

## CHAPTER 22

# Friendships, Romantic Relationships, and Peer Relationships

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### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we discuss the current state of the literature on children and adolescents' dyadic peer relationships.

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We focus primarily on children's and adolescents' romantic relationships and same-sex friendships because of their particular significance to development. However, we also discuss other dyadic peer relationships, such as other-sex friendships and antipathies. We discuss the links between dyadic peer relationships and the broader peer group, but a more comprehensive review of peer group interactions can be found in Rubin, Bukowski, and Bowker (Chapter 5, this

*Handbook*, Volume 4). Our aim is not to provide a comprehensive review of the topic—an impossible task given the breadth of the literature—but to describe recent important findings in the field and identify promising directions for future research. Accordingly, we focus on research that has appeared in 2005 or later. Further information on friendships and romantic relationships can be obtained from other reviews (e.g., Brown & Larson, 2009; Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009; Connolly & McIsaac, 2009; Rubin, Bukowski, & Laursen, 2009; Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006).

We propose a unified relational perspective for conceptualizing all dyadic peer relationships. This perspective has four key features. First, friendships and romantic relationships need to be studied as relationships. By relationships we mean an ongoing set of interactions between two people. They are dyadic phenomena with a history. That is, they are influenced by each person's characteristics, the interaction of their characteristics, and the pattern of their interactions over time. Each person affects the other person's behavior within an occurrence of interaction, and each occurrence affects subsequent occurrences. Such relationships acquire meaning, which is reflected in the participants' cognitions, emotions, and behavior and in subsequent relationships.

Second, children's and adolescents' friendships, romantic relationships, and other dyadic peer relationships share common features. They have been studied as separate phenomena and typically by different investigators. Yet, they are all peer relationships. Many adolescents consider their romantic partner to be friends; many romantic partners were once friends, and, less commonly, some friends were once romantic partners. Friendships, romantic relationships, and other dyadic peer relationships differ in some respects, but both similarities and differences must be identified to understand which processes are specific to one type of peer relationship and which are common to different types of peer relationships or perhaps all close relationships.

If we are to fully understand any particular type of peer relationship, we need to simultaneously consider all of these relationships. We believe that many of the same issues, problems, and insights that have emerged in studies of one relationship apply to the others. Some topics have received considerable attention with regard to one relationship, but could profit from additional attention in the study of other relationships. Thus, one goal of our chapter is to help research on one relationship learn from the research on other relationships. In effect, we hope to promote the integration of the different relationship fields.

Third, any particular relationship is embedded in a network of dyadic relationships. For example, any particular friendship is embedded within a network of other relationships, including other friendships, romantic relationships, and relationships with family members. We review literature on the associations between dyadic peer relationships and family relationships as well as between friendships and romantic relationships.

Finally, our unified perspective not only emphasizes the importance of networks of close dyadic relationships, but also other contextual influences as well. These include the broader peer group, media, and culture. Dyadic peer relationships cannot be understood without consideration of the contexts in which they occur.

With regard to context, an important limitation of the current literature is that the work primarily has been conducted in North America and secondarily in Europe. Thus, we are not able to generalize to other countries. Moreover, many studies in North America and Europe try to obtain samples that are representative in terms of ethnicity, race, or social class. However, these studies often do not examine differences among the ethnic/race or social class subgroups within the sample. Therefore, the conclusions apply to the culture overall but not necessarily to each of the ethnic, racial, or SES subcultures within the sample.

The friendship and romantic relationship literatures also are limited by their primary focus on one type of relationship. Friendship research focuses on same-sex friendships, and the romantic literature focuses on heterosexual romantic relationships. Sometimes other-sex friendships and same-sex romantic relationships are included in studies of friendships or romantic relationships, but these studies usually do not examine differences between same- and other-sex relationships. Therefore, their conclusions apply to friendships or romantic relationships overall but not necessarily to specific subtypes of friendships and romantic relationships.

Using this unified relational perspective, the current chapter reviews research on dyadic peer relationships. In each section, we first review promising new research on friendships and then discuss promising new research on romantic relationships. Next, we compare and contrast the literatures on the two types of relationships with the idea that work on each type of relationship could profit from the work on the other.

Our unified relational perspective also is reflected in the topics we review. We recognize the importance of relationship history by beginning with a discussion of the development of dyadic relationships in childhood and

adolescence. We review research from early childhood through late adolescence. Research on early adulthood is generally considered beyond the scope of the review. The chapter then reviews characteristics of individuals and their partners that influence their relationships. This includes a section on gender and a section on other self and partner characteristics. These sections are followed by discussions of the contexts in which dyadic peer relations are embedded, including family relationships, broader peer group dynamics, media, and cultural contexts. The links between dyadic peer relationships and adjustment are also considered. In each section, future directions are proposed in terms of the specific topic considered. Then, in a separate section, we consider broader future directions in regards to the study of dyadic peer relationships. This includes identifying definitional, conceptual, methodological, analytical issues and understudied topics. We conclude by discussing the merits of a unified relational perspective.

## RELATIONSHIP DIMENSIONS

An understanding of relationships requires a multifaceted framework. In this chapter, we primarily examine the following facets: (a) presence and number of relationships, (b) relationship features, including relationship qualities, cognitions and emotions, (c) characteristics of the self and partner, and (d) the history of the relationship.

The presence of a relationship and number of relationships simply refers to whether one has a particular kind of relationship, and, if so, the number of such relationships. In the romantic relationship field, investigators have sometimes examined whether one has a current romantic relationship or not, and sometimes whether one has had such a relationship during some recent period. In the friendship literature, the number of friends one has is often considered.

Relationship features include the quality and content of relationships, relationship cognitions, and emotions. In regards to quality and content, most close personal relationships can be characterized along four dimensions: (1) positive relationship qualities, such as affiliation, warmth, closeness, support, disclosure, and affection; (2) negative relationship qualities, which include conflict and antagonism; (3) relative status/power; and (4) relationship comparisons (i.e., comparisons of the relationship with other relationships, which may be reflected in features such as jealousy, rivalry, or desires for exclusiveness).

Most research has focused on positive and negative features, and less is known about power/status or relationship comparisons. Relationship cognitions and emotions refer to the thoughts and feelings someone has about him/herself in the relationship, about the partner, and about the relationship. We include not only feelings towards one another, but also expectations or representations of oneself in the relationship, of the partner, and of the relationship.

The characteristics of the person and the partner refer to the personal attributes that each person brings to the relationship and their attributes during the course of the relationship. Not only is it important to consider the characteristics of the person and the partner but also the interplay between the two individuals' characteristics.

The final dimension is the history of the relationship over time. Relationships change over time, and the current status of the relationship cannot be fully understood without knowing the history. Individuals develop an affective bond to each other, and have the prospect of future interactions, which are features that distinguish such interactions from those with whom one does not have an ongoing relationship. Despite the importance of history to understanding relationships, this dimension has received little attention, as will be evident in our review.

Finally, it is important to recognize that multiple perspectives exist regarding any particular relationship. An individual has one perspective, the partner has another, and an outsider, such as a social scientist, has a third perspective. There is no such thing as *a* relationship. There are *multiple* relationships. The person has one relationship, the partner has a different one, and outsiders witness another. Even if we had methodologically perfect measures of the different perspectives, they would not converge completely because they ultimately assess different relationships. The key point is that different perspectives provide different information about the relationship due to meaningful differences in perspectives.

Although we have described number, features, person and partner characteristics, and history as separate facets, it is important to examine their interrelations. Similarly, it is important to study how different interactions within particular relationships affect one another in order to understand how relationships function as a whole. In other words, our theories and methods need to take into account the idea that relationships are self-organizing systems. A relationship-centered approach is needed to complement the variable-centered approach that is usually taken.

## DEVELOPMENT

In this section we discuss: (a) how the characteristics of relationships change with age and (b) how a particular relationship may change over time in terms of its initiation, growth, and dissolution. We refer to the former as developmental changes in relationships and the latter as within-relationship development.

### Friendships: Developmental Changes

Theories of developmental change in friendships highlight the importance of proximity and play in early childhood, helping and shared activities in middle childhood, and intimacy and self-disclosure in adolescence. These developmental differences are generally confirmed by empirical studies (see Rubin, Bukowski, et al., 2006). Recent extensions include: (a) additional evidence of the salience of friendships in early childhood, (b) longitudinal (versus cross-sectional) work on developmental changes in middle childhood and adolescence, and (c) greater attention to the idea that different friendship types may develop as opposed to one universal friendship trajectory.

Recent work suggests that dyadic friendships in early childhood have more in common with friendships of older youth than originally thought. For example, although proximity and play typically have been emphasized in young children's friendships, even early childhood friendships can be differentiated from other peer relationships on the basis of qualities typically assessed later in development, including intimacy, support and conflict (Seban, Kearns, Hernandez, & Galvin, 2007). Moreover, among preschoolers, kindergarteners, and first graders, friendship dyads high on positive features are more likely to be stable across the school year.

Research indicates developmental trends in friendship qualities. Although many cross-sectional studies indicate developmental changes in friendship features (see Rubin, Bukowski, et al., 2006), fewer longitudinal studies exist that address these changes. According to recent longitudinal research with samples of Latino/a American, Asian American, and African American youth and Dutch youth, friendship support increases from middle to late adolescence, stabilizing in early adulthood (De Goede, Branje, & Meeus, 2009; Way & Greene, 2006). Negative interactions, including conflict, decrease with age throughout adolescence and stabilize in early adulthood. In addition,

adolescents report more adaptive responses to anger than school-aged children (von Salisch & Vogelgesang, 2005). Specifically, adolescents are less likely than children to report that they would confront, harm, or ignore a friend when angry. Adolescents are more likely than children to report that they would try to explain themselves, reconcile, and, interestingly, use humor to diffuse the situation.

The research previously described adopted a variable-centered approach and is complemented by person-centered studies that highlight different kinds of friendships. For example, three friendship types can be identified on the basis of middle childhood and early adolescents' characteristics in the broader peer group—the socially withdrawn type, the prosocial type, and the antisocial type (Güroğlu, van Lieshout, Haselager, & Scholte, 2007). Friendships consisting of antisocial youth are more common in adolescence than middle childhood, perhaps suggesting greater acceptance of antisocial behavior in adolescence. Socially withdrawn friendships are relatively common among girls in both middle childhood and adolescence. However, for boys, socially withdrawn friendships are rare in middle childhood and more common in adolescence. Prosocial friendships are more common among girls than boys in both middle childhood and adolescence.

### Friendships: Within-Relationship Development

How friendships are initiated, maintained, and dissolved has received less attention. Little research exists on how a friendship is initiated. However, the results of one study of preschoolers highlight the social dynamics of friendship formation in early childhood (Schaefer, Light, Fabes, Hanish, & Martin, 2010). Children tend to reciprocate social ties, playing with children who initiate play with them. Over the course of the year, they also tend to form closed triads; that is, one child playing with two other children increases the likelihood that those two children will become friends.

The motivations of children and adolescents for forming friendships have been studied as well. Motivations include intrinsic motivation, or wanting to make friends because it is enjoyable, and extrinsic motivation, or wanting to make friends because they think that adults desire them to have friends (Ojanen, Sijtsema, Hawley, & Little, 2010; Richard & Schneider, 2005). Preadolescents and early adolescents with greater intrinsic motivation form higher-quality friendships (Ojanen et al., 2010) and are less

lonely (Richard & Schneider, 2005). Surprisingly, extrinsic motivation is not related to friendship quality or loneliness.

The maintenance of friendships also has received some attention (see Poulin & Chan, 2010). Same-sex and same-race/ethnic friendships of school-aged children are more stable than cross-sex or cross-ethnic/race friendships (Lee, Howes, & Chamberlain, 2007). Best friendships of early adolescents are more stable than other friendships, and friends who interact both in and out of school have more stable friendships than those who interact in only one context (Chan & Poulin, 2007). Similarity between adolescent friends is important for friendship stability (Hafen, Laursen, Burk, Kerr, & Stattin, 2011). Friends who are more similar in terms of delinquent behavior, frequency of intoxication, achievement motivation, and self-esteem are more likely to maintain their friendship over a year. Moreover, the degree to which the youth are similar to one another before they become friends also predicts greater stability. Less research focuses on how friends' interactions with one another influences the longevity of the relationship.

### **Romantic Relationships: Developmental Changes**

Although some school-aged children may have interests in romantic relationships (Carlson & Rose, 2007), romantic experiences and relationships typically begin in adolescence or early adulthood, depending on the culture. Earlier investigators have delineated the typical developmental course of such experiences in Western societies (see Collins & van Dulmen, 2006; Furman & Winkles, 2012; Seiffge-Krenke & Shulman, 2012). In middle childhood, most friendships are with same-sex peers in Western societies. Early adolescents interested in the other sex engage in affiliative activities in a group context (e.g., go to dances and parties). Subsequently, they begin to go out on "dates" with others, often as part of a group. Finally, they form dyadic romantic relationships, which become more intimate and supportive as they grow older.

More recent work has extended the literature in several directions. Romantic fantasies and infatuations have been examined. Such fantasies are very common in adolescence, occurring more often than either romantic relationships or other-sex friendships (Bowker, Spencer, Thomas, & Gyoerkoe, 2012; Tuval-Mashiach, Walsh, Harel, & Shulman, 2008). They may be even more common earlier, as the relative proportion of unreciprocated (versus reciprocated) romantic relationships decreases from childhood to middle adolescence (Carlson & Rose, 2007).

Past findings based on cross-sectional research have been strengthened by new longitudinal findings. Early and middle adolescents tend to follow a sequence of steps of having: (1) no relationship, (2) one casual relationship, (3) multiple casual relationships, and finally (4) a steady relationship. However, skips in steps are common as is movement back toward a step that typically occurs earlier (Meier & Allen, 2009). Feelings of passionate love, emotional rewards, instrumental support, and dating confidence increase through adolescence and early adulthood. Efforts to influence the partner and actual influence increase with age as well (Giordano, Manning, Longmore, & Flanigan, 2012).

In addition, in Western cultures, romantic cognitions and experiences in adolescence are predictive of subsequent ones. Adolescent attachment styles regarding friendship and romantic relationships are moderately stable over two years; stability is higher when they are in the same best friendship or romantic relationship (Doyle, Lawford, & Markiewicz, 2009). A youth in the United States who is involved in a steady relationship of long duration in adolescence is more likely to be married at 25 than one who is casually dating or not dating; a youth who is not dating is less likely to be cohabiting in early adulthood and have had fewer relationships (Meier & Allen, 2009). Having fewer romantic partners and higher-quality romantic relationships in middle adolescence is predictive of higher-quality romantic relationships in early adulthood (Madsen & Collins, 2011). Thus, these early experiences in romantic relationships may have an enduring effect on the timing and nature of committed relationships in adulthood.

Research on same-sex romantic relationships is also beginning to appear, but findings are still quite tentative (see Russell, Watson, & Muraco, 2012). In North America and Europe, adolescents who are attracted to the same-sex are more likely to have same-sex relationships than in past times. Such relationships are often less public because of concerns of being stigmatized. In fact, relationships with other-sex partners are common among youth attracted to same-sex partners as they serve as a way to explore their sexual identity or conceal their same-sex attraction. In regards to development, the emergence of same-sex relationships may be linked more strongly to the development of sexual identity than age per se. Moreover, the developmental paths may differ for male and female adolescents. Male same-sex relationships may be more likely to develop from sexual encounters, whereas female same-sex relationships may be more likely to develop from friendships and may be closer and more intimate.

Recent work also has begun to recognize the heterogeneity of romantic experiences. Although romantic experiences and relationships change substantially over the course of development, a single normative pattern does not exist. Both within and across cultures, youth vary in terms of when they develop romantic interests, begin to date, and establish romantic relationships. For instance, having a mature physical appearance predicts earlier initiation of romantic relationships in middle adolescence (Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbruner, & Collins, 2004). Similarly, the degree of romantic involvement and the sequence of experiences vary across youth. For example, greater satisfaction with physical appearance and friends' greater romantic involvement are related to both greater casual and serious dating in middle adolescence (Furman & Winkles, 2010). Finally, not all individuals end up in committed relationships, nor is that necessarily desired.

Consistent with these ideas, two investigative teams independently identified two dimensions of romantic involvement that seem quite similar (Dhariwal, Connolly, Paciello, & Caprara, 2009; Furman & Winkles, 2010), although the former team studied young adults in Italy and the latter team studied middle adolescents in the United States. The first is casual or exploratory. Those who are high on this dimension have multiple relationships, on and off relationships, breakups, and a high diversity of activities. The second is serious or consolidated. Those high on this dimension have long, more serious relationships in which a high proportion of time they are in love and engage in frequent sexual activity. Interestingly, the casual (exploratory) and serious (consolidated) dimensions are only minimally correlated with each other, underscoring the potential diversity of experiences.

Cluster analyses also yield different types of romantic relationships in adolescence: (a) serious relationships with sex, which are relationships with a high degree of participation in many activities, including sexual intercourse, (b) serious relationships without sex, which are relationships in which there is almost as high a range of different activities, but sexual intercourse has not occurred, (c) group-oriented relationships, which emerge out of friendship groups and typically entail going out together in a group, (d) physically oriented relationships, which primarily entail sexual activity, and (e) low involvement relationships, which involve little interaction and are relatively rare (Crissey, 2005).

Characteristics of middle adolescent dyads also fall into different types: (a) commensurate relationships, in which both members are high in affiliation and romantic feelings

and preoccupation; (b) affiliative relationships, in which both members are high in affiliation and low in romantic feelings and preoccupation; (c) romantic relationships, in which both members are high on romantic feelings and preoccupation and average or low on affiliation; (d) nonlove relationships, in which both members are low in affiliation and romantic feelings and preoccupation; (e) female-oriented relationships, in which females are average in affiliation and romantic feelings and preoccupation, whereas males are low on both; (f) male-oriented relationships, which is the reverse of female-oriented relationships (Seiffge-Krenke & Burk, 2013). The presence of such types underscores the heterogeneity of romantic relationships.

### Romantic Relationships: Within-Relationship Development

Relatively little is known about the developmental course of a romantic relationship, but preliminary information is available. When asked what they find desirable in potential partners, adolescents place most emphasis on positive personality characteristics, such as reliability, honesty, and kindness; the relative importance of different characteristics is quite similar for males and females, although males rate attractiveness as relatively more important (Ha, Overbeek, & Engels, 2010). Like adults, early adolescents are attracted to others who are similar to them (Simon, Aikins, & Prinstein, 2008).

In general, social events, such as spending time with a partner in a group or alone or meeting a partner's parents, occur earlier than romantic events, such as declarations of being a couple or being in love. Genital sexual activity tends to occur after these events (O'Sullivan, Cheng, Harris, & Brooks-Gunn, 2007). However, how consistent the sequence of events is across adolescents and what is predictive of different sequences are not known.

Little is known too about what factors lead to changes in romantic qualities over time. Certainly, studies have examined associations among different features of relationships, but evidence regarding the causal links among features is less apparent as few studies examine the same relationship over time. Higher levels of caring and enmeshment, however, predict subsequently engaging in sexual intercourse (Giordano, Manning, & Longmore, 2010).

Some descriptive information exists on the dissolution of middle adolescents' relationships. Such relationships most commonly end because of unfulfilled intimacy or

affiliative needs in middle adolescence (Connolly & McIsaac, 2009). Also cross-ethnic/racial relationships in adolescence are less stable (Wang, Kao, & Joyner, 2006). Otherwise, little is known about dissolution.

### Future Directions

The literatures on the development of friendships and romantic relationships share some similarities with respect to what has been learned and remains to be learned. How features of these relationships change with age in childhood and adolescence in Western cultures is relatively well documented. Long-term longitudinal studies have significantly advanced our knowledge of the developmental course of both relationships through adolescence, but work describing the developmental course into adulthood is needed (Furman & Winkles, 2012). Investigators have also described how romantic relationships emerge within peer networks (see Furman & Collins, 2009), but aside from the initial emergence of romantic relationships, we know little about how developmental changes in romantic relationships, same- and other-sex friendships, and the general peer group are interrelated. More generally, we do not know much about the developmental processes underlying the age changes in relationships. Such an understanding will require a comprehensive examination of developmental tasks. For example, the establishment of a long-term commitment may involve coordinating career paths and life plans with those of a romantic partner (Shulman & Connolly, 2013). Three important steps toward a unified relational perspective will be: (1) identifying interrelations in developmental changes in different dyadic peer relationships, (2) identifying developmental processes underlying such changes, and (3) considering the broader life context in which relationships occur.

Given developmental changes in the features of friendships and romantic relationships, it also is likely that developmental changes in the causes and consequences of these relationships exist. For instance, a child who is not interested in intimate disclosure may not be disadvantaged in forming friendships in childhood but may have difficulties as an adolescent. Likewise, variables that are linked to romantic relationships in adolescence may differ from those that are linked in adulthood. For example, parent-child relationship processes are less strongly related to romantic relationship quality in middle adolescence than early adulthood (Madsen & Collins, 2011). Similarly, greater romantic involvement is associated with poorer adjustment in adolescence, but better adjustment in early adulthood (Furman & Collibee, in press).

The literatures on both friendships and romantic relationships reflect increasing awareness of the heterogeneity in these relationships. The traditional normative model not only fails to capture the experiences of those who deviate from its parameters, but also does not do justice to those who follow the more common paths. Efforts to identify different dimensions or types have made progress; further work is needed on the developmental course of the different dimensions or types and on the underlying developmental processes and consequences associated with these dimensions or types.

On a related note, some longitudinal studies have assessed relationship features at multiple times. For some individuals these relationships are the same ones at different time points, but for others, they are different. Often these are not differentiated in the analyses, yet it seems likely that consistency within and across relationships differs.

Much more information also is needed on the initiation, development, and termination of specific friendships and romantic relationships. We know little about the actual events or interactions that increase the likelihood of children and adolescents moving from being acquaintances to friends. Similarly, little is known about the processes that lead to the initiation of romantic relationships. Moreover, although we know that a notable proportion of friendships dissolve during any given year, we know little about the process of termination. Some friends may simply grow apart, whereas other friendships may be severed more abruptly by an argument or betrayal. Additionally, some dissolutions are likely mutual, and others may be one-sided. When the termination is one-sided, some friends may have an interaction in which they specifically dissolve the relationship, whereas others may send more subtle signals. Research also is needed regarding the termination of romantic relationships, although some initial work has been done (Connolly & McIsaac, 2009). Friendship researchers could use that work as a preliminary guide for learning more about how and why friendships dissolve. For both friendships and romantic relationships, more work is needed regarding whether and when the nature of the dissolution affects children's and adolescents' well-being and their expectations regarding future relationships.

We not only have limited understanding of the changes in the course of a relationship, but our assessments of a relationship are surprisingly static in nature. To assess within-relationship development, investigators have either seen what features are associated with length or degree of commitment, or compared features at two time points. Little attention has been paid to the processes that lead to change and development within a relationship.

Conceptualizations of the nature of change are essential for selecting the appropriate analytic technique for assessing either within-relationship development or developmental changes (Young, Furman, & Laursen, 2011).

Most work on within-relationship changes focuses on actor or partner characteristics; some of these characteristics are relatively stable in nature; thus, they may not be promising candidates for explaining why relationships develop over time. We need to consider how relationship events, relationship features, or the history of a relationship affect its development. We need to consider what processes may lead to change in a relationship and what characteristics are simply reflections of the current state of a relationship. Finally, we need to consider how within-relationship development changes with age.

Notably, studying the development of relationships is challenging in that relationships may start at any time and many are short-lived, making it unlikely that repeated assessments of the relationship will occur in a typical longitudinal study. More intensive data collection techniques will be required to capture such changes and their implications for development.

Finally, one striking omission is the absence of literature on the development of romantic relationships in non-Western cultures. The emergence of romantic relationships often does not occur until adulthood in other cultures. Some initial forms of romantic relationships in Western cultures, such as casual or group dating, may simply not exist. In cultures where marriages are arranged, a series of romantic relationships may not occur. Moreover, the within-relationship development of arranged and nonarranged relationships may take different forms. For example, feelings of love may emerge after marriage in arranged relationships. A global perspective is needed to better understand which features of relationship development are universal and which are culture specific.

## GENDER

Considerable work has examined gender differences in same-sex friendships (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). This section reviews promising new directions on such differences. We also review the limited work on gender differences in adolescent romantic relationships.

### Friendships

Females' friendships involve greater disclosure, support, and closeness than males' friendships. Engaging in joint

activities plays a more central role in males' friendships. Recent extensions include examining gender-typical versus atypical styles, more extreme forms of sex-typed behavior, and social cognitions.

Having a gender-atypical style may be linked with poor adjustment. Early adolescent females are more likely than males to have preoccupied friendship styles in that they monitor friendships closely and feel distress at separations; early adolescent males are more likely than females to have avoidant styles in that they downplay the importance of friends, deny distress at separation, and act distant when they have problems (Menon, 2011). Adolescent males with preoccupied styles and females with avoidant styles are at risk for low self-esteem, low perceived social competence and elevated depression. Although female-typed styles confer risk for males, some male-typed styles may confer risk for males as well. Adolescent males who focus on activities with friends, avoid talking to friends, and fight to gain respect are at risk for depression, low self-esteem, and poor friendship quality (Gupta et al., 2013). Work is needed to identify friendship styles that are adaptive for males.

Gender-linked behaviors at extreme and moderate levels also have been considered. For example, among middle adolescents, females who "compete to win" have fewer and lower-quality friendships, but "competing to win" is unrelated to friendship characteristics for males; simply "competing to excel" is unrelated to the characteristics of both males' and females' friendships (Hibbard & Buhrmester, 2010). Similarly, hypercompetitiveness (i.e., competing to demonstrate superiority and experiencing distress at losing) is positively related to companionship for early adolescent Canadian males but negatively related for females (Schneider, Woodburn, del Toro, & Udarvi, 2005). Gender differences in moderate levels of competitiveness are less striking. Thus, gender differences may be more apparent at extreme levels of a characteristic. Although these gender differences exist in North America, hypercompetitiveness is not linked with positive friendship outcomes for early adolescent males or females in Latin America (Schneider et al., 2005). Perhaps competition is less accepted in collective cultures, which underscores the role of culture in determining gender differences.

Research on co-rumination considers an exaggerated form of another gender-typed behavior, talking about problems. Co-ruminating friends rehash problems, speculate about problems, and dwell on negative feelings (Rose, 2002). Adolescent females co-ruminate with friends more than males (e.g., Hankin, Stone, & Wright, 2010; Stone, Hankin, Gibb, & Abela, 2011). Co-ruminating adolescent friends are close and have high-quality relationships but



are also at risk for internalizing symptoms (e.g., Hankin et al., 2010; Rose, Carlson, & Waller, 2007; Stone, Hankin, Gibb, & Abela, 2011). Moreover, co-rumination may be linked with positive friendship adjustment more strongly for males and with internalizing symptoms more strongly for females (Rose, 2002; Rose et al., 2007). If so, co-rumination may not only be more common for females but also carry fewer benefits and greater costs for females.

Recent work on social cognitions also provides insight into gender differences in friendships. For example, when early adolescents have problems, females take the friends' perspective more than do males, which may account for females' greater positive friendship quality (Smith & Rose, 2011). However, females' greater perspective taking also may contribute to greater empathetic distress, wherein they experience the friends' distress as their own. Females are also more likely than males to have positive expectations for the outcomes of talking about problems (Rose et al., 2012), including expecting to feel cared for and understood. Males are more likely than females to expect that talking about problems will make them feel like they are wasting time. These gender differences may account for females' greater disclosure to friends. Interestingly, despite females' positive social cognitions in response to friends' problems, females react especially negatively to minor friendship transgressions (MacEvoy & Asher, 2012). In this context, females are more likely than males to feel devalued and controlled and to judge the violations as severe.

### Romantic Relationships

Although many investigators have examined gender differences in marriages and other romantic relationships of adults, almost no work has been done on gender differences in adolescent romantic relationships. The results of one large longitudinal study suggest that females have greater dating confidence than males throughout adolescence and early adulthood (Giordano et al., 2012). Early adolescent males and females have similar levels of communication awkwardness, but females show greater decreases in the adolescent and early adulthood years. Females find romantic relationships more emotionally rewarding. In early adolescence, females provide less instrumental support to their partners than do males, but by early adulthood they provide at least as much as males. Females report making more attempts to influence the other and having more actual influence and decision making power. Aside from this study, gender has primarily been used as a control variable in studies, which means we do not yet have a

good picture of the role of gender in adolescent romantic relationships.

### Future Directions

The role of gender has received considerably more attention in the study of friendships than romantic relationships. More work is needed on romantic relationships, especially as the existing findings regarding power and confidence are unexpected based on gender stereotypes. Furthermore, mean level comparisons cannot provide a complete picture of the role of gender. Work is needed examining how patterns of associations with romantic experiences differ as a function of gender. The promise of such work is illustrated by research showing that the link between co-rumination and friendships differs by gender (e.g., Rose, 2002).

Additional work on friendships is also needed. Research identifying gender differences in social cognitions in friendships suggest these may be underlying processes that explain gender differences in behavior. Investigators could also examine males' and females' perceptions of competitive behaviors in friendships. Whether females who engage in extreme competitive behavior are aware of their behavior and understand that their behavior may carry costs for their friendships is not known. Whether perceptions of these behaviors depend on the gender of the perceiver is also of interest. Males may be more accepting of extreme forms of competitive behavior in their friendships with both males and females. Alternatively, friends of both genders may be more accepting of extreme competitive behaviors when displayed by male friends than female friends.

Other individual differences, such as gender-role traditionality and schemas, may also contribute to gender-typed behavior in peer relationships. The degree of socialization pressure from parents and peers also likely varies and may contribute to gender-typed behavior in these relationships.

Comparisons of gender differences in same-sex and other-sex friendships and romantic relationships would contribute to a unified relational perspective. When interacting with other-sex peers, males and females may adopt interactional styles at least somewhat typical of the other sex in order to facilitate cross-sex interaction. If they adopt more gender-neutral styles in other-sex relationships than same-sex relationships, it would be interesting to know whether this is strategic or whether having a cross-sex partner simply pulls for these changes. If youth adopt more gender-neutral styles in both same- and other-sex romantic relationships than in same- and other-sex friendships, this would suggest differences in the nature of romantic

relationships and friendships (rather than differences driven by gender).

The role of culture and historical time also needs greater attention. The friendship literature has produced interesting findings indicating that gender differences may be enlarged in some cultures and minimized in others. Gender differences in adolescents' romantic relationships are almost certainly more pronounced in traditional cultures than in Western cultures. Moreover, as traditional cultures become more influenced by Western cultures, females' and males' behaviors in romantic relationships may become more similar.

## THE ROLE OF THE SELF AND PARTNER

The characteristics of the person and the partner each play major roles in determining whether a relationship will occur and what the features of the relationship are. Early work typically gathered data from one person, and thus focused on the role of the self. Recent work has examined the role of the partner, and the interplay of the two individuals' characteristics.

### The Self and Friendships

Investigators have considered how the behaviors of individuals affect their friendships. Those who are verbally and physically aggressive toward their peers have difficulties in friendships (Rubin, Bukowski, et al., 2006). Recent research indicates that relationally aggressive early adolescents have friendships that are high in both negative and positive qualities (Banny, Heilbron, Ames, & Prinstein, 2011). Friends who talk in relationally aggressive ways about peers increase in both positive friendship quality and conflict over 6 months. Perhaps friends experience increased intimacy and solidarity as a result of aggressing together against a shared victim.

Although socially withdrawn children have difficulties in the larger peer group, they may find dyadic contexts less intimidating and fare better in friendships. In middle childhood, a shy/withdrawn child is just as likely as other children to have a stable reciprocal friendship (Rubin, Wojslawowicz, Rose-Krasnor, Booth-LaForce, & Burgess, 2006). However, the friendships are of lower quality and likely to be with other shy/withdrawn and victimized children. The friendship difficulties of shy/withdrawn children may emerge in part because their reasoning about what

makes a friendship close and lasting is less advanced than that of other children (Fredstrom et al., 2012). Nonetheless, not all solitary children have friendship difficulties. In middle childhood, anxious/solitary children, who want to play with others but are too shy or afraid, have fewer, less stable friendships than other children (Ladd, Kochenderfer-Ladd, Eggum, Kochel, & McConnell, 2011). In contrast, unsociable children, who prefer to play alone, have just as many friends and friendships that are just as stable as those of other children.

Other work focuses more directly on specific friendship competencies, such as knowing how to help a friend. In two studies, youth ranging in age from middle childhood to middle adolescence were presented with vignettes in which a friend has a stressful encounter with peers (e.g., being teased or picked on). Results showed that those who endorse avoidant or hostile strategies in response to these vignettes have fewer friends and lower-quality friendships concurrently (Rose & Asher, 2004) and over time (Glick & Rose, 2011). Moreover, having more friends predicts decreases in avoidant and hostile strategies, and high-quality friendships predict increases in emotionally engaged strategies, such as giving support (Glick & Rose, 2011). Thus, not only do social competencies affect friendships, but friendships provide a context for the development of social competencies.

### The Partner and Friendships

With regard to partner effects, adolescent females with friends who engage in excessive reassurance seeking experience the relationship as lower in positive friendship quality one year later (Prinstein, Borelli, Cheah, Simon, & Aikins, 2005). Similarly, adolescents with friends who consistently turn the focus of conversations toward themselves experience the relationship as low in positive qualities (Schwartz-Mette & Rose, 2009). Excessive reassurance seeking and conversational self-focus are both common among youth with depressive symptoms. These findings are consistent with interpersonal theories of depression suggesting that depressed friends engage in aversive behaviors, leading others to withdraw from these relationships.

Another way in which partner effects are considered is by examining selection and socialization effects. Such studies examine whether select friends with similar characteristics and friends socialize each other so that they become more similar over time. Most studies, however, focus on selection and socialization effects on adjustment, which is covered in a subsequent section.

### The Self and Romantic Relationships

The literature on actor effects in romantic relationships is not very systematic. Demographic characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, race, or social class are commonly included, but primarily as control variables. Certainly, investigators have examined different characteristics, such as personality characteristics or attachment styles, but usually only a couple of studies have been conducted examining each particular characteristic. Moreover, these few studies typically examined different aspects of romantic relationships. A few characteristics have, however, received more attention.

An adolescent who is physically mature and attractive is more likely to have a romantic relationship, whereas body weight is inversely related to having one (McCarthy & Casey, 2008). For each point on the Body Mass Index scale, the probability of an adolescent female having a romantic relationship decreases by 6% (Halpern, King, Oslak, & Udry, 2005). A female in a romantic relationship in which sexual intercourse has not occurred is more likely to be dieting than one not in a relationship or in a relationship in which intercourse has occurred. Perhaps she believes her attractiveness is more important in retaining a boyfriend when they have not had intercourse. Alternatively, sexual activity may make her feel more confident about her attractiveness, or a sexually active female may enter a relationship with more confidence about her appearance.

Like research on social withdrawal in friendships, research on romantic relationships has examined shyness and dating anxiety. Shy early adolescents are less likely to have initiated dating, whereas those who derive pleasure from novel, intense activities are more likely to date (Ivanova, Mills, & Veenstra, 2011). Dating anxiety in middle adolescence is related to the quality of best friendships, whether they have or have had a romantic relationship, and the quality of romantic relationships (La Greca & Mackey, 2007).

### The Partner and Romantic Relationships

One of the earliest partner effects to receive attention in regards to romantic relationships was the age of the partner. Early adolescents with older partners are at risk for multiple problems. Recent work sheds light on why they are at risk. Links between pubertal maturity and risk behaviors are mediated by having a romantic partner, particularly an older one (Halpern, Kaestle, & Halfors, 2007). In addition, the association between having an older partner

and engaging in sexual intercourse as an early adolescent can be explained by exposure to peer norms favoring sex and being in situations conducive to sexual behavior, such as parties without adults (Marín, Kirby, Hudes, Coyle, & Gómez, 2006). An adolescent female who has an older partner is prone to become depressed, which may stem from an increase in substance use (Haydon & Halpern, 2010). This line of work nicely illustrates a movement from simply identifying a phenomenon (the risk of an older partner) to identifying underlying processes.

Actor and partner effects can be simultaneously examined by using actor-partner interdependence models. For example, middle adolescents' working models of romantic relationships affect their own behaviors in the relationship (actor effects) and their partners' behavior toward them (partner effects; Furman & Simon, 2006). Specifically, adolescents with secure working models display positive communication skills, whereas adolescents with dismissing working models display poorer skills. Adolescents with preoccupied working models engage in more conflictual behavior and tend to display more negative affect. Adolescents with dismissing models display less positive affect. Such actor effects are more common, but partner effects are also present. For example, adolescents with more secure working models have partners who display positive communication skills.

Other research also shows that actor effects are more common, but that partner effects occur too. For example, a middle adolescent female's own behavior during conflict, but not the partner's behavior, predicts her expression of autonomy; however, both the male's own and the partner's behavior predicts his expression of autonomy (McIsaac, Connolly, McKenney, Pepler, & Craig, 2008). Similarly, both genders' affiliative experiences are linked with better conflict resolution skills, and females with more frequent affiliative experiences have partners with better conflict negotiation behavior in middle adolescence (Seiffge-Krenke & Burk, 2013). In related research, middle and late adolescents who are self-silencing by not expressing feelings and thoughts have poor communication skills, such as giving in during conflicts with partners. They also have partners who are frustrated and uncomfortable (Harper & Welsh, 2007). Other work on partner characteristics involves adjustment and is covered in a subsequent section.

### Future Directions

More work on actor effects has been done on friendships than romantic relationships. Peer relations research has

long focused on social competence. Although past work focused primarily on how generally well-liked children or adolescents are, recent work indicates that social competence also influences dyadic friendships. Parallel work is needed on romantic relationships. Some social skills may be required for both friendships and romantic relationships, but others may be unique to friendships or romantic relationships. Studies simultaneously examining actor (or partner) effects in both friendships and romantic relationships would provide valuable information about the consistency and nature of such effects and contribute to a unified relational perspective.

Many characteristics of individuals have received little attention. Particularly needed are studies of interpersonal characteristics that may affect the interchanges in relationships, such as empathic understanding (Haugen, Welsh, & McNulty, 2008) or dating goals (Kelly, Zimmer-Gembeck, & Boislard, 2012).

In addition, most studies of partner effects have focused on the effects on the current relationship. Some work reviewed in a later section also indicates partners' influences on global outcomes, like adjustment. However, less is known about whether partners' influences carry over to subsequent relationships. Work is needed to address the degree to which social skills and interactional styles learned from one partner in one relationship carry over to the next. In addition, existing work on the interfacing of self and partner characteristics has primarily focused on selection and socialization effects on adjustment. As yet, we know little about how the interfacing of the two individuals' characteristics affects their pattern of interaction or relationship.

Finally, most of the work, especially with partner effects, is cross-sectional. For nearly all of the studies considered, it would be reasonable to think that the relationship affects the person instead of, or in addition to, the person affecting the relationship.

## FAMILY PROCESSES

The associations between many different family processes and peer relationships have been studied. These processes include parents' marriage, parent-child relationships, attachment, parenting styles, and sibling relationships. We focus on several particularly promising lines of research.

### Friendships

Recent research builds on previous studies through the use of longitudinal designs and the consideration of processes

that may explain associations between family relationships and friendships. Secure attachment to parents is associated with positive experiences with friends in childhood (e.g., McElwain, Booth-LaForce, Lansford, Wu, & Dyer, 2008; McElwain, Booth-LaForce, & Wu, 2011) and adolescence (e.g., Doyle et al., 2009; Y.-L. Liu, 2008). The relationship between parents is also important. Parents with a more positive marriage when their child is 1 month old have a more securely attached child, and this predicts friendship quality in fourth grade (Lucas-Thompson & Clarke-Stewart, 2007).

Factors that may help explain the association between parent-child attachment and later friendships are of interest. For example, infants' secure attachment predicts their mothers talking with them about cognitions at 24 months, which predicts greater positive friendship quality at 54 months (McElwain et al., 2011). Young children with secure attachments also demonstrate greater peer competence in middle childhood, which predicts more secure friendships in adolescence (Simpson, Collins, Tran, & Haydon, 2007).

Other aspects of the parent-child relationship have received recent attention as well. Preschoolers with parents who respond supportively to their negative emotions show more coordinated play with friends (McElwain, Halberstadt, & Vollung, 2007); parental sensitivity in the first 3 years of life predicts positive interactions with friends in the early school years (McElwain et al., 2008). Mediators have been considered too. Parental sensitivity at 36 months predicts affective mutuality in the mother-child relationship and children's language ability at 54 months and peer competence in first grade, which predicts positive friendship quality in the third grade (McElwain et al., 2008). Importantly, this work incorporates linguistic variables, which have received little attention in the relationship literature.

Work with older youth corroborates studies of young children, indicating that the parent-child relationships influences youths' characteristics in ways that affect friendships. For example, parental psychological control during late childhood predicts poor emotional security in early adolescence, which in turn predicts lower friendship competence in middle adolescence (Cook, Buehler, & Fletcher, 2012).

Although work is generally motivated by the idea that parents influence their children's friendships, these friendships also may influence parent-child relationships. For example, throughout adolescence, parent-child relationship qualities predict changes in the qualities of friendships

(De Goede, Branje, Delsing, & Meeus, 2009). However, the magnitude of the effect of parent support on youths' friendships decreases with age. Moreover, support and power in friendships predict changes in those qualities in the parent-child relationships, and the effect of negative friendship interactions on negative parent-child interactions becomes stronger with age. In other research (Van Doorn, Branje, van der Valk, De Goede, & Meeus, 2011), conflict resolution styles with parents predict friendship conflict resolution styles throughout adolescence. By middle adolescence, friendship conflict resolution styles also predict conflict resolution styles with parents. Together, these findings suggest that the influence of parents on friendships may be strongest in early adolescence, but that, by later adolescence, parents and friends may be similarly influential.

Finally, although family systems theorists have long argued for considering multiple relationships within the family, research on family relationships and friendships has focused almost exclusively on parent-child relationships. However, sibling relationships also share an important connection with friendships. For example, children who interact positively with a friend before a sibling is born have more positive interactions with the sibling in childhood and even into adolescence (Kramer & Kowal, 2005).

### Romantic Relationships

Several longitudinal studies of young children have now been going on long enough to examine links between early family relationships and romantic relationships in adolescence and adulthood. Parent-child relationships as early as the toddler years are linked with romantic experiences in adolescence and young adulthood. Those who are more secure with respect to proximity seeking in infancy have less anxious romantic relationship styles. Although maternal sensitivity in infancy is not predictive of late adolescent anxious or avoidant romantic attachment styles, increases in maternal sensitivity over early and middle childhood are associated with less avoidant and anxious styles (Fraley, Roisman, Booth-LaForce, Owen, & Holland, 2013). Higher average levels of maternal sensitivity in early and middle childhood are also related to higher-quality romantic relationships in middle adolescence (Roisman, Booth-LaForce, Cauffman, Spieker, & The NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2009). Interestingly, however, higher maternal sensitivity is related to lower romantic involvement in middle adolescence. This suggests that marked romantic involvement in adolescence may be premature (also see Furman &

Collibee, in press). In addition, other research indicates that higher quality parenting at two years of age predicts the security of romantic representations, positive perceptions of the relationships, and observed quality of romantic relationships in early adulthood; attachment security at 1 year was less consistently predictive (Haydon, Collins, Salvatore, Simpson, & Roisman, 2012). Moreover, adults' working models of their parents and their working models of romantic partners are both uniquely linked to positive perceptions of their romantic relationship quality and the observed quality of romantic relationships. These findings suggest that representations of romantic relationships and experiences in romantic relationships are not only influenced by each other, but also by early parent-child relationships.

Family processes in adolescence are also related to later romantic relationship experiences. For example, the quality of middle adolescents' family relationships predicts discord, conflict tactics, and connectedness in young adults' romantic relationships (Crockett & Randall, 2006). Marital hostility during middle adolescence, as well as hostility in friendships, is predictive of hostility in romantic relationships in late adolescence (Stocker & Richmond, 2007).

Investigators have also attempted to identify intermediary processes that may explain the associations between family relationships and romantic relationships. Some studies have predicted later romantic experiences using regression analyses in which the predictor variables are entered in chronological order; for example, early childhood experiences first, then middle childhood experiences, and finally adolescent ones. This sequence tests whether more proximal variables contribute over and above variables representing earlier experiences. For example, child abuse and witnessing intimate partner violence in early childhood predicts dating violence in early adulthood; boundary violations and negative interactions in parent-early adolescent relationships are also predictive even controlling for early childhood experiences; finally, friendship quality in middle adolescence is predictive of dating violence even controlling for both early childhood and early adolescent experiences (Linder & Collins, 2005). Similarly, early supportive care predicts early adulthood romantic relationship quality, and early adolescent parent-child interactions are predictive as well, even after controlling for early supportive care and peer competence in middle school. Similarly, after controlling for these earlier experiences, adolescent romantic quality positively predicts early adulthood romantic quality, and the number of recent romantic partners in middle adolescence negatively predicts early adulthood romantic

quality (Madsen & Collins, 2011). Although these studies indicate that more proximal variables contribute after accounting for the effects of the variables assessed earlier, whether the effects of earlier variables are mediated through the more proximal variables, or whether the earlier variable have direct effects on the outcomes, is not known.

Some studies also have considered how early experiences predict relationship experiences in middle childhood or adolescence, and how those experiences then predict later romantic experiences. As mentioned, secure attachment in infancy is related to childhood peer competence, which predicts adolescent friendship security, which then predicts the emotional tone and observed relationship quality of romantic relationships in early adulthood (Simpson et al., 2007). Similarly, poor quality parent-child relationships in early to middle childhood predict conflict with parents in adolescence, which predicts poor romantic relationship quality in early adulthood (Overbeek, Stattin, Vermust, Ha, & Engels, 2007). Such findings underscore the importance of identifying intermediary or proximal processes that occur in childhood or adolescence; at the same time, the findings indicate that these processes may have roots in early childhood. In both of these studies, however, the early childhood processes did not directly affect romantic relationship quality in adulthood, suggesting that the distal links described in the prior paragraph may be mediated through more proximal relationship processes.

Finally, other studies have considered mediating and moderating processes other than specific relationship characteristics. For example, parents' emotion dysregulation predicts their adolescent sons' emotion dysregulation, which predicts the sons' romantic relationships in early adulthood (H. K. Kim, Pears, Capaldi, & Owens, 2009). Additionally, processes that may underlie the link between interparental conflict and romantic relationships are of interest. Potential mediators of this link include adolescents' emotional reactivity in friendships (Cook, Buehler, & Blair, 2013), difficulties in social information processing (Fite et al., 2008), and appraisals of interparental conflict (Simon & Furman, 2010).

### Future Directions

Synergy exists between studies of the influence of parent-child relationships on friendships and romantic relationships. Many of the same positive aspects of parent-child relationships are associated with positive experiences in later friendships and romantic relationships. However, the links between early family experiences and

adolescent friendships are better established than the links between early family experiences and adult friendships. For romantic relationships, evidence is stronger for links between early family experiences with adult romantic relationships than with adolescent romantic relationships. Research on the links with adult friendships and adolescent romantic relationships would allow for comparing and contrasting family predictors of friendships and romantic relationships and foster integration of the work on the two relationships, contributing to a unified perspective.

Research reviewed above also suggests that early experiences with parents predict friendship experiences, which predict romantic relationship outcomes. More such studies are needed to determine whether the impact of early parent-child relationships on later romantic relationships is direct or mediated by experiences with friends. Moreover, with few exceptions (e.g., Stocker & Richmond, 2007), family variables are assessed at earlier ages than friendship variables in studies predicting romantic relationships. As a consequence, it is difficult to determine whether differences in the predictive power of family and friendships stem from the type of relationship considered or the time that the relationship was assessed. Early relationships could be more influential if they serve as prototypes for subsequent relationships; however, more recent relationships could be more influential as they may be more similar to later relationships or because less time has passed. Finally, more research is needed to examine the direction of effects. As noted, relatively little is known about how peer relationships affect family processes.

More research is needed regarding how parent-child relationships, friendships, and romantic relationships coexist in later adolescence and early adulthood when they need to be simultaneously managed. One study considered two time points in adolescence and two time points in early adulthood (Meeus, Branje, van der Valk, & de Weid, 2007). Those who shifted from indicating that their most important peer was a friend to indicating that their most important peer was a romantic partner showed increases in commitment to the romantic partner and decreases in emotional problems. A stronger commitment to a romantic partner in early adulthood, but not in adolescence, was also associated with fewer emotional problems (see Furman & Collibee, in press, for a similar association). Moreover, stronger parental support in early adulthood was associated with greater commitment to a romantic partner. These findings suggest that romantic relationships become more psychologically meaningful than friendships in late adolescence and early adulthood and suggest that links

between relationships with parents and romantic partners become stronger when the romantic relationships become more committed. Additional research is needed to understand how youth healthy romantic relationships, while maintaining healthy relationships with parents and friends.

Other aspects of family relationships also need to be considered. Although social scientists increasingly have examined multiple facets of parenting in the same study, more work is needed. Particularly promising may be studies integrating family structure and family process. Socioeconomic and structural characteristics of the family may set the context for different processes to occur. For example, many middle- or upper-class parents may approach childrearing in terms of “concerted cultivation” in which they attempt to promote children’s skills and talents through organized activities; many working-class parents may approach childrearing as the “accomplishment of natural growth” in which they provide children with the conditions to grow, but leave leisure activities for the children themselves (Lareau, 2011). The time and nature of experiences with extended family and peers may also differ, and such a difference may moderate links between family processes and dyadic peer relationships. Finally, family structure is not static and may change repeatedly over time; the number of transitions in family structure in childhood and adolescence predicts having a current romantic relationship and the number of subsequent romantic relationships (Cavanagh, Crissey, & Raley, 2008). Conceptualizations and studies of the family need to take into account the dynamic processes involved.

Also, most research on links with family processes has considered involvement in friendships or romantic relationships or the characteristics of the relationships. Less research has considered the characteristics of the friends or romantic partners. However, parents likely affect the types of friends and romantic partners youth choose. Moreover, the degree to which parents approve of friends and romantic partners likely influences the parent-child relationship.

In addition, although most children have siblings, few studies have examined associations between sibling relationships and friendships, and even less is known about the associations between sibling relationships and romantic relationships. Studies should explore the idea that having other-sex siblings may increase the comfort and social competence of heterosexual youth with other-sex peers.

Finally, research to date does not represent the wide array of family types. As with other topics, virtually all of the research has been conducted in North American and

European cultures. Although work is increasing on racial and ethnic minority families in these cultures, we know little about how variations within and across families of different backgrounds are associated with children and adolescents’ experiences with friends and romantic partners. Moreover, the families that have been studied tend to be traditional ones. Little is known about immigrant families or families with GLBT parents. Such work would enhance our understanding of the links between children and adolescents’ family experiences and their experiences with friends and romantic partners.

## PEER PROCESSES

In this section, links are considered among friendships, romantic relationships, and peer group processes. Associations between experiences in friendships and romantic relationships are considered first. Associations between broader peer group experiences and friendships are discussed next, followed by a discussion of associations between broader peer group experiences and romantic relationships.

### Friendships and Romantic Relationships

Considerable work indicates that having higher-quality friendships is associated with having higher-quality romantic relationships (see Connolly & McIsaac, 2009; Furman & Collins, 2009). Recent research has focused on more complex associations, including mediation, moderation, trajectories of growth, and within-subject associations. In the previous section on family processes, we discussed how friendships may mediate the links between family processes and romantic relationships. With regard to moderation, having deviant peer friends is associated with higher rates of dating violence perpetration in early adolescence, but this effect is particularly strong when parents support aggressive solutions to conflict (S. Miller, Gorman-Smith, Sullivan, Orpinas, & Simon, 2009).

Virtually all research has only examined predictor variables at one time point, but growth curves have been examined in one instance (Fraleigh, Roisman, Booth-LaForce et al., 2013). Higher levels of positive friendship quality in middle childhood and increases in positive friendship qualities from middle childhood to middle adolescence were predictive of less avoidant romantic attachment styles in late adolescence.

Another new direction involves examining both between- and within-person effects. Between-person associations refer to instances where differences between people on one variable are associated with differences on another variable. For example, adolescents who typically have friends who engage in dating violence engage in more dating violence throughout adolescence; those who typically have high-quality friendships, and females who typically have friends with prosocial beliefs engage in less dating violence throughout adolescence (Foshee et al., 2013). Within-person associations refer to instances where variations within a person over time on one variable are associated with variations within a person over time on another variable. For instance, adolescents engage in more dating violence than usual when they are higher in social status than usual; levels of dating violence are lower than usual at times when they have more friends with prosocial beliefs than they typically do (Foshee et al., 2013). Thus, studies of within-person effects can provide information about *when* activities occur (versus *who* is likely to engage in them). Such studies are central to many psychological theories, because social scientists, especially developmentally oriented ones, are often interested in changes within a person in addition to differences between people. Knowing both *who* and *when* are essential to understanding developmental processes.

### Friendships and Peer Groups

The characteristics of friendships are also associated with processes in broader peer group, such as peer group acceptance, perceived popularity, and victimization. In terms of peer acceptance, children and adolescents with friends and high-quality friendships are well-accepted by peers (see Rubin, Bukoski, et al., 2006). Recent work indicates that school-aged children with friends are better accepted than children without friends, even when the friends have undesirable characteristics, such as aggressive tendencies (Palmen, Vermande, Deković, & van Aken, 2011).

In regards to perceived popularity, having perceived popular friends increases individuals' own perceived popularity in childhood (Logis, Rodkin, Gest, & Ahn, 2013) and adolescence (Dijkstra, Cillessen, Lindenberg, & Veenstra, 2010). However, early adolescents who are liked by peers perceived to be popular, but are not friends with them, are better accepted than those with a friend perceived to be popular (Dijkstra et al., 2010). Prospective research also indicates that children (Logis et al., 2013) and adolescents

(Dijkstra, Cillessen, & Borch, 2013) become more similar to friends in perceived popularity over time.

Recent work has also addressed links between friendship and victimization. Earlier work indicated that children and adolescents with friends are less victimized and that having friends buffers them from the negative effects of victimization (see Rubin, Bukoski, et al., 2006). Recent studies further consider the timing and directionality of these associations. Having poorer-quality friendships predicts later victimization in middle childhood and early adolescence (Kendrick, Jutengren, & Stattin, 2012; Malcolm, Jensen-Campbell, Rex-Lear, & Waldrip, 2006). Children who are chronically friendless or who lose friends across a school year during middle childhood also experience increases in victimization, whereas children who have stable friendships or who gain friends do not experience increased victimization (Wojslawowicz Bowker, Rubin, Burgess, Booth-LaForce, & Rose-Krasnor, 2006).

Other recent work has considered whether associations between friendships and victimization are bidirectional. Previous research was largely motivated by the idea that having few friends leaves children and adolescents vulnerable to victimization (Rubin, Bukoski, et al., 2006). However, the stress of victimization could deplete the social and emotional resources youth bring to friendships, and peers may be concerned that friendships with victimized youth will lead themselves to be victimized. In fact, during middle childhood and early adolescence, victimized individuals are less likely to form new friendships, and the friendships of victimized girls are less stable (Ellis & Zbaratany, 2007). Other research, though, found that victimization is not associated with decreases in friendship quality in middle childhood and early adolescence (Malcolm et al., 2006; Kendrick et al., 2012). More research is needed to determine whether victimization leads to friendship problems.

Last, whether findings for older youth apply to young children has been considered (Hanish, Ryan, Martin, & Fabes, 2005). Even kindergarteners with reciprocal friends are less victimized than their friendless peers. However, reciprocal friends do not protect preschoolers from victimization. Instead, preschoolers who engage in more social play and are in classrooms with higher levels of overall aggression are likely to be victimized. These findings suggest that preschoolers may aggress somewhat indiscriminately toward peers who happen to be nearby, whereas older aggressors may be more strategic and avoid children with friendship alliances.



### Romantic Relationships and Peer Groups

Early research on peer group processes and romantic relationships primarily focused on who was more likely to establish romantic relationships. This work indicated that those who interact more with the other-sex, have more other-sex friends, or are popular are more likely to subsequently develop romantic relationships (see Connolly & McIsaac, 2008; Furman & Collins, 2009). More recently, it has become clear that multiple pathways lead to having romantic relationships (S. Miller, Lansford, et al., 2009). For example, popular youth (i.e., those who are well-accepted) and controversial youth (i.e., those who receive high numbers of liked-most and liked-least nominations from peers) are both more likely to have romantic partners in early adolescence than neglected youth (i.e., those who receive few liked-most and few liked-least nominations). Given the ubiquity of friendships and romantic relationships in our lives, it seems quite likely that numerous pathways exist. As statistical techniques continue to become better able to identify multiple pathways, more pathways are likely to be identified.

Much of the recent focus on links between the peer group and romantic relationships has been with regards to dating violence. Associating with adolescent peers who engage in dating violence or other forms of aggression predicts engaging in dating violence oneself (see Capaldi, Knoble, Shortt, & Kim, 2012). Importantly, whether youth aggress in the peer group is related to their tendency to aggress against a dating partner. For example, in one study (Foshee et al., 2011), 40% of the early and middle adolescent females and 19% of the males who were aggressive toward their peers were aggressive toward a dating partner. In contrast, among youth who were not aggressive toward peers, only 10% of females and 4% of males were aggressive toward a dating partner. Such work suggests that a significant number of youth are at risk for multiple forms of violence, and prevention programs focusing on multiple forms of aggression may be more efficient.

### Future Directions

Some similarities exist between work on friendships and romantic relationships in regards to connections with the larger peer group. Those who are well-accepted or perceived as popular fare well in regards to both friendships and romantic relationships. The friendship literature has also considered links between friendship features and victimization by peers, and the romantic relationship

literature has considered links between dating violence and connections with deviant peer groups. Future work would benefit from integrating these literatures. Longitudinal work could test whether youth who are victimized peers are likely to be victims of dating violence. Whether supportive friendships can protect youth from dating violence similar to how friendships protect youth from victimization is also unknown.

Additionally, most research on the links between friendships and romantic relationships has considered characteristics of the relationships. Less is known about the similarities or differences in the characteristics of friends or romantic partners. Adolescent friends and romantic partners are similar in delinquency, attractiveness, popularity, and depression (Lonardo, Giordano, Longmore, & Manning, 2009; Simon et al., 2008), but what is less understood is why this is the case. It may simply reflect similarities in an adolescent's selection of peers, or be the results of the adolescent's socialization of both, or the friend and partner socializing each other. Understanding the interplay of the dynamics in friendships and romantic relationships will be key for developing a unified relational perspective.

In addition, future research should examine the processes through which friends may influence romantic relationships. Conceptual papers exist on how friends may influence romantic relationships (e.g., Brown, 1999). For example, friends may approve or disapprove of potential partners, introduce peers to potential dating partners, facilitate or disrupt relationships, provide advice about relationship issues, or keep an eye on a partner's behavior. Similarly, partners may engage in comparable behaviors regarding friends. These processes might be considered analogous to parental monitoring and are in need of empirical attention.

### MEDIA

In this section, we consider how use of media by children and adolescents is linked with their experiences in friendships and romantic relationships. This is an important topic given the sheer amount of time youth devote to media use and the advances in technology that allow youth to use digital media (e.g., texting) to communicate with friends and romantic partners.

### Friendships

Adolescents are much more likely to communicate online with real-life friends than with people whom they know

only over the Internet (Reich, Subrahmanyam, & Espinoza, 2012; Smahal, Brown, & Blinka, 2012). Moreover, Internet communication is associated with higher friendship quality for early and middle adolescents who communicate primarily with face-to-face friends versus with those known only online (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). Adolescents who instant message also show increases in positive relationship quality in face-to-face friendships and romantic relationships (Blais, Craig, Pepler, & Connolly, 2008; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009a). The effect for friendships is accounted for by online self-disclosure (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009a), that is, preadolescents and adolescents who instant-message more and disclose more about personal feelings in their messages, which predicts later positive friendship quality. In contrast, using the Internet for chat rooms, games, and general entertainment predicts decreases in some positive friendship and romantic relationship qualities (Blais et al., 2008). In summary, interacting online with preexisting friends can strengthen relationships, but online activities that do not involve communicating with friends may detract from friendships.

Two hypotheses address who benefits from communicating online with friends (see Valkenburg & Peter, 2009b). According to the rich-get-richer hypothesis, socially competent youth are most likely to seek out online communication as one more platform for enhancing friendships. In contrast, the social compensation hypothesis suggests that less socially competent youth feel more comfortable communicating online because there is no face-to-face contact and more time to compose responses. Support exists for both hypotheses. Consistent with the rich-get-richer hypothesis, socially anxious early and middle adolescents may be less likely to communicate online than those who are not socially anxious (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). However, consistent with the social compensation hypothesis, socially anxious adolescents feel more comfortable talking about more topics and more sensitive topics online than face to face (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). Moreover, the negative impact of middle adolescent males' social anxiety on friendship quality is not significant for friends who interact on the computer together (Desjarlais & Willoughby, 2010).

Less research has considered whether positive friendship adjustment may contribute to greater online communication. However, those who interact positively with friends in early adolescence are especially likely to have a social networking webpage in early adulthood and to have a large number of friends on their webpage (Mikami, Szewedo, Allen, Evans, & Hare, 2010). In contrast, relationships with

parents that are problematic also may increase Internet use (Willoughby, 2008). Compared to other youth, early adolescents whose mothers fail to support their autonomy and relatedness are more likely to have formed a friendship with someone they met online during early adulthood (Szewedo, Mikami, & Allen, 2011). Perhaps youth who experience poorer parenting are less likely to develop the skills necessary for success in face-to-face friendship interactions.

### Romantic Relationships

The depiction of sex in the media has received significant attention for some time. However, that literature has not focused on sexual behavior in romantic relationships per se. In fact, only half of the individuals depicted having sexual intercourse on television have an established relationship (Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005). Instead, the focus of research has been on the high frequency of sexual content overall and the limited consideration of sexual risk and responsibilities. Work has been done regarding how adolescents' media diet of sex is linked to sexual attitudes and behavior in general, casual sexual behavior, or sexual risk taking, but little has been done on the links to sexual attitudes and behavior in romantic relationships per se. Indeed, relatively little consideration has been given to the depiction of romantic relationships in the media.

Content analyses reveal that a heterosexual script is commonly portrayed in adolescents' favorite primetime network television programs (J. L. Kim et al., 2007). Males are depicted as preoccupied by females' bodies and consumed by sexual thoughts, desires, and experiences. Males are portrayed as initiating sexual activities, whereas females set sexual limits and are judged by their sexual conduct. Males use active and powerful strategies to win females' affection; females use passive, alluring strategies. Males are seen as wanting and needing independence, whereas females are depicted as wanting and needing relationships, boyfriends, or husbands. Males are portrayed as preferring sexual fulfillment over emotional commitment and as homophobic. Such descriptions may affect whom adolescents are attracted to romantically and how they interact in romantic relationships. Consistent with this idea, watching romantic television programs is associated with having more traditional gender role attitudes about romantic relationships; watching nonromantic programs is associated with middle adolescent youth having less traditional attitudes; watching soap operas is associated with earlier age of starting to date and having a larger number of partners (Rivadenyra & Lebo, 2008).

Little work has focused on the new media and romantic relationships. Qualitative descriptions suggest that digital media may influence adolescents' romantic relationships (Ito et al., 2010). Social network sites may increase opportunities for meeting potential romantic partners. Such opportunities may be particularly important for GLBT youth. Long-distance relationships may be easier to develop or maintain. Whether near or far apart physically, adolescents can be in frequent, if not continuous, contact with romantic partners, which may lead to expectations of being available and responsive at almost any moment. At the same time, text messages and social networking provide individuals opportunities to compose messages before communicating. Moreover, adolescents may find it easier to meet others or have romantic relationships about which their parents have little knowledge. Of course, some parents may oversee or access their adolescent's social network sites or text messages. Certainly, communications are commonly accessible by partners or friends, intentionally or unintentionally. Romantic partners may find it easier to know of each other's activities, especially given the ease of sharing videos and pictures. A suspicious or jealous partner may have easier means of checking on a partner's behavior; this may not only provide opportunities for determining instances of infidelity or troubling behavior but also may lead to misperceptions of a partner's intentions. The restricted channels of communication in digital media may lead to misperceptions of what is said or perhaps greater opportunities for deliberate ambiguity. Finally, relationships can be ended quite indirectly. At the same time, a former lover may find it relatively easy to keep track of or even stalk an ex-partner.

Byproducts of the new media have raised concerns. A 2010 survey of adolescents in the United States showed that in the past year 2.5% of preadolescent and adolescents "sexted," or sent a nude or nearly nude image via electronic media; 7% received one (Mitchell, Finkelhor, Jones, & Wolak, 2012). Ten percent of early and middle adolescents in the United States reported being victims of cyber dating abuse (Zweig, Dank, Yahner, & Lachman, 2013). The most common form is using a social networking account without permission. Receiving texts/e-mails soliciting unwanted sexual acts, being pressured to send sexually explicit photographs, receiving threatening text messages, or receiving intimidating numbers of text messages/e-mails also occur. Importantly, victims of cyber dating abuse are more likely to also have experienced physical, sexual, or psychological dating abuse; perpetrators are more likely to report perpetrating other forms of abuse.

## Future Directions

The literatures on media use on friendships and romantic relationships are strikingly different. Substantially different questions have been addressed in the two fields, which illustrates the importance of a unified relational perspective. Some similarities between media use in friendships and romantic relationships are likely, but what are they and what are the differences? For example, does Internet use affect socially anxious adolescents' romantic relationships differently from their friendships? Coordinated work in the two fields may lead to a better understanding of the role of media in each relationship.

In addition, more work is needed on multiple types of media use and face-to-face interactions. Because adolescents typically use multiple forms of media and face-to-face contact to communicate with friends, separating out the influences of each will be challenging. Variation in the relative use of particular media forms could be considered, but this variation is likely conflated with the characteristics of the individual, partner, and relationship stage.

Although the frequency of media use is important, the content of use, motives for use, and the degree of identification with the media figure also warrant more consideration (see Ward & Friedman, 2006 for an example). Cohort effects are also likely to be striking; indeed, the changes in new media are so rapid that the size of a cohort is becoming increasingly smaller, as youth close in age may use media in substantially different ways.

Several topics have received little attention. Many adult relationship researchers have been interested in how online dating affects romantic relationships. Some online dating sites specifically cater to adolescents, but we are unaware of any work on their effects on adolescents' relationships. In addition, virtually all of the research described in this section has been conducted in technologically advanced cultures; the role of media in other cultures remains to be studied. Finally, just like the technology, research on digital media is rapidly developing. The speed of the research and the technology provide extra challenges for researchers, yet exciting opportunities for much growth in our knowledge in the upcoming years.

## CULTURE

Cultural context affects friendships and romantic relationships. By culture we mean both countries or societies and subcultures within countries or societies. Such subcultures would include different ethnicities and social classes.

Most of the research we reviewed was conducted in North America and secondarily in Europe. Investigators have used Asian and other understudied cultures to examine issues that have been studied in North America or Europe; however, the rationale has often been that few studies have been conducted in that culture, and little information about the culture is reported in the study. Virtually all of these investigators are remiss as well in discussing how their country's culture may affect their results; similarly, studies of European Americans rarely consider how their subculture affects their results. For studies to shed light on culture, cultural processes need to be explicitly considered. In a minority of studies, investigators have discussed how the cultural context may influence the results. In most of these instances, however, the cultural processes are not measured. Consequently, we know relatively little about cultural context. Instead of describing the limited and disparate literature on cultural context and friendships and romantic relationships, we present examples of work that illustrate its potential for insights into friendships and romantic relationships.

### Countries and Societies

One promising strategy has been to conduct studies comparing friends or romantic relationships across more than one country. For example, compared to a child in the United States, an Indonesian child is more likely to disengage from friendship conflicts, such as by avoiding the other child or changing the conversation or activity (French, Pidada, Denoma, McDonald, & Lawton, 2005). A child in the United States is more likely to negotiate or compromise. Notably, in Indonesia only, disengagement is associated with being well-accepted, suggesting that disengagement is not only more common among Indonesian children but more adaptive as well. Interpersonal relationships are highly valued in Indonesia, and avoiding overt conflict is seen as one way to maintain positive relationships.

In regards to romantic relationships, a middle adolescent in Canada is more likely to have had a romantic relationship and had more relationships than an adolescent in China (Li, Connolly, Jiang, Pepler, & Craig, 2010). Canadian adolescents' romantic relationships are also perceived to involve more trust and companionship than the romantic relationships of Chinese adolescents. Canadian females perceive their romantic relationships as more intimate than do Chinese females. Finally, friendship qualities are more strongly related to romantic experiences in Canada than in China. Canadian adolescents may have romantic partnerships that

are more intimate due to the relative emphasis on nonfamilial (versus familial) relationships in Canada versus China. The salience of nonfamilial relationships in Canada may also help to explain the greater interconnectedness between friendships and romantic experiences.

As another example, rates of dating aggression in middle adolescence are similar in Canada and Italy, but the links with other relationship characteristics differ (Connolly et al., 2010). In Canada, dating aggression is related to romantic conflict. In Italy, dating aggression is also related to romantic conflict but to a lesser extent. In Italy, imbalances in power are also associated with dating aggression, perhaps because gender roles are more traditional in Italy. Importantly, these studies also provide some insight into possible commonalities across cultures (e.g. rates of dating aggression).

To date, most studies have compared two countries, but some multi-country studies exist. For example, friendship conceptions were assessed among youth ranging from middle childhood to middle adolescence in former East Germany, Iceland, China, and Russia (Gummerum & Keller, 2008). The results showed that youth from Iceland and East Germany have less mature friendship conceptions than Chinese and Russian youth. Iceland and East German are more individualistic than China and Russia, and individualist countries may foster less sophisticated relationship cognitions.

Seiffge-Krenke et al. (2010) examined reports of romantic stress in early and middle adolescence in 17 countries grouped into seven regions. The results showed that adolescents in Middle and Southern Europe report greater romantic stress than do adolescents in Northern and Eastern Europe, South Africa, South America, and the Middle East. Stress may be higher in these European regions as the development of a romantic relationship plays an important role in the process of separating from the family and leaving home in those cultures. Stress may be lower in other regions because family rules regarding romantic relationships are clearer or stricter, making opportunities for choices regarding romantic experiences more limited. Finally, the differences may arise because adolescents in South America and the Middle East are more concerned about other stressors, such as identity concerns.

Multi-country studies have particular promise, as they allow multiple comparisons among countries, which may shed light on cultural processes that affect friendships and romantic experiences. Although such cross-cultural comparisons present some challenging methodological and conceptual issues regarding equivalence of measures,

samples, and constructs, we believe that such work can provide intriguing insights into the nature of dyadic relationships, as cultures vary markedly on a number of important dimensions.

Another promising direction is to directly measure the processes believed to explain cultural differences. For example, a process-oriented approach could involve considering youth of a single ethnicity who differ in the degree to which they are socialized in Westernized contexts. One study compared late adolescent Indian youth in homeland single-sex colleges, Indian youth in coeducational colleges in India, and Indian youth whose parents had immigrated to Canada (Dhariwal & Connolly, 2013). The results show that all desire romantic experiences. Those attending college in Canada, however, engage in more romantic activities than youth in other contexts. They also have more autonomy in selecting partners than those in coeducational schools in India, who have more autonomy than those in single-sex schools. The three groups also differ in the amount of Western and social media they consumed, their number of other-sex friends, friends having permissive expectations, and the intimacy of their conversations with friends. Importantly, when differences in the media and friendships are taken into account, differences in romantic activities and autonomy no longer exist. Exposure to Western media and intimate conversations with friends may induce acculturation, which may explain the greater romantic involvement of youth in these contexts. This study was one of the first to attempt to deconstruct culture and to identify processes, such as the influence of friendships and media, which might be responsible for cultural differences in romantic experiences.

### Race, Ethnicity, and Social Class

Cultural context also plays a role within particular countries or societies. Subcultural differences exist as a function of race/ethnicity, social class, or neighborhood. Most past work was done with European American middle-class samples. Most studies today try to obtain more representative samples in terms of ethnicity or race, although this seems to be less true for social class. However, even studies that are representative of race, ethnicity, or social class often do not examine subgroups within the sample (see Crissey, 2005; Giordano, Manning, & Longmore, 2005, for exceptions). More typically, race, ethnicity, or social class is included, but only overall mean differences are reported. Thus, generalizations can be made about the population overall, but not about particular ethnic/racial groups or social classes.

There are at least two notable challenges when conducting and interpreting research on racial/ethnic differences. One is that race/ethnicity is often confounded with SES or neighborhood. Another is that research on race/ethnicity differences often describes mean-level differences but does not adopt a process-oriented approach. A few studies attempt to address process by considering whether the ethnic group differences exist in the links between variables such as those among different relationships. For example, ethnic minority Dutch adolescents (primarily of Turkish or Moroccan origins) who have more committed romantic relationships have poorer-quality relationships with parents (Ha, Overbeek, de Greef, Scholte, & Engels, 2010). This association is not found for native Dutch adolescents. The association may emerge for ethnic Dutch adolescents because ethnic Dutch parents place more limits on romantic relationships, and a very committed relationship may be problematic from their perspective.

An even more effective strategy is to assess the cultural processes that may affect friendships or romantic relationships in different ethnic/racial groups or social classes. Studies directly assessing such processes are uncommon, but noteworthy exceptions exist. One approach is to examine cultural models, or themes that members of a cultural group use to describe relationships. The more a theme is discussed, the more relationships are thought to be organized around that theme. Cultural models have been examined through qualitative interviews of Mexican American and African American middle adolescents (Milbrath, Olson, & Eyre, 2009). Five cultural model factors have been identified: (1) Hispanic cultural mores, such as *familismo*, *respeto*, *marianismo*, and *machismo*; (2) conceptions of care, which include directives about appropriate male behavior and idealized models of romance and courtship; (3) expectations in serious romantic exchanges, including expectations regarding sexual exclusiveness and knowing what the other wants; (4) ways of having multiple partners and strategies for managing a partners' fidelity; and (5) gaming, which involves verbal persuasion and social manipulation. Mexican Americans talked more about cultural mores and romantic care, whereas African Americans talked more about serious exchanges and gaming, suggesting that relationships in the two racial/ethnic groups are organized around different dimensions. This research did not examine the degree to which individuals from different ethnic backgrounds adhered to or disagreed with these cultural themes, but future work could examine these individual differences and test whether they account for racial/ethnic differences in romantic relationships.

Another approach involves examining individual differences in the degree to which children or adolescents within a single ethnic group adopt values that are especially salient for that group. For example, Mexican American adolescents who adopt *familistic* values that emphasize interpersonal harmony in the family also tend to adopt solution-oriented conflict resolution styles with friends, which involve discussion and working together to solve problems, as opposed to nonconfrontational strategies or controlling strategies (Thayer, Updegraff, & Delgado, 2008).

### Cross-Race/Ethnic Relationships

Homophily is a driving force in the selection of dyadic peer relationships. Friendships tend to be between same-race/ethnic peers from early childhood through adolescence (Rubin, Bukowski, et al., 2006). Most adolescent romantic relationships are between same-race/ethnic individuals; for example, one set of estimates revealed that over 90% of African American and European American relationships are same-race/ethnic relationships, and over 60% of Hispanic and Asian American relationships are (Wang et al., 2006).

Research is mixed regarding differences in the quality and stability of same-race/ethnic and cross-race/ethnic friendships (McGill, Way, & Hughes, 2012; Schneider, Dixon, & Udavari, 2007). However, factors that increase the likelihood of cross-race/ethnic friendships have been identified. Asian American and Latina/o American middle adolescents whose families have lived in the United States for longer and are more fluent in English are more likely to have cross-race/ethnic friends (Hamm, Brown, & Heck, 2005). African American adolescents with relatively stronger academic orientations and European American adolescents with relatively weaker academic orientations are more likely to have cross-race/ethnic friends. Social cognitions also play a role in the formation of cross-race/ethnic friendships. During middle childhood, children with more positive perceptions of different racial/ethnic groups are more likely to have cross-race/ethnic friendships (Feddes, Noack, & Rutland, 2009).

Other work considers the idea that cross-race/ethnic friendships introduce children and adolescents to new peer groups and increase their social perspective taking and social skills. Cross-sectional studies during middle childhood suggest that children with cross-race/ethnic friends are especially well-liked, leaders, and inclusive of others (Kawabata & Crick, 2008; Lease & Blake, 2005). In middle childhood, children with more cross-race/ethnic

friends also experience decreases in relational and physical victimization and increases in perceived support from friends across the school year (Kawabata & Crick, 2011). Interestingly, the effects for physical victimization and peer support hold only for classrooms that are especially diverse. Additional longitudinal work is needed to test whether socially competent children and adolescents are especially likely to form cross-race/ethnic friendships.

Having cross-race/ethnic friends during early adolescence is also associated with more positive attitudes about peers of other races/ethnicities (Knifsend & Juvonen, 2013). However, the benefits may differ for majority and minority children and adolescents. For example, for the majority German children, having more Turkish friends predicts more positive attitudes about Turkish children across the school year. The same effect does not emerge, though, for minority Turkish children (Feddes et al., 2009). The out-group attitudes of Turkish children may be based on broader experiences in society and not as malleable to the influence of specific friends. Similarly, although having cross-race/ethnic friends contributes to feeling safe at school among preadolescents (Graham, Munniksma, & Juvonen, 2013), these effects also may vary by majority/minority status. Having cross-race/ethnic friends is related to feeling safe at school for preadolescent and early adolescent Latina/o Americans when they are in the majority at the school (Munniksma & Juvonen, 2012), but not for European American adolescents when they are in the minority.

Interestingly, in multiracial/ethnic settings, having more same-race/ethnic friends may have mixed effects. Having more same-ethnic friends is linked with having a positive ethnic identity, including feeling good about one's ethnic group (Graham et al., 2013). However, having more same-ethnic friends is also associated with more stressful perceptions of cross-race/ethnic relations. Specifically, during middle childhood, African American children who have more African American friends are especially likely to report that African American children will be discriminated against (Rowley, Burchinal, Roberts, & Zeisel, 2008). The authors speculated that African American children who affiliate with same-race/ethnic peers may be discriminated against more often or may be socialized within their friendship networks to expect discrimination.

Less work has considered cross-race/ethnic romantic relationships. However, adolescents in cross-race/ethnic relationships are less likely to talk to their mothers or other people about these relationships (Wang et al., 2006). They are also less likely to meet their partners' parents.

These findings suggest that society and parents are less approving of such relationships, or at the very least adolescents think they are. Such cultural factors may lead to instability in cross-race/ethnic romantic relationships and greater homogamy in romantic relationships.

Finally, efforts have been made to identify processes underlying social class and neighborhood effects. Work on romantic relationships has considered the idea that relationships in the context of low-income neighborhoods may be more culturally heterogeneous. That is, more variation may exist in the lifestyles of residents of low-income neighborhoods than in higher-income neighborhoods (Harding, 2007). Consequently, children and adolescents may be exposed to heterogeneous models of relationships in these neighborhoods. Indeed, low-income neighborhoods have greater heterogeneity in attitudes about getting pregnant and the ideal sequence of events in romantic relationships, such as declarations of love, meeting parents, sex, pregnancy, or marriage. Such heterogeneity is associated with less consistency between adolescents' attitudes about pregnancy or romantic events and their actual behavior, even taking into account average neighborhood income levels.

### Future Directions

One of the key propositions of our unified relational perspective is that dyadic peer relationships are embedded in a cultural context. The existing research provides clear evidence of such contextual effects, but more work is needed, especially research that disentangles processes underlying cultural differences (e.g., Dhariwal & Connolly, 2013). Research on such processes is important as too many cultures exist to compare them all, and focusing on processes will promote the integration of research in different cultures and contribute to a unified relational perspective.

Only a few friendship studies have examined developmental processes that reflect cultural variables, such as acculturation, experiences of racism, or ethnic identity. To the best of our knowledge, these variables have not been explored in regards to romantic relationships. More attention also needs to be paid to specific contexts in which these relationships occur, such as the school or neighborhood. The racial/ethnic make-up of the school context influences peer-group dynamics and the prevalence of cross-racial/ethnic friendships (see Graham, Taylor, & Ho, 2009). However, almost nothing is known about how the diversity of the school context affects romantic relationships. The degree of diversity in the school context likely affects not only the prevalence of cross-racial/ethnic

romantic relationships but also the degree to which they are accepted. Classmates' perceptions of cross-racial/ethnic romantic relationships, in turn, may influence who chooses to engage in these relationships and how they influence youths' adjustment.

Existing work on dyadic peer relationships in the United States has focused on African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latina/o Americans. Less is known about Native Americans, multiracial youth, or immigrant youth.

In addition, although work has focused on different ethnic/racial groups, religious differences are also important. One study considered Muslim and Christian Indonesian early adolescents (Eisenberg et al., 2009). Like research on cross-race/ethnic friendships, this work suggests some benefits for youth with cross-religion friendships. Given that racial/ethnicity and religious subcultures are often confounded in countries and societies, work is needed to disentangle the influence of each on close peer relationships.

Historical contexts have also been understudied. Historians have written about changes in relationships, particularly romantic relationships. Today greater opportunities exist for social scientists to examine such changes. Not only are there a number of large-scale surveys that are periodically conducted, but investigators have more opportunities to gather data that corresponds to previously collected data. Taking into account historical changes may be especially important when considering differences across cultures. Globalization may be influencing the degree and nature of differences across different countries. Increased globalization likely provides new opportunities but also new challenges as the values of Western cultures often clash with other cultures. Similarly, immigrants must reconcile differences in the values, behaviors, and traditions of their old and new countries in their relationships.

Examining historical changes may be especially important when considering associations between behavioral traits and adjustment in relationships. Traits such as sociability, shyness/inhibition, behavioral control, and aggression are valued differently and associated differently with peer group status across different countries (see X. Chen & French, 2008). Associations of these traits with friendships and romantic relationships may also differ across countries. Notably, though, the nature of these cultural differences has changed over the past two decades (J. Liu, Chen, Li, & French, 2012). Earlier findings indicated that shyness was associated with lower peer status in the United States but not in China. However, urban China has experienced marked economic and cultural changes, and current findings indicate that shyness now is related to

lower peer status in China. Such studies of historical change provide new opportunities for examining how changes in cultures may be linked to interpersonal relationships.

## ADJUSTMENT

In this section, we consider associations between children's and adolescents' friendships and romantic relationships and their psychological adjustment. We focus on internalizing and externalizing symptoms as that work illustrates the directions the field has taken.

### Friendships

**Friendship Involvement.** The importance of friendships for adjustment is well-accepted (see Rubin, Bukowski, et al., 2006). Friendless children and adolescents are at greater risk for internalizing than externalizing problems (recent examples include Engle, McEwan, & Laski, 2011; Pedersen, Vitaro, Barker, & Borge, 2007; Waldrup, Malcolm, & Jensen-Campbell, 2008). Having friends also mitigates the impact of other risks. Rejection sensitivity is related to social anxiety most strongly for friendless early adolescents (Bowker, Thomas, Norman, & Spencer, 2011); during middle childhood, social isolation is related to later internalizing and externalizing symptoms most strongly for friendless children (Laursen, Bukowski, Anuola, & Nurmi, 2007). *Developmental cascades* are also present during middle childhood such that children who are excluded by peers experience exponentially increasing depressive symptoms, especially if they are friendless (Bukowski, Laursen, & Hoza, 2010).

**Friendship Features.** Not all friendships are similarly protective as friendship quality is also related to adjustment. Friendship quality is associated with emotional adjustment most strongly when early adolescents experience stressors, such as victimization (Woods, Done, & Kalsi, 2009). Supportive friendships also mitigate the impact of other risks, such as the effect of rejection sensitivity on emotional problems during middle adolescence (McDonald, Bowker, Rubin, Laursen, & Duchene, 2010). However, prospective effects of friendship quality on later emotional problems sometimes fail to emerge. Prospective associations may only be present under specific circumstances (e.g., for poorly accepted preadolescents and early adolescents; Waldrup et al., 2008; or preadolescents and early adolescents who engage in aversive behaviors; Prinstein et al., 2005).

Friendship qualities may also not be related consistently to emotional adjustment due to variation in the emotional adjustment of youth with high-quality friendships. Although high-quality friendships may protect some youth from internalizing problems, those ranging in age from middle childhood to middle adolescence who have high-quality friendships and co-ruminate may exacerbate their symptoms (Rose et al., 2007). Co-rumination is also linked with clinical levels of depression in middle childhood and adolescence (Stone et al., 2011; Stone, Ullrich, & Gibb, 2010).

Alternatively, the other direction of effect may be stronger, such that emotional problems are more predictive of problematic friendship quality. That is, children's and adolescents' depressive symptoms may predict changes in friendship quality more consistently than friendship quality predicts changes in depressive symptoms (Oppenheimer & Hankin, 2011; Prinstein et al., 2005; Rose et al., 2011).

Findings are mixed regarding the relation between friendship quality and externalizing symptoms. Cross-sectional associations exist between poor-quality friendships and externalizing problems in early childhood (Engle et al., 2011) and middle childhood/early adolescence (Waldrup et al., 2008). However, friendship quality is not a consistent predictor of changes in externalizing symptoms (Engle et al., 2011). Like internalizing symptoms, friendship quality may be related to externalizing symptoms for only some youth, such as middle adolescents with particular attachment styles (McElhaney, Immele, Smith, & Allen, 2006) or children and early and middle adolescents who experience particular parenting styles (Yu & Gamble, 2010).

**Friends' Characteristics.** In recent years, interest in friends' influence has increased (Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011; Dishion & Piehler, 2009). Similarity between friends can occur because those who are similar become friends (selection), because friends become more similar over time (socialization), or because those who are dissimilar cease to be friends (deselection). All are important processes in friendships.

In terms of internalizing problems, selection effects are present such that adolescents who are similar in depressive symptoms are likely to become friends (Giletta et al., 2012; Kiuru, Burk, Laursen, Nurmi, & Salmela-Aro, 2012; van Zalk, Kerr, Branje, Stattin, & Meeus, 2010; for an exception see Giletta et al., 2011). Moreover, deselection effects also exist such that friends who are less similar in depressive symptoms are more likely to terminate their friendships.



Parallel selection effects are present for externalizing behaviors. Adolescents choose friends who are similar to themselves in aggression (Dijkstra, Berger, & Lindenberg, 2011; Sijtsema et al., 2010) and substance use (de la Haye, Green, Kennedy, Pollard, & Tucker, 2013; DeLay, Laursen, Kiuru, Salmela-Aro, & Nurmi, 2013; Giletta et al., 2012; Popp, Laursen, Kerr, Stattin, & Burk, 2008).

Investigators also find socialization effects with friends becoming more similar to one another over time. In terms of internalizing symptoms, this process is often referred to as contagion. Some studies indicate depression contagion within one specific friendship for each person (Giletta et al., 2011; Prinstein, 2007; Stevens & Prinstein, 2005). Social network analyses allow contagion effects to be tested simultaneously for all dyads within social groups, while controlling for selection effects. This approach indicates that adolescents become increasingly similar in depressive symptoms to peers with whom they spend time, suggesting that contagion effects are present within broad networks of affiliated peers (Kiuru et al., 2012; van Zalk et al., 2010). It is reasonable to suspect that contagion effects are stronger in closer relationships, but the evidence is mixed (Conway, Rancourt, Adelman, Burk, & Prinstein, 2011; Giletta et al., 2011; Giletta et al., 2012; Prinstein, 2007).

Recent research also highlights processes that may account for the contagion of internalizing symptoms. Having depressed peers predicts increases middle adolescents' anticipation of failure, which predicts increases in depression (van Zalk et al., 2010). Having depressed friends also predicts co-rumination, which predicts increases in early and middle adolescents' depression (Schwartz-Mette & Rose, 2012).

A long line of research indicates that having friends who engage in deviant or delinquent behavior or use substances increases youths' own deviant/delinquent behavior and substance use (for recent examples, see Giletta et al., 2012; Piehler, Véronneau, & Dishion, 2012; Selfhout, Branje, & Meeus, 2008; Vitaro, Brendgen, & Wanner, 2005). These effects are typically found for adolescents, but even kindergarteners who have friends with externalizing symptoms develop more school conduct problems (Snyder et al., 2005).

Recent extensions also include considering context, friend, and relationship characteristics that exacerbate the risks of having deviant friends. Regarding contexts, socialization effects for risk attitudes, such as liking to smoke, skip school, and damage property, are especially strong for early adolescents who are in classrooms in which the

perceived popular youth hold these attitudes (Rambaran, Dijkstra, & Stark, 2013).

Parental engagement may also reduce risk. Children and early and middle adolescents with high-quality friendships exhibit less delinquency when parental monitoring is high but more delinquency when parent monitoring is low (Yu & Gamble, 2010). Likewise, early adolescents whose friends drink are more likely to start drinking if they spend unsupervised time together (Light, Greenan, Rusby, Nies, & Snijders, 2013). However, parents' forbidding particular friendships increases contact with deviant peers and delinquent behavior among early and middle adolescents (Keijsers et al., 2012). More work is needed to pinpoint the most protective forms of parent involvement because effectiveness may depend on the type of involvement, developmental stage, and the youths' initial levels of deviant behavior (Tilton-Weaver, Burk, Kerr, & Stattin, 2013).

In terms of adolescent friends' characteristics, the older friend is more influential than the younger friend (Popp et al., 2008) and the better-accepted friend is more influential than the less-accepted friend (Laursen, Hafen, Kerr, & Stattin, 2012). Evidence is mixed regarding whether deviant friends pose greater risks for adolescents in reciprocal (as opposed to nonreciprocal) friendships or higher- (versus lower-) quality friendships (Giletta et al., 2012; Selfhout et al., 2008). However, research on conversational processes suggests that deviant friends pose greater risks in well-functioning friendships (Dishion & Piehler, 2009). Deviancy training, in which friends respond positively (e.g., laugh) to rule-breaking talk, predicts escalating externalizing behavior in later childhood and adolescence and has even been observed in kindergarten (Snyder et al., 2008; Snyder et al., 2005). Friends in middle adolescence are at the greatest risk when the deviant talk is characterized by responsiveness, reciprocity, and cooperation (Piehler & Dishion, 2007).

## Romantic Relationships

**Romantic Involvement.** Current or past romantic involvement is associated with depressive symptoms in adolescence, particularly for early adolescents and females (see Davila, 2008). Similarly, romantic involvement is linked to externalizing symptoms and substance use (Furman & Collibee, in press). Most research has been done in North America, but similar results have been found in China (Z. Chen et al., 2009).

Several explanatory models have been proposed (Davila, 2008): (a) a normative trajectory model—early or

precocious romantic experiences places one at greater risk for depression or other adjustment problems than adhering to developmentally appropriate norms; (b) an attention impairment model—romantic involvement takes time or attention away from other important areas of life, causing difficulties which lead to depression; (c) a stress and coping model—romantic experiences are inherently stressful, which place adolescents, especially those with poor coping skills, at risk for depression; and (d) an individual differences model—certain personality or interpersonal characteristics affect romantic experiences, leading to depression.

The normative trajectory model needs some revision because romantic experiences are linked with depression in adolescence even when they occur at an age that is typical or normative (see Davila, 2008). The alternative developmental task model proposes that romantic involvement is an *emerging* developmental task in adolescence, such that precocious involvement could undermine development (Roisman et al., 2009). Romantic involvement eventually becomes a *salient* developmental task in adulthood, and, as it does, such involvement should be linked to concurrent and subsequent adaptation. Consistent with this idea, having a romantic relationship is associated with poorer adjustment in adolescence but better adjustment in early adulthood (Furman & Collibee, in press).

The other three models have received support in studies examining moderators and mediators (see Davila, 2008). For example, co-rumination with friends predicts increases in depressive symptoms for early adolescent females with more romantic experiences and decreases for females with fewer romantic experiences (Starr & Davila, 2009). If romantic experiences are stressful, co-ruminating about them may be depressogenic; on the other hand, if females are not co-ruminating about romantic experiences, the experiences may be less stressful and not depressogenic. The findings also are consistent with an individual differences explanation in that females who co-ruminate are more likely to have more romantic experiences and be more depressed.

**Romantic Relationship Features.** Not all adolescents who are romantically involved are equally at risk. An important direction for research has been to identify the characteristics of romantic relationships that are linked to such problems. Middle adolescents with romantic relationships characterized by fewer supportive and more negative interactions are more likely to have adjustment problems (Collibee & Furman, 2013; La Greca & Harrison, 2005).

In contrast, an adolescent who reports being in love with a partner is less likely to engage in delinquent behavior (McCarthy & Casey, 2008).

Investigators have also begun to examine developmental changes in the patterns of associations between relationship characteristics and adjustment. The links between positive characteristics (e.g., support, commitment, & relationship security) and adjustment are sometimes stronger in early adulthood than in adolescence (Collibee & Furman, 2014; Meeus et al., 2007; van Dulmen, Goncy, Haydon, & Collins, 2008). Such findings are consistent with the idea that romantic relationships become increasingly important with age, and indeed are salient developmental task in early adulthood.

**Romantic Partner Characteristics.** Characteristics of romantic partners are also influential. In terms of substance use, the more adolescents are exposed to smoking by a close romantic partner, the more likely they are to initiate smoking and the less likely they are to stop smoking. Conversely, the more time they spend in a close romantic relationship with a nonsmoker, the more likely adolescents are to stop smoking (Kennedy, Tucker, Pollard, Go, & Green, 2011). Romantic partner substance use also predicts adolescents' subsequent substance use a year later and 6 years later (Gudinos-Miller, Lewis, Tong, Tu, & Aalsma, 2012); such findings are noteworthy because most of the relationships had dissolved before a year had passed. At the same time, it is unclear if these effects on smoking and other substance use reflect selection or socialization.

Investigators have demonstrated that adolescent romantic partners are similar in adjustment, most typically in terms of externalizing behavior (e.g., Lonardo et al., 2009). However, most studies are cross-sectional and cannot address whether the similarities stem from selection or socialization effects. In a noteworthy exception, Simon et al. (2008) assessed early adolescent and romantic partner adjustment prior to and after the initiation of the relationship. Prior to their relationship, pairs were similar in depressive symptoms, indicating selection effects. An overall effect of socialization was not found, but some adolescents were socialized. Those who dated less depressed partners became less depressed; those who dated more depressed partners did not change. Moreover, only those who were high in depression showed change when paired with a partner low in depression; those who were low in depression did not change, regardless of the partner's level of depression.

Such findings are noteworthy for several reasons. The study was one of the few to examine whether some partners

are more influential than others and if some adolescents are more open to influence than others. It also illustrates the potential for healthy influences by romantic partners. This is particularly noteworthy because these romantic relationships only lasted three months on average. Finally, the observed associations were evident even after taking into account the socializing effects of friends, illustrating the unique influences of different types of dyadic peer relationships (see also Lonardo et al., 2009).

Interestingly, not only friends and romantic partners but also friends of romantic partners may be influential (Kreager & Haynie, 2011). Early and middle adolescents' prior drinking and their partners' prior drinking 18 months earlier are predictive of drinking. Notably, the adolescents' and partners' prior drinking are not very related to each other, suggesting that the partner effects are socialization effects, not selection. Friends' drinking is predictive, but not once the adolescents' prior drinking is taken into account; suggesting that the adolescents select friends with similar drinking habits. Most important, partners' friends' prior drinking is more predictive of adolescents' drinking than partners' drinking is. These associations hold after taking into account adolescents' prior drinking, suggesting that this is not a selection effect. Instead, romantic partners may serve as a bridge or liaison, connecting adolescents to new peers who promote changes in drinking behaviors and allow such behaviors to spread across peer networks.

### Dating Violence

Although considerable research has examined associations between romantic experiences and internalizing or externalizing problems, one aspect of many romantic relationships is recognized as a serious problem in itself—dating or intimate partner violence. Until this century, virtually no research examined psychological, physical, or sexual dating violence in adolescence, but now the topic may be the most extensively studied topic in the field of adolescent dating and romantic relationships.

Recently, the Partner Abuse State of Knowledge Project systematically reviewed the literature on adolescent and adult intimate partner violence. Several conclusions were drawn. First, approximately half of intimate partner violence is bidirectional (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Misra, Selwyn, & Rohling, 2012). Such findings led to an increased recognition of the importance of a dyadic perspective for understanding dating violence (O'Leary & Slep, 2012). Second, physical and psychological violence have detrimental effects not only on psychological

well-being, but also on physical health and health behavior, particularly for females (Lawrence, Orengo-Aguayo, Langer, & Brock, 2012). Third, risk factors for dating violence include minority group status, acculturation stress and other types of stress, violence between parents, experience of child abuse, antisocial behavior, and substance use problems (Capaldi et al., 2012). Family conflicts are also a risk factor, whereas parental monitoring, involvement, and support are protective. Similarly, associating with aggressive peers is a risk factor, whereas higher friendship quality is protective. Hostility toward women, relationship beliefs justifying violence, and relationship conflict are important proximal predictors.

As the number of risk factors increases, the likelihood of perpetrating violence in multiple romantic relationships in middle adolescence increases (Williams, Connolly, Pepler, Craig, & LaPorte, 2008). Moreover, different pathways exist for the recurrence of dating aggression in multiple relationships. Delinquency, aggression, and associating with aggressive peers predict recurrence for those who are accepting of dating aggression. These factors are not predictive for those who are not accepting of dating aggression. Instead, being previously involved in a conflictual and hostile relationship predicts recurrences. Perhaps the conflictual style or a sensitivity to rejection in the prior relationship is brought forward to the new relationship.

As the list of risk factors suggests, dating violence is linked with other forms of violence. At the same time, only some of those who are aggressive toward peers aggress toward a dating partner. Early and middle adolescents who are aggressive toward a dating partner as well as peers are high in depression, substance use, and family conflict and have more peer models and peer approval of deviant behavior (Foshee et al., 2011). These findings provide valuable information about factors that lead to aggression toward a dating partner in particular, and not just aggression toward nonromantic peers. Further work on identifying factors that lead specifically to dating violence is needed. Also work has begun on mediators, or developmental processes underlying dating violence. For example, feelings of stigmatization after sexual abuse are predictive of anger five years later, which predicts adolescent dating violence (Feiring, Simon, Cleland, & Barrett, 2013). Further work on underlying processes is needed. Particularly needed are studies of protective factors.

Developmental changes also may occur in risk factors. For example, heavy alcohol use increases the likelihood of dating violence by any early adolescent, but in late adolescence heavy alcohol use particularly increases the

likelihood of dating violence for those who are embedded in violent family or peer contexts (Reyes, Foshee, Bauer, & Ennett, 2012). More generally, adolescent intimate partner violence is likely to differ in nature from that which occurs in adult committed relationships. Far fewer adolescents are constrained by being married or cohabiting, having children, or relying financially on their partners. Thus, it may be easier to leave a relationship, although the desire to have a relationship may keep some adolescents in violent relationships. Adolescents also may be less socially skilled or experienced than adults; accordingly, they may have less established ideas about what appropriate behavior is for themselves or their partner. Thus, the risk factors, processes underlying the violence, and outcomes may differ, but we know relatively little about such differences.

Early interventions for intimate partner violence were relatively unsuccessful. Recently, more effective programs have been developed; changes have occurred in knowledge and attitudes, and, in some instances, violent behavior (see O'Leary & Slep, 2012; Whitaker, Murphy, Eckhardt, Hodges, & Cowart, 2013). In fact Safe Dates and the 4th R are listed in SAMHSA's National Registry for Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (<http://nrepp.samhsa.gov>). Innovative approaches have also emerged, including a family-based prevention program (Foshee et al., 2012), a program to make school buildings a safe place where sexual victimization does not occur (Taylor, Stein, Mumford, & Woods, 2013), and a program in which coaches encourage athletes to intervene when they witness dating violence-related behaviors (E. Miller et al., 2013). These and other promising programs differ from earlier ones in three important respects. First, they focus on preventing intimate partner violence, rather than treating it. Second, most target young adults and especially adolescents, the time when aggression is most likely to first occur. Finally, they recognize that intimate partner violence is most commonly mutual and thus a dyadic phenomenon; in fact, it may prove most effective to focus on both individuals' behavior, even when violence is unidirectional and solely the responsibility of one person.

### Future Directions

Both similarities and differences exist in how the friendship and romantic relationship literatures have considered associations with adjustment. Both have examined the influence of having a friend or a romantic partner. Of course, the implications are different in that having friendships is a developmentally appropriate task throughout childhood

and adolescence, whereas the optimal level of involvement in romantic relationships for youth of particular ages is not clear and almost certainly varies across cultures. Both literatures reveal benefits of having high-quality relationships. Both have examined the influence of the relationship on adjustment more often than the reverse. Neither field has examined the links between the history of a relationship and adjustment. The trajectories of a relationship's features over time may be important predictors of adjustment. For example, increases in conflict may predict adjustment problems.

The romantic relationship literature indicates that ties between quality and adjustment increase with age, but we know less about developmental changes in the links for friendship. There may be developmental stages during which friendship difficulties are especially likely to forecast later relationship and adjustment problems. Specific aspects of friendships also may influence adjustment differently at different developmental stages.

The friendship literature has begun to highlight ways in which better-functioning relationships actually confer risk. Perhaps ironically, through connected and cohesive conversations, friendships can confer risk for internalizing problems through co-rumination and exacerbate risks of deviant talk on externalizing problems. Having more experience with romantic relationships is associated with both risky behaviors and psychosocial competence (Furman, Low, & Ho, 2009). Future research should consider whether there are additional hidden risks of high-quality romantic relationships as well.

Future studies are also needed to shed light on influence processes in regards to positive behaviors. One study showed that adolescents with friends who engage in prosocial behavior toward peers begin to engage in more prosocial behavior themselves (Barry & Wentzel, 2006). Additional work could examine socialization of other positive behaviors, such as volunteering in the community.

Little is known about the long-term links between dyadic peer relationships and adjustment. Dating in early adolescence is predictive of depression, but these effects dissipate over time (Natsuaki, Biel, & Ge, 2009). Similarly, conflict and poorer problem solving in romantic relationships in middle adolescence are not predictive of the long-term course of depression, but depression in middle adolescence is predictive of romantic relationship quality over the course of the next five years (Vuyeva & Furman, 2011). Aside from this work, little is known.

Violence and abuse have also been investigated in romantic relationships but not in friendships. Some children

and adolescents are victimized in friendships; whether these interactions rise to the level of violence or abuse experienced in some romantic relationships is not known. Violence may be less common in friendships than romantic relationships, but some youth might stay in very damaging friendships.

Another important direction is to identify mechanisms that underlie selection and socialization effects. For example, do individuals actively seek out similar peers for relationships or are they simply likely to meet one another because they find themselves in similar contexts? Do people change their behavior because of the partner's disapproval and the risk to the relationship? Do changes occur because of the effect on one's daily life? In regards to romantic relationships, do changes occur because of thoughts about what being in a more committed relationship entails about one's own identity?

Additionally, most work has examined how friendships or how romantic relationships are linked to adjustment, but do not consider both relationships simultaneously (see Lonardo et al., 2009; Simon et al., 2008, for recent exceptions). Supportive relationships of one kind may buffer the impact of problems in the other. Additive or interactive effects of the different relationships on adjustment may also occur. A unified relational perspective is essential to understand the interplay among the developmental trajectories of friendships, romantic experiences, and psychological adjustment.

Finally, few empirically supported programs for promoting healthy friendships or romantic relationships exist other than those that have aimed to prevent dating violence. Friendship skills are sometimes taught as part of programs to enhance peer acceptance, but no program has focused on friendships per se. Aside from the dating violence programs, those related to romantic relationships have focused on marital education more broadly. In fact, often the education programs are part of a broader curriculum, which may be offered as family and consumer science classes, character education programs, abstinence education programs or community-based initiatives (Karney, Beckett, Collins, & Shaw, 2007). Relatively few evaluations of the education programs exist, and most of these are quasi-experimental designs. A review of these programs characterized the results regarding their effectiveness as "at most suggestive" (Karney et al., 2007). One of the few randomized control trials of a relationship education curriculum found changes in middle adolescents' attitudes and knowledge but not behavior a year later (Kerpelman, Pittman, Adler-Baeder, Eryigit, & Paulk, 2009). Additional

evaluations and new programs are needed to determine how to promote healthy dyadic relationships.

## OTHER DYADIC PEER RELATIONSHIPS

### Other-Sex Friendships

The vast majority of children's and adolescents' friends are same-sex friends (Mehta & Strough, 2009). However, the proportion of other-sex friends increases with age in adolescence, especially for females (Poulin & Pedersen, 2007). Interestingly, females tend to have more other-sex friends in their out-of-school friendship networks than males do. Females' other-sex friends also tend to be older than males' other-sex friends.

Similarities and differences occur in same- and other-sex friendships. Children and adolescents see same- and other-sex friendships as similar in terms of companionship (Hand & Furman, 2009; McDougall & Hymel, 2007). However, they perceive same-sex friendships as more intimate and see themselves as more similar to or compatible with same-sex friends. Interestingly, they comment positively on other-sex friends' personalities more than those of same-sex friends'. Other-sex friends also provide opportunities to learn about other-sex peers. Compared to same-sex friendships, adolescents are more concerned about ambiguity in other-sex friendships (e.g., if one friend develops romantic feelings) and that others will misunderstand the relationship (Hand & Furman, 2009).

Notably, females may be disadvantaged in other-sex friendships (Rose, 2007). Females may alter their interpersonal styles more than males to match other-sex friends (McDougall & Hymel, 2007). Females report greater common activities in other-sex friendships than in same-sex friendships, perhaps because of the focus on common activities in males' same-sex friendships. In contrast, males do not report greater intimacy in other-sex friendships than same-sex friendships, despite females' focus on intimacy in same-sex friendships. Moreover, adolescent males seek and receive more help from other-sex friends than do females (Poulin & Pedersen, 2007; Sears, Graham, & Campbell, 2009). These studies may not be generalizable to all cultures, however. Chinese middle adolescent females report greater help and security in their other-sex friendships than do males (Cheung & McBride-Chang, 2011).

Males are more likely than females to perceive heterosocial benefits of other-sex friendships. They are also more likely than females to perceive other-sex friendships

as venues for meeting other-sex peers and to see physical attraction in other-sex friendships as a benefit of the relationships (Hand & Furman, 2009). In fact, other-sex friendships may serve as models for developing skills for romantic relationships. Middle adolescents with more other-sex friends have lower dating anxiety (La Greca & Mackey, 2007), and those with higher-quality other-sex friendships are especially likely to be in romantic relationships (Cheung & McBride-Chang, 2011).

Having other-sex friends also may be particularly risky for females' adjustment. Early adolescent females with more other-sex friends are more likely to use alcohol at age 18 (Poulin, Denault, & Pedersen, 2011); females in middle adolescence with more other-sex friends are especially likely to be smoking 1 year later (Mrug, Borch, & Cillessen, 2011). Females who increase their proportion of other-sex friends through early and middle adolescence experience increases in their alcohol and drug use (Poulin et al., 2011). These effects are not significant for males. In fact, middle adolescent males with other-sex friends are less likely than other males to be smoking 1 year later (Mrug et al., 2011). Similar findings emerge for antisocial behaviors (Arndorfer & Stormshak, 2008; Haynie, Steffensmeier, & Bell, 2007). The greater risk for adolescent females may occur in part because females' other-sex friends tend to be older, out-of-school friends (Poulin & Pederson, 2007). These friends are more likely than females' agemates to be experimenting with alcohol and drugs. In addition, because males are more likely than females to engage in antisocial or violent behavior, males may elicit these behaviors in the females.

### Antipathies

Antipathies are relationships in which two individuals dislike each other. Children and adolescents with antipathies are less well liked by peers, more victimized, and have more externalizing and internalizing problems than those without antipathies (Card, 2010). The two individuals in early adolescent antipathies tend to be dissimilar in terms of perceived popularity (Berger & Dijkstra, 2013) and behavior (Güroğlu, Haselager, van Lieshout, & Scholte, 2009). Many antipathies involve one person who is antisocial and another who is withdrawn. The withdrawn one may be especially at risk for maltreatment. An early adolescent is especially likely to be victimized within an antipathy if the other youth is physically strong and aggressive and is not victimized by others (Card & Hodges, 2007). Moreover, being the more aggressive youth within an antipathy

increases risk for behavioral problems. During middle to late childhood, a child with an antipathy becomes more aggressive over time if the person who she or he dislikes is generally not aggressive, but not if the disliked one is aggressive (Erath, Petit, Dodge, & Bates, 2009). Disliking, and perhaps aggressing against, a nonaggressive peer may be more reinforcing than sharing mutual dislike with a peer who responds with aggression. This finding illustrates the importance of a relational perspective. It is important not only to examine the characteristics of the individuals, but also to consider the combination of characteristics of individuals within a dyad.

### Future Directions

More work is needed on these understudied relationships. For example, more information is needed on factors that contribute to the development of other-sex friendships. Children and adolescents with interpersonal styles more characteristic of the other sex may be especially likely to have other-sex friends. However, the interplay between the partners is also likely to be important. Cross-sex dyads with similar interpersonal styles may be likely to become friends. Implications for adjustment also need to be better understood. Having other-sex friends carries risks, especially for females. However, positive experiences in other-sex friendships should foster skills needed for high-quality romantic relationships. These lines of research need to be integrated to identify how children and adolescents can reap the benefits of other-sex friendships while minimizing the risks.

A better understanding of antipathies is also needed. We need to know how antipathies develop, the nature of interactions between antipathies, and whether antipathies are ever resolved amicably. According to retrospective reports, many antipathies were formerly friends and mutual dislike developed through perceived friendship transgressions (Card, 2010; Casper & Card, 2010). Longitudinal work is needed to track the development, dyadic nature, and implications of these relationships.

Some other types of relationships have received virtually no attention. Although work on same-sex romantic relationships in adulthood has increased, little is known about such relationships in adolescence (see Diamond & Lucas, 2004, for an exception). Similarly, both the scientific field and media have focused on "friends with benefits," which young adults' characterize as relationships with ongoing sexual exchanges, often between friends (Furman & Shaffer, 2011). This work has focused on college students,

and we know virtually nothing about such relationships in adolescence, even their prevalence. Finally, although most adolescents and young adults' interactions on the Internet are with friends with whom they also interact face-to-face (Reich et al., 2012; Smahal et al., 2012), some friendships may only entail online communication; we know little about such "virtual friendships."

Although the distinctions among different types of relationships have much merit, it is important to recognize that boundaries among categories can be unclear. Someone may be uncertain whether a relationship is a romantic relationship or a friend-with-benefits relationship; certainly, two members of a dyad may disagree about the status of the relationship. Moreover, an individual may consider a relationship to fall into two categories—for example, a friendship and a romantic relationship. Overlaps between friends and biological relatives, such as cousins or siblings, may be particularly likely in non-Western cultures. In some instances, it may be valuable to focus not on friendships or romantic relationships per se, but to study the relationships youth consider most important (Kerr, Stattin, & Kiessner, 2007).

Further research on these understudied relationships will contribute to a unified relational perspective. As we learn more about the different types of dyadic peer relationships, we will acquire a better understanding of what features and developmental processes are specific to particular relationships and which are shared by different ones.

## ISSUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

### Definitional Issues

Many studies have simply considered the influence of peers without specifying the nature of their relationships with different peers. Yet peers are a heterogeneous group; some are close friends, some friends, some acquaintances, and some antipathies. Making differentiations among these different relationships and studying their unique contributions to development is critical for building our understanding of what is specific to friendships and what reflects effects of the general peer group.

In addition, in studies of friendship, an adolescent may list a romantic partner as a friend unless the investigator explicitly said not to do so. As a consequence, some studies of friendships may actually be studies of both friendships and romantic relationships. One could argue that romantic relationships are friendships and should be included; however, the point is that investigators should make clear to participants what kind of relationship they are studying.

### Theoretical and Conceptual Issues

Although some work has been based on Eriksonian or Sullivanian theory, most research on dyadic peer relationships in childhood and adolescence has not been guided strongly by theory. Theories such as attachment theory, behavioral systems theory, evolutionary theory, the investment model, and social exchange theory have guided work on close relationships in adulthood, and seem just as applicable to children's and adolescents' relationships. More theoretically guided work would help us accumulate a more systematic body of knowledge. Mini-theories or theoretical explanations of particular phenomena are also valuable. Davila (2008) presented four possible explanations for why adolescent romantic involvement is linked to depression. Subsequent work has tested such explanations, leading to faster progress on the topic (see "Adjustment" section).

Also, much of the literature focuses only on one aspect of relationships, such as a conflict style. Focused in-depth studies of particular phenomena are essential but need to be complemented by studies that examine multiple facets of relationships, multiple predictors, or multiple consequences of relationships. If not, our understanding of relationships will be fragmented. Moreover, research simultaneously examining involvement, relationship quality, partner characteristics, and relationship history is needed. Failing to take into account all of the dimensions can lead to incorrect inferences about associations with particular dimensions.

In addition to simultaneously examining multiple variables, key variables need to be identified and isolated. In one study, for example, 13 different variables were all correlated with perpetrating dating violence, but when all were entered in the same logistic regression, only four remained as unique predictors (Banyard, Cross, & Modecki, 2006). This does not mean that the other nine variables are unimportant; whether a variable uniquely contributes is highly dependent on the other variables under consideration. However, this example illustrates the challenge of identifying key relations in complex networks of variables.

Structural equation modeling may help identify the common, potentially core, components that underlie our variables and underlie the links among constructs. For example, Kogan et al. (2013) measured three aspects of parenting in middle childhood (warmth, monitoring, & inductive reasoning) and three aspects of relationship quality in early adulthood (satisfaction, lack of verbal conflict, & absence of violence). All nine correlations between the three manifest parenting variables and the three manifest relationship

quality variables were below .22. Yet the path between a latent parenting variable and a latent relationship quality variable exceeded .50. In effect, SEM allowed measurement error to be controlled and identified underlying constructs that were linked.

Another factor that contributes to a piecemeal understanding is that separate fields of study have emerged around specific topics of interest. For example, the literature on dating violence is quite separate from that on normative aspects of romantic relationships. Similarly, sexual behavior and romantic relationships developed as separate fields, although some recent progress has been made toward integrating them. Most literature on all dyadic peer relationships has focused on specific age periods, limiting our understanding of developmental changes in the nature and function of different relationships. Literature spanning the transition from adolescence to adulthood is particularly limited (see Furman & Winkles, 2012). Indeed, the child/adolescent and adult literatures on relationships historically have had little contact with each other. This bifurcation is problematic as the literature on adults' relationships, especially their romantic ones, is quite extensive, and different from that on children's and adolescents' relationships. Fortunately, several long-standing longitudinal studies now span the transition, and developmental scientists are increasingly interested in emerging or early adults' relationships. Finally, psychology, sociology, and other disciplines are also rather isolated from one another, although the emergence of the field of relationship science has promoted interdisciplinary contact.

### Methodological Issues

The increasing availability of large scale, long-standing longitudinal data sets has greatly advanced the field. At the same time, they pose methodological challenges. In our review, we repeatedly noticed differences in the specific variables examined in studies using the same data sets. For example, one paper may report results on one relationship variable, whereas another reports on a different, yet seemingly similar, variable. It is often unclear why different variables were used. The practice raises questions about the robustness of the findings. The inclusion of indices that are similar from paper to paper would strengthen the inferences that can be drawn from the study.

Data collection points in most longitudinal studies also tend to be far (e.g. a year or more) apart. This approach provides invaluable information about the development and long-term consequences of relationships, but wide-spread

time points may not be ideal for studies of mediation or process because the durations over which many variables have their strongest impact are much shorter. Short-term longitudinal studies with many points of data collection may be required to assess processes of change in friendships or romantic relationships. This work is particularly important in our field because many relationships do not even last for a year. Few such studies currently exist, but more may shortly appear as investigators begin to use smart phones and other electronic means for collecting such data.

### Analytic Issues

Our analytic toolbox is much greater than a decade ago. Of particular relevance are advances in techniques for studying dyads (see Card, Selig & Little, 2008; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). As can be seen in this paper, studies using techniques such as the Actor Partner Interdependence Model or Sienna are increasing in number. Few investigators, however, have taken advantage of sequential analyses or time series data to identify patterns of interaction in dyads. State space grids that analyze event sequences need to be explored more (Hollenstein, 2007).

Contemporary analytic tools, such as growth curve analyses or analyses of between- and within-person effects, allow for examination of the developmental course of particular relationships, a topic that has been neglected. Such techniques can also be used to examine how trajectories of predictors are associated with relationships and how trajectories of relationships are associated with outcomes (e.g., Fraley, Roisman, & Haltigan, 2013; Vuyeva & Furman, 2011).

In addition, recently developed statistical models permit the identification of trait and state elements of behavior. Specifically, trait-state-occasion and trait-state-error models allow one to determine how much a characteristic is stable over time (i.e., a trait) and how much varies from occasion to occasion (Cole, Martin, & Steiger, 2005). Moreover, what variables are predictive of the trait and occasion components of behavior can be examined to determine how stable characteristics of individuals contribute to patterns of interaction. For example, approximately 50% of the variation in late adolescent and young adults' negative behavior toward a friend or romantic partner can be attributed to a trait component, whereas the remaining proportion is occasion specific (Hatton et al., 2008). Moreover, the trait component is predicted by a mother's earlier negative behavior toward the adolescent and the adolescent's self-evaluation, negative emotionality, and



security of romantic representations; none of these factors predicted the occasion-specific variance. The difference in the predictors of the trait and occasion components illustrates the challenges of determining what underlies particular interactions in relationships.

More work testing mediation is also needed. We have made great progress identifying variables that are associated with different facets of dyadic peer relationships, but we know less about why they are related. This chapter includes a number of examples of such process-oriented work that illustrates its potential. Process work should prove particularly valuable for dyadic phenomena, such as mutual dating violence, where each person may play a role.

Existing studies of mediation have made progress in that more studies incorporate three time points rather than one. However, virtually all of these studies have assessed the predictor at time one, the mediator at time two, and the outcome at time three, which is not as strong as designs in which all three variables are assessed at all three times (Cole & Maxwell, 2003). Without such an assessment, it is difficult to determine if the mediator is actually involved in the process or simply covaries with the variables that are responsible. Indeed, few studies have examined multiple potential mediators, leaving it unclear whether the studied mediators are key processes or are simply associated with key processes. Moreover, the nature of the associations between predictors and outcome variables is often not clear. That is, if the variables treated as predictors at time one had been assessed at time three, they might have been predicted by the variables treated as outcomes if those variables had been assessed at time one. As noted, most studies examining family variables have examined how family processes predict subsequent friendships or romantic relationships and have not examined how friendships or romantic relationships predict family processes. Similarly, most studies examine how friendships predict romantic relationships, whereas only a few examples of the reverse exist.

Whether early experiences with friends or romantic partners have enduring effects on competence is also of interest. An early experience could anchor a child's developmental trajectory and directly influence later behavior by processes such as cognitive representations that are consolidated early in development. Alternatively, seemingly long-term effects may be indirect; that is, an experience may affect competence at an early age, which affects subsequent competence. Moreover, seemingly long-term effects could stem from consistencies in experiences over

time. Statistical techniques now exist for differentiating such models (Fraley, Roisman, & Haltigan, 2013).

## Understudied Topics

### *Genetic Factors*

Recent work suggests that the examination of genetic factors has promise (see Brendgen, 2012). A few studies have examined gene-environment correlations, or the degree to which different dimensions of friendships are associated with the genetic make-up of individuals. Genetic factors appear to be weakly related (van Lier et al., 2007) or unrelated (Brendgen et al., 2008) to young children's tendency to have aggressive friends. However, genetic factors contribute to young children's tendency to have socially reticent friends (Guimond et al., 2013), and older children and adolescents choose friends based on their own genetic makeup (see Brendgen & Boivin, 2009).

A few investigators have also examined gene by environment interactions, or whether experiences with friends exacerbate or mitigate genetic risks. For example, children with a genetic predisposition toward depression are less likely to be depressed if they have friends (Brendgen et al., 2013). Children with a genetic predisposition toward physical aggression are especially aggressive if they have aggressive friends (Brendgen et al., 2008; Van Lier et al., 2007). We know of only one study that has used molecular genetic techniques to study adolescent peer relationships (Fraley, Roisman, Booth-LaForce, et al., 2013); that study found little evidence for genetic antecedents of late adolescent romantic attachment styles. Clearly, more work is needed on genetic factors. Such work also would provide information about nonshared environments as discrepancies between monozygotic twins may stem from nonshared environmental influences.

### *Psychophysiological and Neurological Processes*

Research on psychophysiological, neurological, and other biological processes has exploded in the past decade; however, only a few studies have considered such processes in children or adolescents' friendships or romantic relationships. This work primarily focuses on the neuroendocrine and autonomic nervous systems (see Murray-Close, 2012). Notably, friendship experiences can mitigate physiological stress responses. A child's physiological response to stress as reflected in cortisol levels is mitigated when a best friend is present (Adams, Santo, & Bukowski, 2011). In addition, children who are rejected by classmates have a flattened diurnal cortisol rhythm, suggesting

hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenocortical (HPA) axis dysregulation. Importantly, this flattened diurnal rhythm is most pronounced for children with few or low-quality friends (Peters, Riksen, Walraven, Cillessen, & de Weerth, 2011). Thus, work on psychophysiological processes in regards to dyadic peer relationships is in its infancy. Moreover, although marked advances have been made in neuropsychology, we are unaware of research that examined neurological processes and the dyadic peer relationships of children or adolescents.

### *Adolescent Parents*

Studies of adolescent romantic relationships have focused on youth who are not residing with their partners, yet a significant minority of adolescents cohabit with their partners, often raising children together. Little research exists on the relationships between adolescent parents, yet such relationships may prove to be key to the couples' and their children's adjustment (see Moore, Florsheim, & Butner, 2007).

## **THE MERITS OF A UNIFIED RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

In this chapter, we have argued for a unified relational perspective. Our thesis has several key points. First, friendships and romantic relationships need to be studied as relationships. They are dyadic phenomena with a history; they are influenced by each person's characteristics, the interaction of their characteristics, and the pattern of their interactions over time. Each person affects the other person's behavior within an occurrence of interaction, and each occurrence affects subsequent occurrences. To date, work has focused primarily on individual's characteristics and, to a lesser degree, partner's characteristics. We have learned much from this work yet without more work on the partner, the interfacing of the person and the partner's characteristics, and especially the temporal history of their interactions, we will have an incomplete picture of the relationship and its impact. Indeed, the fact that relationships develop over time underscores the importance of studying interpersonal processes in the dyad, a seriously understudied topic.

Second, our unified relational perspective emphasizes that close peer relationships share some common features. The specific nature of the similarities (and differences) needs to be delineated further as only few studies have compared interactions in friendships and romantic

relationships (Furman & Shomaker, 2008). Moreover, although we described links between friendships and romantic relationships, the literatures on the two relationships are not that connected. We reviewed the literature on the two types of relationships in parallel to encourage greater cross-fertilization. As seen in our review, the two fields often focused on different issues, yet many topics examined in relation to one type of relationship could be studied in regards to the other type of relationship. Certainly, some facets of friendships and romantic relationships are not the same, and differences in research topics are expected. However, we can profit from greater coordination in the theory, method, and research topics in the two fields.

Third, our unified relational perspective emphasizes the importance of multiple contextual factors. A key factor is that any relationship is embedded in a network of dyadic relationships. Different relationships affect one another, and we should consider the set of relationships simultaneously.

One reason for examining networks of relationships is that the characteristics of different relationships often covary. For example, levels of support in middle adolescents' relationships with friends, romantic partners, and mothers are moderately related (Laursen, Furman, & Mooney, 2006). In fact, the three common configurations of relationship networks in middle adolescence in a U.S. sample are those in which levels of support are high in relationships with friends, romantic partners, and mothers, low in all three, or low in relationships with friends and mothers, and no romantic relationship. These similarities in different relationships underscore the importance of a unified relational perspective.

Most studies have included one type of relationship as a predictor or one type as an outcome; few have included multiple relationships assessed at the same age (see Lonardo et al., 2009; Stocker & Richmond, 2007, for exceptions). Including multiple relationships as concurrent predictors in the same study, even the same analysis, can help identify what links are common across relationships and what links are specific to one type of relationship. Evidence of convergence and divergence may lead to a better understanding of the nature of the relationships. Moreover, one type of relationship often moderates the effect of another type of relationship (e.g., S. Miller, Gorman-Smith, et al., 2009). On a related point, the examination of behavior in multiple types of relationships can also provide a better understanding of both the behavior itself and its significance. For example, sexual intercourse

with special romantic partners is not related to delinquency, but intercourse with nonromantic partners or with both romantic partners and nonromantic partners is linked to increases in delinquency (McCarthy & Casey, 2008). An understanding of sexual activity will require that we take the relational context into account.

The fact that an adolescent often does not have a current romantic partner underscores the importance of a network perspective. When an adolescent is not in a relationship, the functions fulfilled by that relationship are either unfulfilled or fulfilled by another relationship. By examining when another relationship substitutes for a romantic relationship and when it does not, we can identify processes common to different relationships and those particular to romantic relationships. We also can learn about the impact of romantic relationships by comparing characteristics of social networks when a romantic relationship exists and when one does not.

Moreover, little research has examined associations in multiple types of relationships simultaneously; thus little is known about whether, *within an individual*, differences among different types of relationships are associated with other differences in relationship cognitions, behaviors, or outcomes. One study of middle adolescents examined associations between patterns of interactions and relationship representations with mothers, friends, and romantic partners (Furman, Stephenson, & Rhoades, 2013). The results revealed that the more positive interactions there are in one relationship relative to the individual's own average level of positive interactions across relationships, the less avoidant the representations are for that type of relationship. Associations between representations of one relationship and interactions in another relationship do occur but are attenuated when representations of the same type of relationship are controlled for. Attachment theory has emphasized cross-relationship links, but it is important to consider how cognitive representations and experiences within a particular type of relationship affect each other as well.

Finally, our unified perspective not only emphasizes the importance of the system of close relationships but also of contextual factors, such as the peer group, media, culture, and historical time. Dyadic peer relationships cannot be understood without incorporating the contexts in which they occur; conversely, these contexts need to take close dyadic relationships into account to understand how they influence individuals and development. In effect they are part of a multilevel system that is constantly evolving as the different parts influence one another.

In sum, dyadic relationships are both part of a system of relationships and are embedded in multiple levels of context, all of which influence one another. As a consequence, they are key to our development, well-being, and health. Indeed, a recent meta-analysis revealed that they have as big an impact on mortality as well-known risk factors, such as smoking, obesity, and substance use (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010). Stated simply, relationships are powerful and should be central in our work as social scientists.

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