latter is not.

- 1 Carrie: They can like, like, like as much as they want, but they
 2 don't// (go)
 3 Marla: They don't two-time!
 4 Researcher: But what?
 5 Carrie: They can like a person as much as they want.
 6 Researcher: Can two friends *go* together // with the same boy?
 7 (Alice): Oh, they don't have any choice // (they)
 8 Carrie: No.
 9 Bonnie: No (interview, seventh grade, May 24).

Throughout this year, many girls began to pursue boys openly and to make their feelings more public, often through a friend who served as an intermediary. Once a group member had acted openly on her feelings and formed a relationship with a boy, it was no longer acceptable for other girls either to have or to express romantic feelings for him. At this point in the development of their romantic activities, the norm of exclusivity had become highly salient, and violations began

to be perceived as a serious threat. Most of the girls became concerned about violations; they were resentful and jealous of those who did not abide by the norm of exclusivity.

Gossip was one way in which the girls clarified and reinforced this norm. In the following example from a seventh-grade interview, Natalie is accusing Rhoda, an attractive group member, of flirting with her and Tricia's boyfriends.

- 1 Natalie: Rhoda, every time I get a boyfriend or Tricia gets a boyfriend
 2 # or or we like somebody, she starts # y'know messing around
 3 with him and everything and # y'know—and everything, she
 4 shows her ass off and so, they start *likin'* her, right? And she
 5 did that, she was trying to do that to Sammy Jones #
 6 Tricia's boyfriend # ya know, the one that broke up with her
 7 after four months (interview, seventh grade, May 24).

Although gossip episodes such as this do not inform norm violators about the deviant nature of their behavior, they communicate normative information to other group members (Eder and Enke 1988; Fine 1986; Goodwin 1980).

The girls considered it inappropriate to have or express romantic feelings not only for a boy who was involved with someone else, but also for a boy whom a group member was in the process of pursuing. Group members

sometimes engaged in confrontations with alleged norm violators in order to communicate their inappropriate behavior and affect. In the next exchange, several members of a seventh-grade group directly accuse Carol of flirting with Ted, a boy Betty is pursuing but not currently going with. Although Carol argues initially that she has not done anything wrong, later she agrees to be an intermediary for Betty in order to resolve the dispute.

- 1 Mary: Ted came up to Carol and said she—that he loved her.
 2 Linda: Who?
 3 Betty: *Carol!*
 4 Carol: What?
 5 Betty: I don't like you no more.
 6 Carol: What'd I do?
 7 Linda: Taking Betty's boyfriend.
 8 Carol: I didn't either! ((pounds table as she half laughs))
 9 Mary: It wasn't Carol's *fault*, though.
 10 Betty: *Yes it was!* She *flirts!*
 11 Carol: I was just walking there // ().

- 12 Betty: You *flirt*, You *flirt*. Yes, you //
- 13 Carol: I didn't even do nothing. ((laughter))
- 14 Betty: You *flirt*, Carol! You're mean! I don't like you no more.
- 15 Carol: You won't (mind me) after I get done talking # if you still
16 want me to.
- 17 Betty: Huh?
- 18 Carol: If you—do you want me to still talk to him? // ((Betty
19 nods)) Alright, shut up. God.
- 20 Nancy: Hell, she called me up, she goes, "Nancy, call Ted and talk to
21 him."
- 22 Betty: (I sank you) ((silly voice)) (taped conversation, seventh grade, May 5).

This example is interesting because it shows that these girls expect their friends to know not only with whom they are going, but also their *intentions* to become romantically involved with certain boys. Acceptable contact with these boys is limited to behavior that will promote their friends' romantic interests (e.g., serving as intermediaries), and excludes any friendly behavior that might encourage romantic feelings to develop. As shown in the previous example, such behavior makes a girl subject to the negative label "flirt."⁸ It is also noteworthy that group members use confrontations such as this to sanction inappropriate behavior and affect. Because violations of the norm of exclusivity have serious consequences for group members, including the possibility of being in competition with friends over boys, it is not surprising that confrontations sometimes are used to clarify and reinforce this norm.

Although most group members increasingly saw the need for the norm of exclusivity to protect themselves from unpleasant feelings of jealousy, some girls were reluctant to give up the freedom to have or express romantic feelings whenever they desired. Because norm violations were viewed as serious, girls who continued to defy this norm occasionally engaged in playful modes of interaction whereby they could express their "deviant" feelings while acknowledging the norm of exclusivity.

For example, several seventh-grade girls were teasing Mary about "liking" Wally and dragged her over to the ball diamond, where Wally was playing softball. The teasing consisted of trying to get Mary to talk with him and telling Wally that Mary wanted to "go in the stairwell" with him. Mary refused to talk to Wally. This reaction led to some joking exchanges among the other group members, several of whom also had romantic feelings for Wally.

- 1 Carol: I'll take him if you don't.
- 2 Elaine: Whoo! You hear that one, Wally?
- 3 Carol: Well, I don't care.
- 4 Elaine: Wally, Wally, Wally, Wally. She says she'll take
5 ya if Mary don't want ya. ((Unrelated talk for
6 five turns.))
- 7 Elaine: She said she'd take ya if Mary don't want ya.
- 8 Mary: What'd you tell him Elaine? Elaine // ()
- 9 Linda: Hey you! If Mary don't want ya and Carol don't
10 want ya, I'll take ya!
- 11 Carol: Uh uh, I will. I'll take him if Mary don't and
12 then if I don't, you do (taped conversation, seventh grade, April 7).

Here the girls use playful teasing to inform Wally of their romantic feelings, while ac-

knowledging at the same time that they will wait to act on these feelings until Mary no longer "wants" him. The joking nature of

⁸ The label "flirt" has a double meaning among adolescent females. Whereas the term sometimes is used to describe girls who express romantic feelings toward a group member's boyfriend, it is also used to describe girls who express romantic feelings for more than one boy. In the previous example, the girls used it in the former sense. Like the labels "gay" and "slut," the girls also use the label "flirt" to refer to an emotional social

type. Emotional social types are persons who routinely violate emotion norms and who serve as examples in correcting young people's feeling and/or expression. See Gordon (1989) for a discussion of the functions of the emotional social type in childhood emotional socialization.

this exchange provides these girls with more freedom to express their feelings for Wally and thus to violate the norm of exclusivity.⁹

This finding suggests that feeling and expression norms do not determine adolescent girls' affect and behavior, but serve as an important cultural resource which is incorporated into their action. Through expressing their knowledge of this norm, in fact, these girls succeed in expressing their feelings for a boy who is being pursued by a friend. At the same time, their ability to transform cultural knowledge into a playful frame gives them an opportunity to violate the norm without negative sanctions.

In brief, when group members began to pursue boys and form romantic relationships, the girls developed the norm of exclusivity to deal with their new concerns. They communicated this norm through gossip and confrontations as well as in more playful modes of discourse. Yet even though norm violations were viewed negatively by most of the girls, several group members did not feel compelled to abide by this norm. Instead they responded with "resistance" by continuing to hold and express romantic feelings for boys who were already "taken." In some cases their resistance was communicated through playful teasing, which allowed them to express their normatively inappropriate feelings while simultaneously showing their awareness of the norm of exclusivity.

Norm 4: One should have romantic feelings for only one boy at a time.

The third feeling norm pertaining to the object of romance was that one should have romantic feelings for only one boy at a time. A corollary was that if one had romantic feelings for more than one boy, these feelings **should not be** expressed. In some groups, the development of the norm of monogamy reflected the girls' awareness of the societal norm of monogamy. In other groups, how-

ever, this norm was developed to deal with the problems created by having multiple boyfriends.

For example, when we asked one group of seventh-grade girls about the possibility of going with more than one person at a time, the reason they gave for avoiding this behavior was the likelihood of creating jealousy among boyfriends. Because jealousy and other forms of conflict among males were expressed frequently in physical fights, the consequences of creating jealousy were considered to be quite serious.

I asked if you could only go with one person at a time and she said, "It depends on who you're talking about." She said that you should only go with one at a time but that some girls went with more than one. I asked why they shouldn't do that, and she said because "then you get a couple of jealous boyfriends on your hands" and they might end up getting into a fight, and that it was best to avoid that (field notes, seventh grade, April 27).

Some girls continued to have multiple boyfriends, but were careful to become involved only with boys who were separated geographically. As long as a boy was unaware of his girlfriend's other romantic involvements, jealousy and its negative consequences could be avoided. For some of these girls, in fact, having multiple boyfriends was a source of status—something they bragged about to their female friends.

Effie and Laura had a long conversation. Laura told Effie that she was going with two guys, one from Royalton and another from California. She said that they were both going to be coming down this summer and she didn't know what to do. She presented this as a dilemma, but she was laughing about it. She really wanted to show that she was popular with boys (field notes, eighth grade, April 6).

Although some groups developed the norm of monogamy to deal with the practical problems associated with having multiple boyfriends, in other groups the development of this norm reflected group members' knowledge of the cultural norm of monogamy. When we asked one group of seventh-grade girls whether two people could go with the same boy, their response turned to the inappropriateness of having multiple romantic partners.

⁹ Although an alternative interpretation of this exchange is that the girls actually are supporting Mary's romantic interest rather than violating the norm of exclusivity, ethnographic data on these girls show that several of them in fact had romantic feelings for Wally. Because Mary was somewhat overweight, the girls did not take her interest in him seriously.

- 1 Researcher: How come two people can't go with the same boy at the same
2 time? It seems like you could logi-
3 Ellen: Because you're only supposed to—when you go with a person
4 like if you
5 Natalie: It's like a bigamist.
6 Ellen: Oh . . .
7 Natalie: You know, when you
8 Ellen: Like a what?
9 Natalie: A bigamist. Like when you go with somebody. Like it's, it's
10 Ellen: Two-timing.
11 Natalie: When you go with each other the same—when you go with each
12 other it's kinda like gettin' married or somethin', you
13 know, and like if you're goin' with two people at the same
14 time it's like a bigamist.
15 Ellen: Like Natalie did!
16 Natalie: Yeah, I did that once.
17 Ellen: Yeah, with Steve and Robert.
18 Natalie: I did it twice. ((Natalie and Ellen burst out laughing)) (interview, seventh
grade, May 24).

This example illustrates that the girls are drawing on their knowledge of the societal norm of monogamy (which pertains to marriage) in order to develop a feeling norm regarding multiple partners which is relevant to their own romantic relationships. The exchange also shows that even though these girls agreed that it was inappropriate to have romantic feelings for more than one boy at a time, violations of this norm were not perceived as serious.

By the time these girls were in eighth

grade, however, having romantic feelings for more than one boy was no longer viewed as acceptable. Moreover, they used different strategies to clarify this norm and to sanction deviant affect and behavior. In the following exchange, Ellen and Hanna are telling the other girls about what happened at church the night before. Because Ellen is already going with Craig, she is first accused and later reprimanded for going to church solely to meet other boys.

- 1 Ellen: We were sittin' there starin' at guys at church last night,
2 me and Hanna were, and—
3 Hanna: And she saw one that looked just like Craig.
4 Natalie: But # // I was—
5 Ellen: I wasn't starin' at him.
6 Hanna: That was groaty.
7 (Natalie:) You're going with Craig.
8 Ellen: I know. I stared at Steve. ((laughs))
9 Hanna: I know, but he looks like him in the face,
10 Natalie: But, um, he just—
11 Peg: You // go to church for a different reason than that, Ellen!
12 Natalie: I // get stuck on one guy.
13 Peg: Then you shouldn't of been there (interview, eighth grade, March 30).

Although Peg and Natalie considered this violation to be serious, Ellen continued to view it as humorous, laughing as she acknowledged that she “stared” at another boy. Given Ellen's reluctance to consider the seriousness of her violation, Peg and Natalie used more confrontive strategies to inform her about the inappropriateness of

her affect and behavior with respect to this norm.¹⁰

¹⁰ As among the college students in Waller's (1937) classic study of the “rating and dating complex,” our data show that same-sex peers are more important than romantic partners in regulating adolescent girls' romantic feelings and behaviors.

ERRATUM

There is an error in footnote 12, p. 41, p. 41, of "Feeling Norms Among Adolescent Females," by Robin W. Simon, Donna Eder, and Cathy Evans (1992, Vol. 55, No. 1). The second sentence of this footnote should read:

"The girls' normative statements in the interviews about affect and behavior, however, suggest that these norms are not merely 'rhetorical devices'."

We apologize to the authors for this error.

As girls begin to take this norm seriously, they need to become more aware of their romantic feelings. They may even begin to modify their emotions on certain occasions, changing romantic attractions to nonromantic feelings in order to avoid norm violations. Sometimes the girls explicitly discussed their feelings toward boys, thus showing their close monitoring of these feelings. Awareness of romantic feelings was especially important during times of transition from one boyfriend to another. Because "going together" arrangements typically lasted less than two weeks, these transitions were frequent.

Gwen and Ellen went "cruising" with some boys over the weekend. The boy Gwen was with asked her to go with him but he broke up with her the next morning because another boy that Gwen went with last week threatened to beat him up. So then the other boy asked her back with him Monday morning and she's going with him again now. She said that "one thing I can say for certain is that I love (the boy she's going with), but I can also say for certain that I really like (the boy she went with on Saturday)" (field notes, eighth grade, March 30).

Through Gwen's claim that she "loves" the boy she is currently going with and "likes" the boy she went with on Saturday, her feelings appear to conform with the norm of monogamy. Although it is not clear whether her current feelings are the result of emotion (or expression) work, it is clear that she pays close attention to her feelings and can discuss them with "certainty."¹¹

Other girls expressed more confusion about their emotions. In some cases, their confusion stemmed from the discrepancy between their *actual* feelings and the feelings they thought they *ought* to have. Even though they knew that they *should* have romantic feelings for only one boy at a time, girls sometimes found themselves feeling multiple attractions.

I heard Karla being teased when a specific boy walked by. Her friends were saying that she had a crush on him and once they yelled it at the boy. Karla acted rather embarrassed and angry about this. When they yelled at the boy, they

asked Karla if it was true that she liked him. Karla said that she did like him "for a friend." They said that they had seen her walking with him in the halls. After a long pause Karla asked Laura rather indignantly, "How could I like him when I'm already going with somebody?" Effie said, "Two-timing." Karla was embarrassed and seemed rather mild in her denial (field notes, eighth grade, April 21).

Karla's feelings are creating some discomfort for her because they do not conform readily to this feeling norm. She claims that she likes the other boy only "for a friend," but she expresses embarrassment as well as anger toward her friends, who perceive it to be a stronger attraction. Although we do not know whether Karla subsequently modified her feelings and/or expressions toward this boy, emotion work might be necessary in situations such as this, if girls are to abide by the norm of monogamy.¹²

Norm 5: One should always be in love.

The final feeling norm that emerged was that one should always be in love. This norm differed from those discussed previously in that it was not devised to deal with group concerns, but was developed largely to deal with the concerns of individuals. Whereas violations of most feeling norms had consequences for other group members and peers (e.g., the norms of heterosexuality, exclusivity, and monogamy), violations of this final norm had consequences only for individual girls. Because such violations did not affect others, this norm was held even less widely than those discussed previously. For many girls at the school, however, this emotion norm was a basic part of their knowledge and understanding of romantic love.

For some girls, the onset of their first romantic attraction was the beginning of a continuous state of being in love, often with frequent changes in the object of their

¹¹ Although our data do not permit us to assess whether these girls altered their emotions and/or expressions in order to conform to feeling norms, research by developmental psychologists shows that by age 11, children know that internally experienced affect need not be expressed (Saarni 1979) and that certain affective states can be manipulated intentionally (Harris and Olthof 1982).

¹² One possible interpretation of these data is that these feeling norms concern how adolescent girls should conduct discourse about romantic love, rather than how they should feel and behave. The girls' normative statements in the interviews about affect and behavior, however, suggest that these norms are merely "rhetorical devices." Another possibility is that these norms pertain not to emotion per se but rather to romantic relationships. Indeed, it is difficult to disentangle the two, especially because the girls' conversations are not laden with emotion words. On the basis of the combination of ethnography, in-depth interviews, and naturally occurring discourse, however, we are convinced that these are norms about feelings corresponding to romantic relationships.

feelings. In fact, simply having romantic feelings may have been more important than the actual boys to whom these feelings were directed. For example, a researcher noticed that a girl had "I love" written on her hand and asked her about it. Although this girl's romantic feelings had no particular target, she explained that she was ready to add the name of a boy as soon as a suitable target was found.

The importance of always being in love became particularly evident when relationships with boys ended. For instance, when girls realized that a boy they had been going with now liked someone else, they often redirected their romantic feelings toward someone new.

She said that she was just going to go up and ask him if he had any intention of going with her again, and if he didn't, she was just "going to have to find someone else." I don't think she has the concept in her mind that she could possibly not be involved with anyone (field notes, eighth grade, March 23).

The salience of this norm was related to the duration of adolescent romantic relationships. Although it might seem that "long-term" relationships would be preferred because girls would not continually have to seek out new boyfriends, some girls reported that being in a long-term relationship was a disadvantage because it took them out of circulation.

Apparently Alice's boyfriend broke up with her today and she was unhappy. She saw him walk by the media center and called to him several

times, but he ignored her purposely. She said that the worst of it was that she had gone with him several months, and during that time had progressively cut herself off from contact with other boys so that she didn't even have any male friends left (field notes, eighth grade, March 4).

Within four days Alice had a new boyfriend, but her comments show that replacing her old boyfriend was an important concern.

During the early stage in the development of their romantic activities, when the girls were beginning to have romantic feelings but did not act on them, all group members could adhere easily to this norm. Once they started to form romantic relationships, however, only the girls who were popular with boys could continually attract new boyfriends. In fact, the status associated with being popular with boys contributed to the salience of this norm among the girls at this school. At the same time, group members also had a hand in reinforcing this feeling norm.

When Nancy came up she asked "Who do you like now, Carol?" a question which Nancy often asks Carol. Carol said, "Pete." Nancy said, "Oh yeah." Shortly after that Linda said, "Guess who Pete likes?" Betty said, "Carol." Nancy said, "God, you guys get everything you want" (field notes, seventh grade, April 14).

Even though less popular girls could not attract new boyfriends so easily, nevertheless they were able to abide by this norm. One strategy commonly used by these as well as by the more popular girls was to "recycle" the boys with whom they had had a previous relationship.

- 1 Ellen: And then she went with George and then she went to likin' Tom
2 again.
3 Natalie: Yeah. ((pause)) But sometimes it kinda switches on and off, like
4 s—like you'll like one boy and then you'll get tired of 'im and
5 you go with somebody else and then you'll like him again. Like
6 with Bryan and Dale. I used to do that a lot (interview, seventh grade,
May 24).

Natalie's comments suggest that her and her friends' feelings for former boyfriends sometimes are recreated for the purpose of conforming to this norm. Natalie's comments also imply that conformity is likely to result in emotion work on the part of these girls, who sometimes evoke romantic feelings for boys they were previously "tired of."¹³

¹³ Although the scope of this paper does not include an examination of the role of the media in disseminating normative information about romantic feelings to adoles-

The advantages of conforming to this norm include appearing to be popular with boys as well as providing ongoing evidence of a heterosexual orientation; both are important concerns to girls at this age. At the same

cent females, studies of media messages indicate that teenage girls typically are portrayed in popular magazines, romance novels, and television programs as either having a boyfriend or actively seeking one (Cantor 1987). These messages may contribute to the development and maintenance of the feeling norm regarding the importance of being in love continually.

time, however, conformity carries several possible costs. One such cost is that emotion work may be necessary in order to always be in love. Although we can only speculate at this point, adolescent girls sometimes may create romantic feelings for boys to whom they are not attracted so they can conform to this norm. Hochschild (1983b) argued that when insincere feelings are created routinely, people lose touch with their actual feelings. Insofar as girls have insincere feelings, it is possible that eventually they will have difficulty in distinguishing between their "real" romantic feelings and their less authentic feelings, which they created in order to satisfy the requirements of this norm.

A second potential cost stems from the dilemma faced by adolescent females as a result of their adherence to this norm. On the one hand, girls consider being continuously in love as socially desirable because it is a way to reaffirm their popularity with boys and thus to increase their own status in relation to other females. On the other hand, group members who both attract too much attention from males and appear to be indiscriminate in their choice of romantic partners are often criticized by their friends for being "sluts," and ultimately are viewed in a negative manner.

DISCUSSION

In this paper we argue that adolescence is a period during which females acquire cultural knowledge about romantic love, including the social norms that guide romantic feelings. In addition to obtaining normative information about romance, we found that the girls in this study had developed several feeling and expression norms to deal with their own concerns about romantic love. By the seventh and eighth grade, norms concerning the relative importance of romantic relationships as well as the appropriate object of romantic feelings had emerged in these groups of friends. Whereas some of these norms were highly developed and generally accepted (e.g., the norms of heterosexuality, exclusivity, and monogamy), others were not held by all group members and still were being negotiated (e.g., the norm concerning the relative importance of romantic relationships).

We also found that adolescent girls used a variety of discourse strategies to communicate normative information and to reinforce emo-

tion norms to friends. In general, group members informed one another about feeling and expression norms through light and playful language activities, as well as through serious and confrontive modes of discourse. Language that involved humor was one of the more common discourse strategies used by these girls. Through joking and teasing remarks, group members could point out their friends' norm violations in an indirect, nonthreatening manner. Moreover, teasing and joking were ways in which the girls could show their awareness of feeling norms while simultaneously expressing their own normatively inappropriate emotions.

The girls also commonly used gossip and confrontations to clarify and reinforce feeling norms. Although gossip did not directly inform norm violators of their inappropriate affect and behavior, it provided normative information to other group members. Finally, confrontations sometimes were used when indirect strategies were ineffective at producing normative consensus and when norm violations had negative consequences for group members. In these exchanges, girls expressed social disapproval of affective deviance through accusations, insults, and reprimands. Not surprisingly, such exchanges often involved considerable conflict and tension. Overall, through these various language activities and modes of discourse, the girls conveyed what they viewed as appropriate and inappropriate in regard to the group's feeling and expression norms.

Even though girls obtain normative information about romantic love from friends, they do not always abide by emotion norms. Rather, our analysis of discourse revealed that group members sometimes responded with "resistance" and intentionally defied their group's feeling and expression norms. Therefore, feeling and expression norms underlying romantic love constrain but do not determine adolescent females' affect and behavior. Further research is necessary to determine the degree to which girls resist other emotion norms, as well as to identify the full range of emotion management processes used by adolescent females.

Romance is highly salient, however, because having a boyfriend enhances girls' popularity with peers at an age when being popular is important for their self-image. In fact, two norms that emerged in these peer groups reveal the salience of romance to girls

during this period: the norms concerning the relative importance of romantic relationships and the importance of being in love continually. It is possible that even after romantic relationships become tied less closely to peer group status, females continue to feel that they always should be in a romantic relationship with a male in order to validate their attractiveness and worth to self and to others.

Although it was not our purpose to examine the actual emotional experiences of adolescent girls, our findings support the view that emotions are in part socially constructed and that feeling and expression are subject to normative influences. By focusing on romantic socialization in adolescent peer groups, we have shown how, in everyday interaction with friends, females obtain normative information about romantic feelings as well as maintaining, reproducing, and recreating one aspect of their society's emotion culture.

The focus on emotional socialization among adolescent peers also is important for understanding emotion processes more generally. Affective socialization, as a fluid, negotiated process that nonetheless leads to conformity to social norms, often is overlooked when attention is restricted to adult-child interaction and relations among adults. Our findings illustrate that older children not only acquire cultural knowledge about emotion but also challenge, refine, and alter this knowledge.

Although the results of our study should be generalizable to other adolescent white females, there is some evidence suggesting that black and other nonwhite females are less concerned with romance (Griffin 1985). This difference may occur because historically, nonwhite females have been less dependent than white females on marriage for economic sustenance or mobility. Additional research is necessary to assess whether the affective socialization processes described in this paper are specific to white girls, or whether they apply to girls from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds.

It also is important to learn more about affective socialization processes among females in adulthood. For example, it is conceivable that women make a greater distinction between feelings and expressions than girls, accepting a wider range of feelings but monitoring their expressions more closely. Women also may use different strategies when resisting the feeling and expression norms underlying romantic love.

Interactional data on married and single women would be helpful in beginning to address these issues.

In this paper we begin to identify feeling norms that underlie romantic love among early adolescent females as well as outlining the social processes by which normative information about romantic feelings is obtained. This research, however, raises questions about affective socialization processes that we did not address here. We limited our analysis to peer group socialization in school, but it is likely that children also acquire cultural knowledge about romantic feelings through other social relationships and in other social contexts. For example, to what extent do children acquire normative information about romantic feelings from family members such as parents, siblings, and cousins?

Moreover, we focused on the ways in which adolescent females obtain normative information about romantic feelings in everyday interaction. Yet, girls also may acquire cultural knowledge about love through romance novels, television, and films. Do these media present explicit normative information about romantic feelings? If they do so, how is this information interpreted and used by adolescent females?

Furthermore, does romantic socialization differ for adolescent males? We know little about the ways in which boys gain normative information about romantic feelings. Are the affective socialization processes described here specific to females, or are they found also in adolescent male peer groups?

Finally, can we attribute gender differences in the experience, expression, and importance of love in adulthood, reported by Cancian (1985, 1987) and Hochschild (1983a), to these earlier affective socialization processes? Insofar as romantic love is more salient to adolescent females than to adolescent males, what are the implications of these differences not only for male-female romantic relationships, but also for gay and lesbian relationships, in adult life? Our understanding of romantic love in American culture will be broadened only when these questions are addressed.

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