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The Joy of Romance:
Healthy Adolescent Relationships
as an Educational Agenda

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The diversity of topics covered in this volume on adolescent romantic relationships and sexuality highlights the increasing complexity with which we view these topics. Covering different perspectives and approaches, the authors highlight three broad themes of importance to educators and educational policy makers: (a) romance and sex are normative, important elements of adolescent development; (b) as we think about adolescent partnerships, we need to consider how individual differences interact with relationship contexts to either foster or undermine positive development and healthy growth; and (c) gender and gendered development are critically important components of romantic relationships and sexuality. That these themes are so salient in this book reflects a shift from the consideration of sexuality in adolescence as a deviant or risky behavior to the emergence of more complex frameworks that focus on the quality and diversity of adolescent romantic and sexual experiences. Until recently, research on adolescent sexuality has been focused on problematic aspects—pregnancy, STDs, and failure to use contraception (Koch, 1993). The authors in this volume have provided a rich and multifaceted view of adolescent romantic relations and sexuality, illustrating the need for educational programs and policies that are responsive to the characteristics of the youth they target. This theme was also highlighted in Andrew Collins's 2002 presidential address at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence (Collins, 2002).

IMPORTANCE OF ROMANTIC
RELATIONSHIPS

The chapters illustrate the prevalence of romantic relationships in adolescence, and the key role they play in development. According to Carver, Joyner, and Udry (chap. 2, this volume) two thirds of adolescents experience some form of a romantic relationship over an 18-month period. The exact nature of these experiences varies across age, with older adolescents reporting both more stable, intimate relationships and more abusive relationships. In light of the normative nature of romantic relationships, a number of developmental consequences of these partnerships are discussed throughout this volume, including identity formation, relationship skill building, emotional maturation, and achievement socialization.

In discussing the developmental importance of romantic relationships, several authors in this volume highlighted *identity formation* (Diamond, chap. 4; Furman & Shaffer, chap. 1; Tracy, Shaver, Albino, & Cooper, chap. 6; Welsh, Grello, & Harper, chap. 8). Adolescence is a time to reflect upon and try out different identities (Erikson, 1968). Amazingly little attention has been paid to the development of either a romantic or a sexual identity given the importance of these aspects of life for most adolescents and adults. In contrast, these themes pervade popular culture in all Western cultures. Several of the chapters suggest that such relationships are likely to play an important role in both the general affective and specific content dimensions of identity formation and consolidation. Positive experiences can lead to a positive romantic self-concept and view of the self as an attractive partner, which in turn should contribute to healthy global self-esteem during both adolescence and adulthood (Furman & Shaffer, chap. 1; Tracy et al., chap. 6). In contrast, negative experiences may result in current feelings of humiliation and shame as well as do long term damage to both general self-esteem and more specific aspects of confidence and values in the domains of romance, intimate partnerships, dating, and sexuality that can plague a person for the rest of his or her life (Tracy et al., chap. 6).

The role of romantic relationships are likely to be especially important for identity validation for sexual minority youth precisely because they are often forced in our culture to keep their sexual orientation secret even from their parents and sexual majority friends. Consequently, their romantic partners may be their only source of the types of emotional, intellectual, and sexual intimacy needed to help them work through the process of sexual and romantic partner identity formation and consolidation (Diamond, chap. 4).

This theme of self-definition and identity formation within the context of relationships suggests that adolescents who miss out on desired opportunities

to have a romantic partner may suffer considerably in the identity consolidation process. Similarly, having to cope with this identity formation task in the absence of good scaffolding by supportive adults and well-functioning role models makes the task even more treacherous. Certainly, the media provides many models of less than optimal developmental pathways through these domains. There is amazingly little to counterbalance these images and role models.

Romantic relationships also provide a context in which *social competencies are both learned and tested.* In the context of secure romantic partnerships, adolescents receive training in intimacy and mutual affirmation (Tracy et al., chap. 6) as well as in communication and negotiation skills, and interpersonal conflict management skills (Shulman, chap. 5). Similarly, because romantic relationships are also a major source of strong positive and negative emotions, they also provide a context for learning emotion regulation skills (Larson, Clore, & Wood, 1999). Dating relationships typically provide challenges to emotional well-being, particularly with regard to issues related to infidelity and breakups (Welsh et al., chap. 8). As Diamond (chap. 4) points out, participating in romantic relationships during adolescence can facilitate acquiring the very skills needed to manage the heightened emotionality that is likely to accompany these partnerships throughout life.

The authors also draw attention to the role of romantic partners as *social influences* during adolescence. Unlike the prevalence of concern over the negative consequences of romantic relationships during this period in much of the existing rhetoric and research, the authors in this book provide a more balanced view. For example, although beginning dating, romantic relationships, and sex too early are predictive of lower achievement, Furman and Shaffer (chap. 1) point out the potential for positive, as well as negative, partner influence on career plans and aspirations, educational/vocational identity and both educational and occupational attainment. Having achievement-oriented friends during adolescence is predictive of higher educational attainment (Epstein, 1983; Stone, Barber, & Eccles, 2000). The same should be true for romantic partners. Having achievement-focused romantic partners should facilitate greater educational focus and school attachment. Although studies of adolescent partnerships on this point are scarce, Belansky (1994) reported that partner support at age 20 predicts educational attainment in young adulthood. Furthermore, emotionally healthy romantic partnerships in late adolescence often provide the turning point for youth who have been involved in very risky behaviors throughout most of their adolescent years (Horney, Osgood, & Marshall, 1995; Pickles & Rutter, 1991; Sampson & Laub, 1993). This is particularly true for males who have been heavily involved in criminal behavior. More work is badly needed on this topic.

In contrast, negative experiences related to sexuality during this period can have quite troubling consequences. Recent reports from the American Association of University Women (1993, 2001) suggest that sexual harassment is quite common in American schools. Increasing attention is being drawn to date rape during the adolescent and young adult years, and to victimization based on sexual orientation. These types of experiences have serious negative consequences for school achievement, high school completion, mental health, and general well-being (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995; Jozefowicz, Colarossi, Arbreton, Eccles, & Barber, 2000).

Given their importance and prevalence, romantic relationships should be a focus of educators. Well-designed curricula may help adolescents develop knowledge and interpersonal skills that improve their chances of experiencing positive relationships as well as help them benefit from the learning opportunities inherent in such relationships. In addition to facilitating healthy development, such curricula could help them learn the interpersonal skills and self-confidence necessary to extract themselves from risky romantic relationships. The challenge in developing and delivering a program or curriculum on sexuality and romantic relationship education is that a developmentally appropriate solution will vary across contexts and different groups of adolescents. We elaborate these points in the next section.

CONSIDERING THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RELATIONSHIP

One of the clear messages of these chapters is that relationships are complex, and that a homogeneous conceptualization of "adolescent romantic relationships" is not realistic. Numerous factors, including individual differences, context effects, and the interaction of person and context characteristics need to be considered when planning for educational programs. Although this makes program delivery difficult, it is necessary if we want the interventions to be effective.

Individual Differences

The chapters emphasize that relationships are experienced differently, depending on the individual characteristics of those involved. Some of the characteristics raised in chapters include gender (addressed later), pubertal timing and hormone levels, sexual orientation, attachment style, and relationship expectations.

Pubertal Timing and Status

When designing educational programs for adolescents, it is crucial to consider the developmental level of the audience. Pubertal maturation is an obvious consideration for programs targeting sexual behavior and romantic relationships. Halpern (chap. 3, this volume) highlights that both pubertal status and relative timing have been linked to sexual activity. For boys, earlier pubertal development, and the higher testosterone levels accompanying that development, are related to earlier sexual behavior (Graber, Brooks-Gunn, & Galen, 1998). Hormone–behavior links are more complex for girls. Although relatively early puberty is associated with girls' earlier sexual activity, the relationship is more pronounced in certain life circumstances, such as in mixed-sex schools, and affiliation with older males (Halpern, chap. 3, this volume). Similarly, social control interacts with hormone levels for girls, with testosterone predicting sexual behavior only if the father is not present in the home.

Some of the most important work on the impact of pubertal timing and development during adolescence has been done by Stattin and Magnusson (1990), and this work is directly related to the issues discussed in this book. Stattin and Magnusson (1990) found that early maturing Swedish girls obtained less education and lower status jobs than their later maturing peers. They also married and became parents at a younger age than their later maturing peers. Why? Stattin and Magnusson argued that these girls were more likely to be pulled into a working class older male peer group because of their early sexual maturation. Once they were pulled into this peer group, their educational and marital trajectories were shaped by the needs and values of these males. Essentially, the young women's desire to be popular with older males made them vulnerable to the opportunities these older males were ready to offer. It is unlikely that these young women understood the long-term consequences of these early romantic choices. Educational programs could be designed to help them make better informed and more self-protective choices.

Sexual Orientation

As Diamond suggests, it is crucial to resist making assumptions about the sexual and romantic interests of students. Programs that focus exclusively on heterosexual attractions and sexuality ignore the interests and concerns of sexual minority youth. Furthermore, Diamond highlights the importance of individual differences among sexual minority youth, as some self-identify as having exclusively same-sex attractions, others are bisexual, and still others may be questioning their sexual identity. Experiences of sexual and romantic

relationships will vary for these different groups, and educators must attend to their diverse expectations, goals, and circumstances in designing curricula and support opportunities.

Views of Relationships

Several chapters in the volume make it clear that educational programs for adolescents should consider students' previous relationship experiences and accompanying schemas for romantic involvement. Program content and format should address the diverse needs of those who have had early victimization experiences, relationship difficulties, of those who are characterized by insecure attachment styles or dependent depression, and of those who have grown up in violent and abusive families. Wekerle and Avgoustis (chap. 9, this volume) suggest that childhood maltreatment may influence one's working model of close relationships, and result in unmet dependency needs and fear of injury, loss, or abandonment. This relationship view is consistent with that of "dependently" depressed individuals described by Seefeldt, Florsheim, and Benjamin (chap. 7, this volume). The need for acceptance may compromise rejection-sensitive adolescents' judgment in selecting partners, and place them at risk for depression (girls) or abusiveness (boys) (Downey, Bonica, & Rincon, 1999). Such a relationship style may not be improved simply with better communication and problem-solving skills. Downey and colleagues (1999) suggested that rejection sensitivity can be modified by disconfirming experiences, such as having a supportive and accepting partner, but also acknowledge that the pool of potential adolescent partners may not have the full range of relational skills to scaffold such change. Programs designed to address the underlying insecurity may be effective in improving relationships for such individuals (Seefeldt et al., chap. 7, this volume).

Similarly, Tracy et al. (chap. 6, this volume) found that anxiously attached girls, compared to securely attached girls, reported more sexual experience and were more likely to say they had sex for fear of losing their partner. They recommend that for this group, an important program goal might be to learn the differences between love, sex, and security, and to consider healthy and unhealthy goals of relationships. Furthermore, Shulman (chap. 5) suggests that unrealistic expectations of one's partner, or previous unresolved conflict, may lead to difficulties in negotiating issues of self and other. It is especially important for educators to develop and deliver programs about healthy relationships for adolescents with negative dating and interpersonal behaviors and expectations, in order to reduce the likelihood of their negative patterns continuing into their adult relationships.

Social Contexts

Development of sexuality and relationship skills is embedded in the adolescents' changing ecological contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and the chapters in this volume highlight several contexts to consider in education efforts, particularly in the areas of relationship quality and partner characteristics. The heterogeneity of relationship contexts presents a challenge to educators, as optimal programs to help those in troubled or violent relationships may not be effective for enhancing healthy relationships among most youth.

Relationship Quality

A substantial number of adolescents report experiencing abusive behaviours within their relationships (see chaps. 10, 2, and 9, by Capaldi & Gorman-Smith; Carver et al.; and Wekerle & Avgoustis, respectively). The prevalence of dating violence among high school students results in a substantial number of youth who could benefit from prevention and intervention efforts, and suggests that schools would be an important venue for program delivery. However, it will be a challenge for educators to simultaneously intervene to meet the immediate needs of those in problematic, hostile relationships, and educate those who may be at risk of forming unhealthy relationships. Both are important goals.

Intimacy and support are key characteristics of romantic relationships. Satisfying relationships can translate to better adjustment to parenthood and less stress for young fathers (Florsheim, Moore, & Edgington, chap. 12, this volume). Given the importance of relationship quality for early parenting, educational programs targeting communication, problem solving, and negotiation skills in adolescence are likely not only to improve the interparental relationship, but also to benefit the development of their children. Thus, educators should pay particular attention to those expectant parents and adolescents at risk of becoming parents who are having relationship difficulties.

Partner characteristics are critically important. Fortenberry describes the within-dyad similarity in health harming and health protecting behavior. This assortative pairing has implications for partnership violence. Aggression is more likely in a couple when both partners are antisocial (Capaldi & Gorman-Smith), highlighting one of the challenges in intervention in schools with adolescent couples. Health promotion programs will be less successful for youth in these high-risk dyads if they only target one member of the couple. Such programs are unlikely to be successful precisely because the partner does not participate.

Person–Environment Interaction

Halpern reminds us that development involves biological factors that are related to, as well as interact with, social contexts and psychological processes. For example, as discussed earlier, Stattin and Magnusson (1990) found that early maturation in females lead some of these females into early dating with older male peers, which, in turn, put them on a life path leading to early marriage and lower educational attainment. Other person–enviroment interactions might result from the developmental mismatch experienced by many adolescents as they move from elementary school into middle school and then into high school. Both Eccles and her colleagues (e.g., Eccles et al., 1993) and Simmons and Blyth (1987) have shown that some youth, particularly low achieving youth and early developing girls, are at increased risk of declining school engagement and achievement following these school transitions. During the earlier adolescent years, these youth may be particularly susceptible to the negative influences of premature sexual and romantic relationships. School-based and out-of-school programs that provide both activities in which these youth can feel successful and valued and educational experiences related to managing their own sexual and romantic lives could be very important for these young people.

GENDER

Gender is a theme in several of the chapters. For example, Furman and Shaffer (chap. 1, this volume) discuss how the phenomenon of gender intensification (i.e., the increasing differentiation of expected gender roles for males and females) can be reinforced in romantic partnerships, or in the quest for a partner. An older study (see Algier & McCormick, 1983) illustrates this point very well. In this study, both male and female participants rated how they thought the other sex expected them to behave as well as how they actually wanted their dates to behave. Both males and females had much more gender-role stereotyped views of how they thought the opposite sex expected them to behave on a date than either gender actually indicated on the items assessing their own expectations about how they would like their dates to behave. These overly stereotyped expectations of what the other gender wants can lead both males and females to behave in an exaggerated sex-typed manner in the early stages of heterosexual dating. Educational programs that involve self-assessments about expectations and then shared discussion of how exaggerated each sex's views of the opposite sex's expectations are could help correct some of these gender stereotyped misperceptions and the associated inauthentic behavior on dates.

Closely related to the role of gender stereotypes in romantic relationships is the research on conflict reviewed by Shulman (chap. 5). Consistent with gender stereotypes, Shulman highlights research that indicates gender imbalances in power and influence in adolescent relationships, especially in regard to sexuality. Young women are more likely to be the one who "gives in" to a male partner's sexual advances because they believe this is expected in order to both maintain the relationship and to increase the level of emotional intimacy in the relationship. Educational programs that make both males and females aware of how gender role stereotypes influence this dance of intimacy might help both sexes overcome some of the pressures associated with adolescents' desire to both please their partners and to be seen by the partner as romantically competent.

Gender role stereotypes are also important in same-sex relationships, not because of a gender imbalance of power or roles, but because of the concordance of gender roles. As Diamond (chap. 4, this volume) points out, there is evidence that gender differences in relationship behavior can be magnified in same-sex partnerships. How are emotional intimacy and sexual initiation negotiated in the absence of differentiated gender role norms? The lack of social scripts for same-sex relationships can present both a challenge and an opportunity for sexual minority youth. Early dating experiences may occur in a context of uncertainty about how same-sex dating differs from opposite-sex dating (Diamond, Savin-Williams, & Dubé, 1999). Without the differentiated gender-role proscriptions of conventional opposite-sex romance scripts, gay and lesbian adolescents may have more freedom to interpret and express their roles within relationships based on their individual perspectives and desires.

We discussed another example of the ways in which gender is important earlier in conjunction with our discussion of the Stattin and Magnusson work (1990). The long-term consequences of gender stereotyped interactions in romantic relationships can be quite different for males and females. Often these consequences are more negative for females. For example, because teen mothers are still more likely to accept the responsibility for their children than teen fathers, the cost in terms of adult educational and occupational attainment of having a child during adolescence is usually greater for young women than young men (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, & Morgan, 1987). Similarly, the likelihood of being pulled into an older and less achievement oriented peer group is much greater for early maturing girls than early maturing boys due to fact that older males are more likely to want to date younger females than older females are to want to date younger males. Finally, getting caught up in the traditional female romantic role is more likely to lead young women to lower their educational and occupational aspirations than getting caught up in the

traditional male romantic role is for young men. In fact, getting caught up in this role may lead young men to adopt increased educational and occupational aspirations and engagement.

Taking a different perspective, Tracy et al. (chap. 6, this volume) point out that young women report experiencing more negative and fewer positive emotions than young men in their sexual experiences regardless of their attachment style. This finding is consistent with work reports from a large national study (Add Health) that found that girls are more vulnerable to the negative effects of romantic relationships than boys (Joyner & Udry, 2000). In this study, those adolescents, particularly those young women, who became romantically involved over the course of a year experienced greater increases in depression. The disadvantage for the young women was not limited to negative emotions—those young women who became romantically involved experienced decreases in their happiness as well.

The role of violence in dating and romantic relationships is another area in which gender and gender roles are very important. There is an ongoing debate in the domestic violence literature about the gender symmetry of relationship violence perpetration. On the one hand, there is evidence that men and women can be equally violent in intimate relationships, particularly during arguments in which one or both partners lash out physically at the other (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). This type of relationship violence does not escalate, and has been called "common couple violence" by Johnson (2001). On the other hand, there is a heavily male type of violence ("intimate terrorism"), which is much more likely to escalate, consistent with the motive to control or subdue one's partner, rooted in patriarchal ideas about the relationships between men and women (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). Intimate terrorism is less likely to be reciprocal, and is more likely to involve serious injury.

The distinction between types of violence makes it clear that there are likely to be multiple paths to relational violence, and education and intervention efforts may be differentially successful in preventing these types of violence. Johnson (2001) has suggested that for common couple violence, communication and anger management skills might be appropriate targets. We discuss this approach in the relationship skills section to follow. The suggestions are less clear for prevention of intimate terrorism. The man's attitude about controlling the female partner may be one area to consider. Capaldi and Gorman-Smith (chap. 10, this volume) describe findings indicating that adolescent males' hostile talk about girls and women predict partner aggression in young adulthood. One suggested intervention to prevent aggression toward female partners is to counter and prevent hostile attitudes and statements about girls and young women, particularly among antisocial males (Capaldi & Gorman-Smith).

AN EDUCATIONAL AGENDA

Taken together, the chapters on normative adolescent romantic relationships and sexual behavior illustrate that negotiating the pathway to successful adult relationships and sexuality involves adolescents' building relationship skills as well as developing romantic and sexual identities. Educators can facilitate the acquisition of these important emotional and interpersonal capabilities in at least three ways: interpersonal relationships skills programs, sexuality and relationship education, and opportunity provision for safe exploration of relationships for sexual minority youth.

Relationship Skill Programs

Destructive adolescent relationship patterns can set the stage for later family difficulties (Shulman, chap. 5, this volume), and are therefore important to target before the cycle is integrated into adolescents' schema of how relationships operate. Educational efforts targeting conflict resolution and negotiation should offer opportunities to improve communication in the context of disagreements, enhance interpersonal understanding, strengthen social skills, and monitor behavior (Shulman, chap. 5). Conflict management skills are a part of the Safe Dates Project (Capaldi & Gorman-Smith, chap. 10; Seefeldt et al., chap. 7), and together with changing social norms about dating violence and decreasing gender stereotyping, these program components predicted decreases in perpetration of psychological abuse, physical and sexual violence. Given the bidirectional violence Capaldi and Gorman-Smith (chap. 10) report in their sample, a decrease in perpetrating by one partner may result in lower levels of aggression in adolescent couples. However, they point out the need for a sustained effort over time with both partners.

Because effective relationship functioning requires both interpersonal skills and self-beliefs of efficacy to use those skills, programs should include educational modules that facilitate the consolidation of a sense of competence for all participants. Programs with such a focus should not only help to prevent aggression in adolescent relationships, but also promote such positive relationship qualities as communication and support. Such content might satisfy Furman and Shaffer's suggestion that we go beyond anatomy and contraception in sex education classes, and address relationship issues (chap. 1). Furthermore, a number of the chapters in this volume highlight the need for the content of all relationship education programs to be sensitive to the gender, sexual orientation, relationship context, attachment style, mental health, and developmental level of the students.

Sex Education

There are certainly structural barriers to the provision of developmentally appropriate and facilitative romantic and sex education. Some worry that frank discussions and provision of information will result in earlier sexual experimentation, despite the evidence to the contrary (Kirby, 2001; Russell & Andrews, in press). Conservative coalitions lobby educational policymakers to resist any discussions of sexuality with youth. Federal funding for education in the area of sexuality has been focused away from contraception with the proscriptions of the Personal Responsibilities and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 that provides millions of dollars each year for abstinence-only education, and bans the mention of contraceptives in those educational programs, except to describe their risks (Wilcox, 1999). Despite the lack of compelling evidence that this type of sex education is effective in changing behavior, President Bush has expanded the funding for teaching abstinence in his 2003 budget proposal, that would raise federal spending on "abstinence only" education by $33 million, to $135 million.

In 1999, a nationally representative survey of secondary school teachers found that 23% of sexuality education teachers taught abstinence as the only way to avoid pregnancy and STDs, up from 2% in 1988 (Darroch, Landry, & Singh, 2000). These numbers are consistent with a 1998 survey of public school district superintendents that showed that of the 69% of districts that have a policy to teach sexuality education, 14% cover abstinence as one option for adolescents in a broader program, 51% promote abstinence as the preferred option, and 35% teach abstinence as the only option outside of marriage (Landry, Kaeser, & Richards, 1999). The lack of sound education on contraception and prevention of STDs and HIV is not developmentally appropriate given the prevalence of sexually active adolescents, particularly in high schools. Furthermore, a review of nine of the fear-based, abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula, conducted by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS, 2001) indicated that the programs reinforced stereotypical views about gender, placing primary responsibility for maintaining sexual limits on girls. Moreover, the focus on abstinence until marriage is heterosexist, and does not meet developmental needs of sexual minority youth.

Teachers were less likely in 1999 than in 1988 to say that sexuality education classes should cover sexual orientation in Grade 7 or earlier (39% in 1999 vs. 54% in 1988) or by the end of Grade 12 (78% in 1999 vs. 95% in 1988) (Darroch et al., 2000). The conservative shift in the teachers' beliefs is also reflected in their behavior—the proportion of sexuality education teachers

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covering sexual orientation decreased sharply from 1988 to 1999 (69% to 51%). Given that positive feelings about teachers play an important role in mediating the school troubles experienced by sexual minority youth (Russell, Seif, & Truong, 2001), these increasingly missed opportunities for teachers to be supportive and affirming are likely to contribute to further marginalization of sexual minority students.

These shortcomings in sexuality education are not new—they were well described in Fine's (1988) summary of her ethnographic study of sex education in which she described how the anti-sex rhetoric of public school sexuality education suppressed a discourse of female sexual desire and explicitly privileged married heterosexuality over other practices of sexuality. The most recent data suggest that the climate has worsened for young women and sexual minority students since Fine's report.

How can we do a better job preparing youth to develop self-understanding and make responsible decisions about such an important aspect of identity and experience? Welsh and colleagues recommend that school-based health education programs consider both the joys and the challenges of adolescent romantic relationships. In particular, to prevent depression, they suggest that curriculum include adaptive coping strategies for the especially difficult aspects of relationships including unreciprocated love, infidelity, and breaking up. A positive and affirming curriculum would go even further if it focused on helping adolescents to understand their sexuality and sexual identity, and emphasizing their role as active agents in their own sexual lives.

Opportunity Provision

Key to successful creation and consolidation of an identity is the opportunity to explore different roles and identities. Students with opposite sex attractions have many arenas in which to pursue such self-discovery in the domains of relationships and sexuality. As Diamond suggests, we also need contexts for sexual minority youth to explore their sexual identity—to discuss relationships and meet others who share their sexual orientations and to develop a supportive network of sexual minority peers. Russell (in press) has highlighted the importance of Gay–Straight Alliances in high schools, not only for providing support and advocacy for sexual minority youth in schools, but also for their educational efforts, not just for members, but for other students, teachers, and administrators. Such organizations may facilitate Diamond's goal that educators understand the diversity of sexual minority students and resist making assumptions about the romantic interests of all students.

Teacher Education and Preparation

Beyond direct educational efforts with the adolescents, it is important to consider the needs of those who teach and advise them. Educators and parents should also receive more normative information about teenagers' relationships (Furman), as well as guidance in how to deal with the emotions that may accompany adolescent relationships (Welsh et al., chap. 8). Teacher training in sex education may be another area to target, and SIECUS (National Guidelines Task Force, 1996) has recommended 36 topics on sexual health and responsibility in their *Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Kindergarten–12th Grade.*

This volume has highlighted the importance of romantic relationships and sexuality for adolescent development. The chapters provide compelling evidence to guide educational efforts for youth. Above all, they remind us of the importance of examining the developmental appropriateness of curricula offered to youth, and the limited likelihood of success if the needs of individuals are not considered.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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