

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Dating and Romantic Experiences in Adolescence

Heather A. Bouchey and Wyndol Furman

Introduction

If we were to enter a typical grade school playground in the United States, we would likely witness a curious process, wherein boys and girls sporadically tease each other with threats of “Cootie” infestation, kissing games, or other similar taunts. If we flash forward a few years, we are likely to see the same students interacting more regularly with members of the other sex. Although adolescents may have previously proclaimed that members of the other sex were “icky” or stupid, they have now become much more interested in these peers. If we look even further into the future, many of these individuals will be involved in an intense romantic relationship during adolescence or young adulthood. Some will have recognized that they are lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and turned their romantic interests to same-sex peers. Clearly, substantial changes have occurred in these peer interactions. What was once a short-lived interchange on the playground has become an intimate relationship that is central to an adolescent’s or young adult’s life.

In this chapter, we discuss the emergence and nature of adolescents’ dating and romantic experiences. Existing research has primarily focused on heterosexual relationships, but we include literature on the experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth whenever possible (see also chapter 19 in this volume). We highlight common changes that occur in romantic experiences and relationships from early through late adolescence. We also describe individual differences in these experiences and discuss contextual influences on romantic relationships. The topic of adolescent romance is a relatively new one in the scientific literature; accordingly, we not only review the existing research, but also describe major gaps in our current knowledge and identify important directions for research and

theory. We begin with an examination of the significance of romantic activity in adolescence.

The Significance of Romantic Experiences in Adolescence

Romantic relationships are a central aspect of most adolescents' social worlds. Well over one-half of 12- to 18-year-olds in the United States report having experienced a romantic relationship in the last 18 months (Carver, Joyner, & Udry, 1999). By the 10th grade (ages 15–16), adolescents interact more frequently with romantic partners than they do with parents, siblings, or friends (Laursen & Williams, 1997). Moreover, other-sex peers occupy much of adolescents' thoughts even when they are not interacting with them. High school students spend between five and eight hours per week thinking about actual or potential romantic partners (Richards et al., 1998).

Romantic partners are also a major source of support for many adolescents. By the tenth grade, they are tied for second with mothers in the hierarchy of support figures (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). In college (age 19), romantic relationships are the most supportive relationship for males, and are among the most supportive relationships for females.

The other sex is a frequent source of strong emotions as well – in fact, a more frequent source than same-sex peers, parents, or school issues (Wilson-Shockley, 1995). The majority of these emotions are positive, but a substantial proportion are negative, indicating that other-sex relationships can be sources of stress as well.

Romantic involvements are thought to influence both intimacy and identity development – two crucial psychosocial processes that occur during adolescence (Dyk & Adams, 1987, 1990; Erikson, 1968; Fitch & Adams, 1983; Furman & Shaffer, in press). Various theorists have even suggested that experiences in adolescent romantic relationships may influence the nature of subsequent close relationships, including marriages (Erikson, 1968; Furman & Flanagan, 1997; Sullivan, 1953). In addition to encouraging a sense of relatedness to others, romantic experiences may help adolescents successfully establish autonomy as they explore extrafamilial relationships and come to rely less on parents (Dowdy & Kliewer, 1998; Furman & Shaffer, in press; Gray & Steinberg, 1999).

Whereas dating may confer several benefits to adolescents, it also entails risks. The elevated prevalence of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease in the United States is clearly linked to romantic involvement. In fact, the strongest risk factor for sexual intercourse in 7th–12th grades is participation in a romantic relationship during the previous 18 months (Blum, Beuhring, & Rinehart, 2000). Romantic partners are the perpetrators of between one-half to two-thirds of sexual victimization incidents in late adolescence (Flanagan & Furman, 2000). More than 25 percent of adolescents are victims of dating violence or aggression (see Wolfe & Feiring, 2000), and dating violence precedes serious marital violence in 25 percent to 50 percent of cases (Gayford, 1975; Roscoe & Benaske, 1985). In terms of mental health, adolescent romantic breakups are one of the strongest predictors of depression, multiple-victim killings, and suicide attempts and completions (Brendt et al., 1993; Fessenden, 2000; Joyner & Udry, 2000; Monroe et al., 1999). Thus,

romantic involvement has both benefits and risks. The specific effects of romantic experiences, however, vary from individual to individual, a topic we shall return to in a subsequent section.

Developmental Changes in Romantic Experiences

In this section, we describe the nature of adolescent heterosexual romantic experiences and the developmental changes that commonly occur from early adolescence to late adolescence and adulthood. We must emphasize at the outset that there is no single normative pattern of development in the romantic domain. Individuals vary with respect to when they develop romantic interests, when they begin to date, and how extensively they date. The sequence of experiences is also not fixed. For example, early romantic ventures tend to be short-lived, but a minority of them may develop into long-term relationships. Despite this variability in adolescent romantic involvement, there is some commonality in the nature and sequence of these experiences; a description of the developmental changes that often occur can be useful heuristically.

Changes in interest and activity with the other sex

One of the most noticeable developmental changes occurring in early adolescence is increased activity with the other sex. During the elementary school years, both boys and girls interact primarily with peers of the same sex, often actively avoiding interaction with other-sex playmates (Maccoby, 1988, 1990; Thorne, 1986). However, in early adolescence boys and girls begin to think about and engage more in activities with the other sex.

Dunphy (1963) first described this pattern of changes in his five-stage developmental model of adolescent peer-group interaction. In the first stage, unisexual cliques emerge. These cliques consist of four to six close friends with similar backgrounds who serve as the primary nonfamily social unit throughout early adolescence. In the second stage of Dunphy's (1963) model, male cliques and female cliques begin socializing together in a group context. A larger heterosexual peer group begins to emerge during the third stage, when clique leaders begin to date each other. In the fourth stage, the peer crowd is fully developed, and several heterosexual cliques closely associate with one another. Finally, males and females begin to develop couple relationships; the crowd begins to disintegrate, leaving loosely associated groups of couples.

Recent investigations have identified developmental changes that are congruent with Dunphy's model. For example, early adolescents spend much of their time thinking about members of the other sex, but it is not until later that they actually begin to spend a significant amount of time with them (Blyth, Hill, & Thiel, 1982; Richards et al., 1998). Typically, adolescents first interact with the other sex in a mixed group context, and then

peers date more frequently (Franzoi, Davis, & Vásquez-Suson, 1994). Moreover, having a large number of close other-sex friends predicts having a larger other-sex network subsequently, which in turn predicts developing a romantic relationship with someone (Connolly, Furman, & Konarski, 2001). Finally, the percentage of adolescents who report having a boyfriend or girlfriend increases from early to late adolescence (Carver et al., 1999; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). A recent national survey reports that 36 percent of adolescents at age 13 and 73 percent at age 18 report involvement with a romantic partner in the last 18 months (Carver et al., 1999). These relationships also become more intense and central over time, as interdependence and closeness between romantic partners increase with age (Laursen & Williams, 1997; Zimmer-Gembeck, 1999).

To date, the majority of theoretical and empirical work has focused on heterosexual youths' experiences. Few sexual-minority youth enter into romantic liaisons with same-sex peers during adolescence, because of the limited opportunities to do so (Sears, 1991). Many, however, have sexual experiences with same-sex peers (Herdt & Boxer, 1993; Savin-Williams, 1990, 1998). Moreover, many gay and lesbian youth report that they had dated and had sexual experiences with other-sex peers during adolescence (Savin-Williams, 1996). Experiences with the other sex may help clarify gay, lesbian, and bisexual youths' sexual orientation, and can provide a cover for their sexual identity (Diamond, Savin-Williams, & Dubé, 1999).

Changes in features of romantic relationships across adolescence

By early adolescence, individuals begin to differentiate between relationships with other-sex friendships and heterosexual romantic relationships, attributing features such as passion and commitment solely to the latter (Connolly et al., 1999). At the same time, adolescents' conceptualizations of dating and romance are not the same as adults' conceptions. Early notions of romance are quite idealized and commensurate with stereotyped media images of heterosexual love (Connolly, et al., 1999; Montgomery & Sorell, 1998). For instance, many adolescents report being in love even though they have rarely spoken to or are not in an actual relationship with the object of their desire (Montgomery & Sorell, 1998). Further, older adolescents report both falling in love at a later age and having dated less in the past than younger ones do, suggesting that concepts of romantic relationships change with development (Montgomery & Sorell, 1998; Shulman & Scharf, 2000).

Adolescents initially view these new relationships as opportunities for recreation, sexual experimentation, or status attainment. Dating relationships are not expected to meet many of the functions that are obtained in subsequent adult romantic relationships, such as the provision of support or caregiving (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Feiring, 1996; Roscoe, Diana, & Brooks, 1987). In fact, simply having a boyfriend or girlfriend during early and middle adolescence may be more important than the nature of the romantic interactions themselves. Of course, having the right boyfriend or girlfriend matters as well. A popular or attractive dating partner can be an avenue for garnering prestige and

With time, adolescents acquire experience interacting with the other sex and begin to turn to their romantic partners to fulfill socio-emotional needs. Furman and Wehner (1994) proposed that romantic partners become important figures in the functioning of four behavioral systems – affiliation, sexual/reproduction, attachment, and caregiving. According to this model, the affiliative and sexual/reproduction systems are the first to become salient in romantic relationships (Furman & Wehner, 1994, 1997). In their initial romantic relationships, adolescents are likely to “hang out” with dating partners and engage in many leisure activities with them. They provide stimulation and frequently trigger positive emotions (Wilson-Shockley, 1995). In addition, adolescent romantic relationships present ideal opportunities for individuals to explore their sexual feelings, seek sexual gratification, and ascertain the kind of sexual activity with which they feel comfortable. Furman and Wehner (1994, 1997) posited that the attachment and caregiving systems become more important in romantic relationships during late adolescence and early adulthood. At this time, the press to find a new primary attachment figure increases as relationships with parents have transformed and many individuals have left home. The emergence of the attachment and caregiving systems takes time, however, and thus, these systems may be fully activated only in relatively long-term romantic relationships (Furman & Wehner, 1994, 1997).

Although the evidence is limited, existing data are consistent with this framework. For instance, both middle and late adolescents mention affiliative features more often than attachment and caregiving features in their descriptions of the advantages of romantic relationships (Feiring, 1996, 1999; Shulman & Scharf, 2000). Moreover, the emphasis on romantic partners' affiliative features tends to decrease or remain the same from middle to late adolescence, whereas the emphasis on attachment features tends to increase. Adolescents first turn to their peers for a safe haven, and subsequently rely on them as a secure base (Hazan & Zeifman, 1994). However, only long-term romantic partners are likely to serve as secure bases (Fraley & Davis, 1997; Hazan & Zeifman, 1994). Even in young adulthood, a substantial number of individuals still view parents as their primary secure base (Trinke & Bartholomew, 1997; Fraley & Davis, 1997).

Individual Differences in Romantic Relationships

Up to this point, we have emphasized the normative patterns of adolescent romantic development. What is at least as striking, however, is the diversity of romantic experiences adolescents have. Some begin dating early, whereas others wait until later in adolescence or even adulthood. Some date extensively, whereas others focus on alternative activities, such as schoolwork or sports, during adolescence. Not only does the timing and extent of adolescents' romantic experiences vary, but the nature of their experiences differs widely as well. For instance, some adolescents become involved with warm and supportive dating partners, whereas others report conflict-ridden, volatile relationships.

Investigators have begun to examine such individual differences in romantic activity,

fully propose such a framework, we believe that at least four dimensions are required to capture individual variation in experiences. These dimensions are (a) the timing of dating; (b) the intensity or quantity of experiences; (c) the quality of the relationships that develop; and (d) individuals' representations of these relationships. The empirical literature concerning each is described subsequently.

Much of the work on individual differences in the timing of dating experiences has focused on early participation in romantic relationships. Bullies are more likely to begin dating early, and their relationships are more likely to be characterized by a lack of support and physical and social aggression (Connolly et al., 2000). Those adolescents who are involved with a romantic partner at a young age have higher rates of alcohol and drug use as well as lower levels of academic achievement (Aro & Taipale, 1987; Grinder, 1966). However, the causal direction of the links between early involvement and these problems is not clear, as early relationships may engender some risk or adolescents at risk may be seeking out romantic relationships earlier (Aro & Taipale, 1987; Pawlby, Mills, & Quinton, 1997).

To date, little research has examined the developmental antecedents and sequelae for those adolescents who date at a later age than their peers do. In one study of 12th-grade students (ages 16–19), those with minimal dating experience were found to report greater symptomatology than those who had dated some (Furman, 2000). Coupled with the results on early dating, this suggests that being off the normative timetable is associated with psychological difficulties.

Once one takes into account early daters and nondaters, the correlates of the frequency or intensity of dating do not appear to be strong or are mixed in nature. For example, when minimal daters were excluded from the study just described, psychological symptomatology and self-esteem were unrelated to quantitative indices, such as the total number of people dated, the number dated in the last year, and whether one was currently dating (Furman, 2000). Similarly, middle adolescents who were currently dating and those who had not dated in the last six months did not differ in the frequency of behavioral problems (Kuttler, La Greca, & Prinstein, 1999). Those who had broken up with a partner in the last six months, however, reported more externalizing symptoms, underscoring the importance of distinguishing between the potential impact of romantic involvement and romantic breakups.

The quality of adolescents' relationships may also play an important role in their impact. For example, negative interactions and controlling behavior by one's partner are associated with greater symptomatology and lower self-esteem (Furman, 2000). Importantly, the degree of adolescents' dating involvement and their romantic relationship quality appear relatively unrelated. For example, whether one has a romantic relationship in one year is not very predictive of the quality of ones that develop, nor conversely, is the quality of the relationship in prior years predictive of whether one has a romantic relationship in subsequent years (Connolly et al., 2001).

Just as individuals have working models or representations of their relationships with parents, they also develop representations or views of their romantic relationships. We have proposed that the same framework used by attachment researchers to assess repre-

romantic relationships, as well as those of parent-child relationships, can be classified into three categories – secure, anxious-avoidant (dismissing), and anxious-ambivalent (preoccupied). Most of the work to date has examined the links among views of different relationships (see next section), but some work has examined relations between romantic representations and adjustment. Specifically, preoccupied or anxious-ambivalent romantic styles and working models have been linked to greater symptomatology and poor self-esteem (Cooper, Shaver, & Collins, 1998; Furman, 2000). Secure styles are associated with greater self-esteem.

In a related vein, Downey and her co-workers have studied rejection sensitivity – the disposition to “anxiously or angrily expect, readily perceive, and react intensely to rejection” (Downey, Bonica, & Rincón, 1999, p. 149). Girls who are high in rejection sensitivity worry about whether their partner will cheat or betray them, are upset when their partner does things without them, and want to know exactly what their partner is doing (Purdie & Downey, 2000). They are more likely to get in physical fights or ignore their partner to make him feel badly.

Although relatively little empirical work has been conducted, it is apparent that marked variations exist in adolescents’ romantic experiences. Moreover, such individual differences are linked to psychosocial adjustment.

Sociocontextual Factors and Romantic Experiences

Romantic relationships occur within a social context. Accordingly, adolescents’ romantic experiences and views are likely linked to their close relationships with others, such as parents and friends. In addition, adolescents’ experiences with particular romantic partners may influence their views and subsequent relationships. Finally, broad cultural messages, practices, and mores in society at large may also have an impact on adolescents’ romantic views. We discuss each of these factors in the following sections.

Parent-child relationships

The premise that parent-child relationships influence romantic relationships is certainly not new. For instance, Freud (1940/1964) posited that the mother-infant relationship served as a template for all later love relationships. Social scientists have documented connections between adults’ recollections and representations of their relationships with parents and romantic partners (see Furman & Flanagan, 1997), but as yet empirical data on such links in adolescence are sparse. Theorists have, however, hypothesized that parents may influence adolescent romantic relationships through a variety of mechanisms.

One process by which parents are thought to have an effect on adolescents’ romantic views and experiences is via socialization practices. For example, a history of attentive and responsive caregiving from parents is expected to enhance adolescents’ self-esteem and sense of self-worth, thereby affording them confidence in the novel domain of romantic experiences and relationships (Collins & Sroufe, 1999). Likewise, an authoritative

romantic domain (Gray & Steinberg, 1999). Children whose parents effectively monitor their activities are hypothesized to feel supported and to develop the social competence necessary to negotiate romantic relationships. Further, parents' socialization practices may affect their adolescents' choices regarding whom to date.

Parents may also influence the construction of views regarding close relationships (Furman & Simon, 1999; Simon et al., 2000). According to Bowlby (1973), models of both self and other formed in the context of the initial caregiver-child relationship are carried forward to subsequent relationships in life. Thus, if a child experiences sensitive and consistent caregiving early on, he/she is likely to form secure representations of close relationships, and will in turn approach new relationships with the expectation of achieving intimacy and closeness. On the other hand, an individual who has experienced rejection or inconsistent/intrusive caregiving may develop insecure representations of close relationships. Empirical evidence indicates that views of relationships with parents and romantic partners are related, but the findings are somewhat inconsistent (Furman, 1999; Furman et al., in press). The links may become stronger in late adolescence and adulthood as attachment and caregiving features of romantic relationships become more salient than they were earlier in adolescence (Furman & Wehner, 1997).

Finally, parents' own marriage or romantic relationship may influence adolescents' romantic experiences in several different ways (Gray & Steinberg, 1999). Parents may model patterns of communication, conflict resolution, and support-seeking in their marital and romantic relationships – patterns that adolescents may subsequently imitate with their own romantic partners. As the parental marital relationship is likely a quite salient model of close egalitarian relationships for adolescents, they may rely on perceptions of their parents' marriage to interpret and make sense of novel romantic experiences. Further, parents' marriage may have an indirect effect on adolescent romantic relationships through its effect on the parent-adolescent relationship (see Fincham, 1998). Similarly, the marriage may affect the adolescent's adjustment, which in turn may affect his/her romantic experiences.

Studies of the cross-generational transmission of aggression have found links between parents' marriages and adolescents' aggression toward their romantic partner (Capaldi & Clark, 1998; Capaldi et al., 2001; Simons, Lin, & Gordon, 1998). The mechanisms responsible for the transmission, however, do not seem to be marital conflict per se, but unskilled or punitive parenting. These parenting practices seem to lead to antisocial behavior, which is in turn linked to dating violence.

Relationships with friends

Attachment theorists emphasized the role that parent-child relationships may play in the emergence of romantic relationships (e.g. Bowlby, 1973, Shaver & Hazan, 1988), but did not discuss the role that peer relationships may play. Furman (1999) proposed that peer relationships might influence the development of romantic relationships through at least three different mechanisms.

First, as was discussed in a prior section, the peer group provides a context for establish-

well as contribute to the interchanges between them. Adolescents' friends and acquaintances can serve as matchmakers, messenger services, and interpreters of romantic experience (Brown, 1999), thus somewhat protecting individual adolescents from overt rejection or unfavorable romantic experiences. Interacting in a group context may also be easier for young adolescents than more intense dyadic exchanges with members of the other sex.

Secondly, who one's peers and friends are may affect the nature of one's romantic relationships. Adolescents' peers are likely to affect their choices of potential partners, and their behavior toward these partners. For example, European American girls are influenced by their existing friends' sexual activity (Billy & Udry, 1985). Similarly, associating with deviant peers predicts hostile talk about women, which in turn predicts aggression toward romantic partners (Capaldi et al., 2001).

Finally, interactions in and representations of friendships might influence concomitant processes in romantic relationships. Friendships share a number of overt features with romantic relationships. Both entail affiliative characteristics, such as mutual co-construction of the relationship, companionship, and intimacy (Furman, 1999; Furman & Wehner, 1994). Both friendships and romantic relationships are egalitarian in nature, with the participants possessing relatively equal footing with one another. Thus, the social skills acquired in friendships would be expected to carry over to romantic relationships. Consistent with this idea, ratings of social support and negative interactions in friendships and romantic relationships are usually found to be correlated (Connolly & Johnson, 1996; Furman, 1999; Furman et al., in press). Similarly, romantic self-concepts are related to close-friend and peer self-concepts (Connolly & Konarski, 1994).

Given similarities in the features and qualities of close friendships and romantic relationships, adolescents' cognitive representations of these relationships are likely to be linked. Both high school and college students' self-reported relational styles with close friends are related to corresponding styles with romantic partners (Furman et al., in press; Furman & Wehner, 1994, 1997). Furthermore, adolescents' internal working models regarding friendships and romantic relationships are tied to one another (Furman, 1999; Furman et al., in press). In fact, the links between representations of friendships and romantic relationships are more consistent than those between parent-child relationships and romantic relationships.

Recently, investigators have explored the role of other-sex friendships in romantic relationship development. Friendships with members of the other sex are a common occurrence in adolescence, especially during high school (Kuttler et al., 1999). The existing literature suggests that such relationships influence adolescents' romantic experiences. Adolescents with more other-sex friends at age 13 were more likely to describe their romantic relationships in terms of self-disclosure and support at age 15 than those with fewer other-sex friends (Feiring, 1999). In contrast, adolescents with a smaller number of other-sex friends tended to focus on social status in their subsequent romantic relationship descriptions. Further, those adolescents with more other-sex friends at age 13 had longer romantic relationships at age 18. Interactions with other-sex peers are also associated with social and romantic competence, as well as high self-esteem (Bukowski, Sippola, & Hoza, 1999; Darling et al., 1999).

Peer relations for sexual minority youth are usually quite different. Few have the oppor-

they may be teased or ostracized by heterosexual peers. Passionate same-sex friendships – intense yet avowedly non-sexual relationships – may fulfill some of the needs that heterosexual youth meet through romantic relationships (Diamond, Savin-Williams, and Dubé, 1999). Such relationships may also assist in the clarification and ascertainment of sexual identity.

Experiences with specific romantic partners

Although adolescents' patterns of interaction with both parents and friends may influence their views of close relationships with others, experiences in particular romantic relationships are also likely to impact subsequent ones. After all, many aspects of romantic relationships are specific to that domain. For instance, sexual behavior, infidelity, and breakups are all common occurrences in the romantic domain but uncommon in other relationships. To the extent that these events or other experiences are common across romantic relationships, adolescents may draw upon them to manage present situations with romantic partners. In addition to the acquisition of specific relational skills learned with romantic partners, adolescents' views of these relationships may also be influenced by their prior romantic experiences (Furman & Wehner, 1994). Those individuals who have experienced a positive initial romantic relationship may expect future partners to behave in similar ways. Those with less positive experiences may approach future relationships with some trepidation or may repeat past patterns of interaction.

Although it appears plausible that previous romantic experiences may influence adolescents' subsequent ones, it is unlikely that they would be completely the same. After all, one's partner is different and she or he would influence the course of the relationship as well. Moreover, adolescents are just learning about romantic relationships. Given adolescents' psychosocial need to establish a sense of identity and experiment with different possible selves (Erikson, 1968; Markus & Nurius, 1986), one might expect them to behave in different ways across romantic relationships.

Unfortunately, little is known empirically about the degree of consistency across relationships. In one study (Connolly et al., 2000), perceptions of support and negative interactions in romantic relationships were found to be highly stable across a year, even though the vast majority of the relationships were different at both times.

Cultural influences on romantic experiences

The previous discussion of socio-contextual influences on adolescent romantic experiences and views focused on relationships with significant others such as parents, friends, and dating partners. However, each of these relationships occurs against the backdrop of broader societal and cultural messages concerning the romantic realm. Societal or cultural influences on romantic relationships include numerous factors such as media portrayals of romance and norms about dating, sexuality, gender roles, and marriage. Many Western societies extol the value of dating, yet in more traditional societies dating and even premarital contact with the other sex are discouraged or actively prohibited (Hatfield &

Across cultures, considerable variability exists with respect to how romantic partnerships are formed. Autonomy and independence in the selection of romantic partners – a hallmark of dating in Western culture – is certainly not a universal cultural practice. In fact, free choice in the selection of one's romantic partners is a relatively rare occurrence worldwide (Stephens, 1963). The vast majority of adolescents do not get to independently select their potential mates. Rather, approval from parents or elders, as well as arranged marriages, is still quite common in many areas of the world (Buruma, 1994; Rosenblatt & Anderson, 1981; Sprecher & Chandak, 1992).

Cultural differences in the selection of romantic partners would likely have an impact on the development of romantic relationships and concomitant cognitive representations of such relationships. For instance, because mixed-sex group dating and exploration with a number of dating partners are not universal cultural practices, interactions within the peer network and the affiliative behavioral system may not be central aspects of romantic development for all youth. As previously discussed, contemporary Western scholars posit that these factors are crucial in the establishment of romantic relationships during adolescence, but it is not clear what role they play in non-Western societies. In cultures where mates are selected by community or family members, culturally prescribed roles and parents' modeling of marital behavior may have a stronger impact on romantic relationships than one's interactions with agemates (Simon et al., 2000).

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, we have reviewed the significance, characteristics, and development of adolescent romantic experiences and relationships. We discussed normative shifts in mixed-sex interactions and features of romantic relationships across adolescence, as well as individual differences in the timing, quantity, and quality of romantic experiences and representations. Finally, we described a number of socio-contextual influences that are hypothesized to influence the emergence and nature of romantic relationships. This review highlights the considerable progress made within the past ten years in the field of adolescent romantic research. Despite this progress, however, much work remains to be done. As such, this area represents a rich avenue for further theoretical and empirical exploration.

We have emphasized the diversity of romantic experiences in adolescence. If anything, however, the diversity is even greater than we have stated. Most of the research to date has focused on the romantic experiences of middle-class, heterosexual youth in North America. We still know relatively little about the dating and romantic relationships of gay, lesbian, or bisexual youth, although progress is being made (see chapter 19 in this volume; Diamond, Savin-Williams, & Dubé, 1999; Savin-Williams, 1996). Further, except for demographic work on the timing of sexual intercourse and teen pregnancy rates, very few studies address the nature of romantic relationships in ethnic minority youth. Longitudinal studies of normative romantic development in African-American, Latino, Asian American, and Native American youth are necessary to broaden our current

involvement may influence the nature of romantic experiences. For instance, the nature and timing of adolescent romantic experiences may differ for individuals growing up in a small, close-knit rural community and those in a suburban or urban inner-city environment. We also know relatively little about the romantic relationships of particular subgroups of adolescents, such as those expecting a child (Moore & Florsheim, 2001) or those with health problems (Seiffge-Krenke, 1997).

With few exceptions (e.g. Shulman et al., 1997), investigators have not examined gender differences in the nature and experience of adolescent romantic relationships. Given the extensive theoretical history positing that girls are more strongly socialized to value relationships and connection with others (e.g., Gilligan, 1986; Maccoby, 1998), the absence of work on the role of gender in the adolescent romantic domain is puzzling.

Most of the work to date has also focused on individuals and their romantic experiences, not the relationships per se. The vast majority of research has relied on the self-reported perceptions of one romantic partner, but an understanding of romantic relationships entails assessing the behavior and perceptions of the two persons involved. A few investigators have gathered data from both individuals in a dyad or coded patterns of interaction (e.g. Welsh et al., 1999), but additional work on the dyadic components of romantic relationships would be quite beneficial.

Finally, investigators have only begun to examine the links between childhood experiences and adolescent romantic relationships (e.g. Collins et al., 1997), and almost nothing is known about whether adolescent experiences are predictive of subsequent relationships (see Furman & Flanagan, 1997). Similarly, the evidence is beginning to indicate that adolescent romantic experiences are linked to psychosocial functioning, but systematic research that examines such relations, as well as the mechanisms by which such associations occur, remains relatively sparse. For instance, how do adolescent romantic experiences influence subsequent self-concept and identity development? Can interaction with romantic partners have either a deleterious or beneficial effect on adolescents' achievement and motivation beliefs? Are the effects of romantic experiences above and beyond the influence of other important persons in the adolescents' life? Do romantic experiences offer something unique to the socialization process? Although answers to these questions remain largely unanswered, we hope that this review will stimulate future theoretical debate and empirical work in the fascinating domain of adolescent romantic experiences.

Key Readings

Furman, W., Brown, B. B., & Feiring, C. (Eds.) (1999). *The development of romantic relationships in adolescence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This edited volume compiles a variety of theoretical frameworks concerning the nature, function, and experience of adolescent romantic relationships. Topics covered include important mechanisms and processes underlying romantic relationship development, individual differences in romantic relationships, and their social context.

adolescence: Advances in adolescent development, Vol. 6, (pp. 168–175). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

This chapter introduces a theoretical framework for conceptualizing the nature and function of romantic relationships during adolescence. Integrating romantic attachment and neo-Sullivanian theory, the authors contend that the behavioral systems approach best captures the complex phenomenon of romantic relationship development.

Shulman, S., & Collins, W. A. (Eds.) (1997). *Romantic relationships in adolescence: Developmental perspectives*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This edited issue of the *New Directions in Child Development* series integrates empirical findings and theoretical frameworks from an international perspective. The issues explored range from connections among family, peer, and romantic relationships to gender and physical health status as modifiers of romantic experiences.

References

- Aro, H., & Taipale, V. (1987). The impact of timing of puberty on psychosomatic symptoms among fourteen- to sixteen-year-old Finnish girls. *Child Development, 58*, 261–268.
- Billy, J. O., & Udry, J. R. (1985). Patterns of adolescent friendship and effects on sexual behavior. *Social Psychological Quarterly, 48*, 27–41.
- Blum, R. W., Beuhring, T., & Rinehart, P. M. (2000). *Protecting teens: Beyond race, income, and family structure*. Center for Adolescent Health, University of Minnesota: Minneapolis, MN.
- Blyth, D. A., Hill, J. P., & Thiel, K. S. (1982). Early adolescents' significant others: Grade and gender differences in perceived relationships with familial and nonfamilial adults and young people. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 11*, 425–449.
- Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 2: Separation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Brendt, D. A., Perper, J. A., Moritz, G., Baugher, M., Roth, C., Balach, L. et al. (1993). Stressful life events, psychopathology, and adolescent suicide: A case control study. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 23*, 179–187.
- Brown, B. B. (1999). "You're going out with who?": Peer group influences on adolescent romantic relationships. In W. Furman, B. B. Brown, & C. Feiring (Eds.), *The development of romantic relationships in adolescence* (pp. 291–329). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bukowski, W. M., Sippola, L. K., & Hoza, B. (1999). Same and other: Interdependency between participation in same- and other-sex friendships. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 28*, 439–459.
- Buruma, I. (1994). *A Japanese mirror: Heroes and villains of Japanese culture*. New York: Viking Penguin.
- Capaldi, D. M., & Clark, S. (1998). Prospective family predictors of aggression toward female partners for at-risk young men. *Developmental Psychology, 34*, 1175–1188.
- Capaldi, D. M., Dishion, T. J., Stoolmiller, M., & Yoerger, K. (2001). Aggression toward female partners by at-risk young men: The contribution of male adolescent friendships. *Developmental Psychology, 37*, 61–73.
- Carver, K., Joyner, K., & Udry, J. R. (1999). National estimates of adolescent romantic relationships. Unpublished manuscript. Carolina Population Center.
- Collins, W. A., Hennighausen, K. C., Schmit, D. T., & Sroufe, L. A. (1997). Developmental pre-

- Collins, W. A., & Sroufe, L. A. (1999). Capacity for intimate relationships: A developmental construction. In W. Furman, B. B. Brown, & C. Feiring (Eds.), *Contemporary perspectives on adolescent romantic relationships* (pp. 125–147). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Connolly, J., Craig, W., Goldberg, A., & Pepler, D. (1999). Conceptions of cross-sex friendships and romantic relationships in early adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 28, 481–494.
- Connolly, J., Furman, W., & Konarski, R. (2001). The role of peers in the emergence of romantic relationships in adolescence. *Child Development*, 71, 1395–1408.
- Connolly, J., & Goldberg, A. (1999). Romantic relationships in adolescence: The role of friends and peers in their emergence and development. In W. Furman, B. B. Brown, & C. Feiring, (Eds.), *The development of romantic relationships in adolescence* (pp. 266–290). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Connolly, J., Goldberg, & Pepler, D. (under review) *Romantic development in the peer group in early adolescence*.
- Connolly, J. A., & Johnson, A. M. (1996). Adolescents' romantic relationships and the structure and quality of their close interpersonal ties. *Personal Relationships*, 3, 185–195.
- Connolly, J. A., & Konarski, R. (1994). Peer self-concept in adolescence. Analysis of factor structure and associations with peer experience. *Journal of Research in Adolescence*, 43, 385–403.
- Connolly, J., Pepler, D., Craig, W., & Taradash, A. (2000). Dating experiences of bullies in early adolescence. *Child Maltreatment*, 5, 299–310.
- Cooper, M. L., Shaver, P. R., & Collins, N. J. (1998). Attachment styles, emotion regulation, and adjustment in adolescence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 1380–1397.
- Darling, N., Dowdy, B. B., Van Horn, M. L., & Caldwell, L. L. (1999). Mixed-sex settings and the perception of competence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 28, 461–480.
- Diamond, L. M., Savin-Williams, R. C., & Dubé, E. M. (1999). Sex, dating, passionate friendships, and romance: Intimate peer relations among lesbian, gay, and bisexual adolescents. In W. Furman, B. B. Brown, & C. Feiring (Eds.), *The development of romantic relationships in adolescence* (pp. 175–210). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dowdy, B. B., & Kliever, W. (1998). Dating, parent-adolescent conflict, and behavioral autonomy. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 27, 473–492.
- Downey, G., Bonica, C., & Rincón, C. (1999). Rejection sensitivity and adolescent romantic relationships. In W. Furman, B. B. Brown, & C. Feiring (Eds.), *The development of romantic relationships in adolescence* (pp. 148–174). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dunphy, D. C. (1963). The social structure of urban adolescent peer groups. *Sociometry*, 26, 230–246.
- Dyk, P. A. H., & Adams, G. R. (1987). The association between identity development and intimacy during adolescence: A theoretical treatise. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 2, 223–235.
- Dyk, P. H., & Adams, G. R. (1990). Identity and intimacy: An initial investigation of three theoretical models using cross-lag panel correlations. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 19, 91–110.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity, youth, and crisis*. New York: Norton.
- Feiring, C. (1996). Concepts of romance in 15-year-old adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 6, 181–200.
- Feiring, C. (1999). Other-sex friendship networks and the development of romantic relationships in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 28, 495–512.
- Fessenden, F. (2000, April 9). They threaten, seethe, and unhinge, then kill in quantity. *New York Times*, p. 1.
- Fincham, F. D. (1998). Child development and marital relations. *Child Development*, 69, 543–574.

- Flanagan, A. S., & Furman, W. C. (2000). Sexual victimization and perceptions of close relationships in adolescence. *Child Maltreatment, 5*, 350–359.
- Fraley, R. C., & Davis, K. E. (1997). Attachment formation and transfer in young adolescents' close friendships and romantic relationships. *Personal Relationships, 4*, 131–144.
- Franzoi, S. L., Davis, M. H., & Vásquez-Suson, K. A. (1994). Two social worlds: Social correlates and stability of adolescent status groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67*, 462–473.
- Freud, S. (1940/1964). An outline of psycho-analysis. In J. Strachey (Ed. and Trans.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 23* (pp. 139–207). London: Hogarth.
- Furman, W. (1999). Friends and lovers: The role of peer relationships in adolescent heterosexual romantic relationships. In W. A. Collins & B. Laursen (Eds.), *Relationships as developmental contexts: Minnesota Symposia on Child Development: Vol. 30* (pp. 133–154). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Furman, W. (April, 2000). Quantity and quality of romantic experiences: What matters? Poster presented at the meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development, Albuquerque, NM.
- Furman, W., & Buhrmester, D. (1992). Age and sex differences in perceptions of networks of personal relationships. *Child Development, 63*, 103–115.
- Furman, W., & Flanagan, A. (1997). The influence of earlier relationships on marriage: An attachment perspective. In W. K. Halford & H. J. Markman (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of marriage and couples interventions* (pp. 179–202). New York: Wiley.
- Furman, W., & Shaffer, L. (in press). The role of romantic relationships in adolescent development. In P. Florsheim (Ed.), *Adolescent romantic relations and sexual behavior: Theory, research, and practical implications*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Furman, W., & Simon, V. A. (1999). Cognitive representations of adolescent romantic relationships. In W. Furman, B. B. Brown, & C. Feiring (Eds.), *The development of romantic relationships in adolescence* (pp. 75–97). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Furman, W., Simon, V. A., Shaffer, L., & Bouchey, H. A. (in press). Adolescents' working models and styles for relationships with parents, friends, and romantic partners. *Child Development*.
- Furman, W., & Wehner, E. A. (1994). Romantic views: Toward a theory of adolescent romantic relationships. In R. Montemayor, G. R. Adams, & G. P. Gullotta (Eds.), *Relationships during adolescence: Advances in adolescent development: Volume 6* (pp. 168–175). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Furman, W., & Wehner, E. A. (1997). Adolescent romantic relationships: A developmental perspective. In S. Shulman & W. A. Collins (Eds.), *Romantic relationships in adolescence: Developmental perspectives: New directions for child development* (pp. 21–36). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gayford, J. J. (1975). Wife battering: A preliminary survey of 100 cases. *British Medical Journal, 1*, 194–197.
- Gilligan, C. (1986). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gray, M. R., & Steinberg, L. (1999). Adolescent romance and the parent-child relationship: A contextual perspective. In W. Furman, B. B. Brown, & C. Feiring, (Eds.), *The development of romantic relationships in adolescence* (pp. 235–265). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grinder, R. E. (1966). Relations of social dating attractions to academic orientation and peer relations. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 57*, 27–34.

- Hazan, C., & Zeifman (1994). Sex and the psychological tether. In K. Bartholomew & D. Perlman (Eds.), *Advances in personal relationships: Vol. 1: Attachment processes in adulthood* (pp. 151–180). London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Herdrt, G., & Boxer, A. M. (1993). *Children of Horizons: How gay and lesbian teens are leading a new way out of the closet*. Boston, MA: Beacon.
- Joyner, K., & Udry, J. R. (2000). You don't bring me anything but down: Adolescent romance and depression. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 41*, 369–391.
- Kuttler, A. F., La Greca, A. M., & Prinstein, M. J. (1999). Friendship qualities and social-emotional functioning of adolescents with close, cross-sex friendships. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 9*, 339–366.
- Laursen, B., & Williams, V. A. (1997). Perceptions of interdependence and closeness in family and peer relationships among adolescents with and without romantic partners. In S. Shulman & W. A. Collins (Eds.), *Romantic relationships in adolescence: Developmental perspectives* (pp. 3–20). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Maccoby, E. E. (1988). Gender as a social category. *Developmental Psychology, 24*, 755–765.
- Maccoby, E. E. (1990). Gender and relationships: A developmental account. *American Psychologist, 45*, 513–520.
- Maccoby, E. E. (1998). *The two sexes: Growing up apart, coming together*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist, 41*, 954–969.
- Monroe, S. M., Rohde, P., Seeley, J. R., & Lewinsohn, P. M. (1999). Life events and depression in adolescence: Relationship loss as a prospective risk factor for first onset of major depressive disorder. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 108*, 606–614.
- Montgomery, M. J., & Sorell, G. T. (1998). Love and dating experience in early and middle adolescence: Grade and gender comparisons. *Journal of Adolescence, 21*, 677–689.
- Moore, J., & Florsheim, J. (2001). Interpersonal processes and psychopathology among expectant and nonexpectant adolescent couples. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 69*, 101–113.
- Mulatti, L. (1995). Families in India: Beliefs and realities. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 26*, 11–25.
- Pawlby, S. J., Mills, A., & Quinton, D. (1997). Vulnerable adolescent girls: Opposite-sex relationships. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 38*, 909–920.
- Purdie, V., & Downey, G. (2000). Rejection sensitivity and adolescent girls' vulnerability to relationship-centered difficulties. *Child Maltreatment, 5*, 338–349.
- Richards, M. H., Crowe, P. A., Larson, R., & Swarr, A. (1998). Developmental patterns and gender differences in the experience of peer companionship during adolescence. *Child Development, 69*, 154–163.
- Roscoe, B., & Benaske, N. (1985). Courtship violence experienced by abused wives: Similarities in patterns of abuse. *Family Relations, 43*, 419–424.
- Roscoe, B., Diana, M. S., & Brooks, R. H. (1987). Early, middle, and late adolescents' views on dating and factors influencing partner selection. *Adolescence, 22*, 59–68.
- Rosenblatt, P. C., & Anderson, R. M. (1981). Human sexuality in cross-cultural perspective. In M. Cook (Ed.), *The bases of human sexual attraction* (pp. 215–250). London: Academic Press.
- Savin-Williams, R. C. (1990). *Gay and lesbian youth: Expressions of identity*. New York: Hemisphere.
- Savin-Williams, R. C. (1996). Dating and romantic relationships among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youths. In R. C. Savin-Williams & K. M. Cohen (Eds.), *The lives of lesbians, gays,*

- Sears, J. T. (1991). *Growing up gay in the South: Race, gender, and journeys of the spirit*. New York: Harrington Park Press.
- Seiffge-Krenke, I. (1997). The capacity to balance intimacy and conflict: Differences in romantic relationships between healthy and diabetic adolescents. In S. Shulman & W. Andrew Collins (Eds.), *Romantic relationships in adolescence: Developmental perspectives: New directions for child development* (pp. 37-52). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Shaver, P., & Hazan, C. (1988). A biased overview of the study of love. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 5, 473-501.
- Shulman, S., Levy-Shiff, R., Kedem, P., & Alon, E. (1997). Intimate relationships among adolescent romantic partners and same-sex friends: Individual and systemic perspectives. *New Directions for Child Development*, 78, 37-51.
- Shulman, S., & Scharf, M. (2000). Adolescent romantic behaviors and perceptions: Age- and gender-related differences, and links with family and peer relationships. *Journal of Research in Adolescence*, 10, 91-118.
- Simon, V. A., Bouchey, H. A., & Furman, W. (2000). The social construction of adolescents' representations of romantic relationships. In S. Larose & G. M. Tarabulsy (Eds.), *Attachment and development: Vol. 2: Adolescence* (pp. 301-326). Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- Simons, R. L., Lin, K., & Gordon, L. C. (1998). Socialization in the family of origin and male dating violence: A prospective study. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60, 467-478.
- Sprecher, S., & Chandak, R. (1992). Attitudes about arranged marriages and dating among men and women from India. *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology*, 20, 1-11.
- Stephens, W. N. (1963). *The family in cross-cultural perspective*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Sullivan, H. S. (1953). *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry*. New York: Horton.
- Thorne, B. (1986). Girls and boys together, but mostly apart. In W. W. Hartup & Z. Rubin (Eds.), *Relationship and development* (pp. 167-184). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Trinke, S. J., & Bartholomew, K. (1997). Hierarchies of attachment relationships in young adulthood. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 14, 603-626.
- Vaidyanathan, P., & Naidoo, J. (1990). Asian Indians in western countries: Cultural identity and the arranged marriage. In N. Bleichrodt & P. Drenth (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in cross-cultural psychology* (pp. 37-49). Amsterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger.
- Welsh, D. P., Galliher, R. V., Kawaguchi, M. C., & Rostosky, S. S. (1999). Discrepancies in adolescent romantic couples' and observers' perceptions of couple interaction and their relationship to depressive symptoms. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 28, 645-666.
- Wilson-Shockley, S. (1995). Gender differences in adolescent depression: The contribution of negative affect. Master's thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Wolfe, D. A., & Feiring, C. (2000). Dating violence through the lens of adolescent romantic relationships. *Child Maltreatment*, 5, 360-363.
- Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J. (1999). Stability, change and individual differences in involvement with friends and romantic partners among adolescent females. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 28, 419-438.