

Changes in Adolescents' Interpersonal Experiences: Are They Being Prepared for Adult Relationships in the Twenty-First Century?

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Trends across nations suggest that adulthood in the future will require greater social versatility, including abilities to function in relationships that are less scripted by community norms and that bridge multiple social worlds. This article assesses whether current changes in adolescents' interpersonal experience are likely to give them the social resources and competencies they will need. Changes in families are making them smaller, more diverse in social capital, and more responsive to adolescents. Changes in adolescents' nonfamily experience include more time in institutional settings; more involvement with peers; and more cycles of developing (and ending) relationships with a heterogeneous set of adults, friends, and, for many, romantic partners. The analysis suggests that these changes will provide many youth with greater opportunities to develop the more versatile interpersonal resources required in the future, but that many adolescents will have restricted opportunities to acquire these resources.

Throughout the world the daily forms of human social life are changing. As part of gradual processes—associated with urbanization, globalization, new technologies, and the overlay of “modern” upon traditional institutions—the contexts and vernaculars of interpersonal interactions are being altered. Daily interactions are progressively less likely to occur within the context of stable, small-scale, culturally homogeneous, and tightly knit communities, and more likely to occur within transitory, culturally heterogeneous, negotiated, and sometimes more impersonal relationships. Putnam (2000, pp. 183–184) suggests that, “Thin, single-stranded, surf-by interactions are gradually replacing dense, multistranded, well-exercised bonds.” Concomitantly, the rules and vocabulary of daily interactions are changing in many parts of the globe, becoming less structured and scripted by community norms and more improvisational, requiring abilities to shift languages and navigate diverse social worlds.

These and other historic changes are altering the daily social experiences of adolescents, and thus the socialization they are getting in interpersonal skills. These changes are also altering the repertoire of social resources and competencies that adolescents will need to be fully functioning adults in the future. As with other articles in this special issue, we are concerned with trends in the match between adolescent experience and the changing demands of adulthood. Are adolescents acquiring the repertoire of social resources that will allow them to be full-functioning adults in the new social worlds of the 21st century, or are there emerging mismatches between adolescent preparation and the demands of adulthood?

Of course, such concise questions rarely have a simple “yes or no” response. Answers are likely to vary across populations, between rich and poor, and for differing domains of social preparation. The diverse processes known as “modernization” take different forms across societies and can be expected to lead to differing changes in interpersonal life. This article has two parts. In Part I, we review evidence on a wide range of current historical trends in the institutions that structure daily social life for adolescents and adults, looking first at the trends in families, and second, in other contexts of social interactions, such as friendship, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods? In Part II, we then discuss how these changes may be altering the match between adolescents’ preparation and the demands of adulthood.

The conclusions of this article are speculative, intended to provoke thought. Firm predictions about the family and other social institutions are difficult at best (Cherlin, 1999). By drawing as broadly as possible on international literature, we hope to stimulate reasoned conjectures about future scenarios.

PART I. CHANGES IN THE INSTITUTIONS OF INTERPERSONAL LIFE

Families and Family Relationships

Families are without doubt the most important institution in people's interpersonal lives, yet they have been changing dramatically in ways that affect both adolescents' interpersonal experiences and what will be required of them as adults. Public discussion in many parts of the world often takes the form of a discourse on the "disintegration of the family" (e.g., Prasad, 1995). Close examination of the evidence, however, suggests multiple trends (summarized in Table 1) that have both positive and negative implications.

TABLE 1
Ongoing Trends in Families

Family size and composition

1. Smaller families (fewer siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins); more childless families
2. Persistence and renewal of the extended family; increase in "bean pole" extended families
3. Increasing diversity of family forms, which are more improvisational and transitory
4. More female-headed households
5. More orphaned and homeless adolescents

Connections to other institutions

6. Links between the family and thick community networks are reduced by urbanization and family mobility
7. Increased employment of women and other changes give families more "bridging social capital"
8. More instrumental functions of families given to other institutions

Marriage

9. Later average age of family formation
10. Increasing importance of conjugal relationships in two-parent families; higher expectations for the emotional quality of marital relationships
11. Increasing flexibility and negotiation of roles between husbands and wives in two-parent families, with persistence of differences in contributions to housework and child care

Parent-adolescent relationships and exchange

12. More economic investment in children by parents
 13. Greater investment of time and emotional energy in children by parents
 14. Parents becoming less authoritarian and adopting more responsive styles of parenting; reduced parental authority and control for some parents
 15. More equitable treatment and expectations for boys and girls in families
 16. Continued generation gaps between parents and adolescents
 17. Family violence against children persists
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Family size and composition. Perhaps the most striking and universal trend is that families are shrinking. In industrialized countries and among the middle class across the world, the average number of children per woman has fallen below the replacement level of 2.1 and is as low as 1.3 in some nations. Family sizes are larger but also falling among the poor in developing nations (UNDP, 1999). This decline in family size has been no less precipitous in nations with a strong “traditional family,” such as Spain and Italy (Furstenberg, 1995), indicating that traditionality is not an impediment to declining family size. Having one or two children is still considered obligatory in India (Verma & Saraswathi, 2002); but the imperative to have children has weakened in Japan (Tsuya & Mason, 1995).

In the short term, fewer children means that adolescents have fewer siblings (with many having none); in the long term it means fewer uncles, aunts, and many fewer cousins, nieces, and nephews—in other words, a much smaller extended family. The lengthening life span, however, means that adolescents have more living grandparents, great-grandparents, and even great-great-grandparents (although this trend is partly tempered by later ages of family formation; Goldscheider, 1997). Together these trends are creating what has been described as a vertical “bean-pole” extended family (Dizard & Gadlin, 1990).

Households around the world also are taking a wider diversity of forms, which are more likely to be improvisational and transitory. Rates of divorce and female-headed households are high in Europe, North America, Africa, and the Caribbean, and are increasing in most other parts of the world (Burns & Scott, 1994; Engle & Breaux, 1998). Rates of common law and consensual unions are rising in Latin America and the Caribbean (Masiah, 1990; Welti, 2002), Japan (Ishii-Kuntz, 2000), and northern Europe (Hess, 1995). In many regions, increasing numbers of fathers work in distant cities or countries to support their families (Bharat, 1986; Booth, 2002; Santa Maria, 2002); and in African and Caribbean nations, as many as a quarter or more of young adolescents, especially girls, are “fostered out” and live apart from their natal family, often as domestic workers (Mensch, Bruce, & Greene, 1998). History shows that diversity in family forms was common in earlier eras, when high death rates caused frequent disruptions (Bertram, 2000). What is new is the variety of arrangements that is normatively accepted and the increased rates of headship by women.

A concern related to this diversity is that increasing numbers of young people, especially adolescents, end up in family arrangements with fewer adults to provide guidance, modeling, and support. First, the percentage of households including extended kin is declining in many parts of the world (Hess, 1995; Verma & Saraswathi, 2002), although in most countries ties to extended kin remain strong, and in India the large “joint” extended

household has proven to be an adaptive arrangement that helps family members deal with the stressful demands of modern urban life (Sharma & Srivastava, 1991). Second, men (fathers, grandfathers, uncles) are more often absent from adolescents' lives. Nsamenang (2002) described how in Africa, urbanization, increasing costs of parenting, and the decline of the patriarchal family have made participation in families less rewarding for men; similar patterns have been described elsewhere (Burns & Scott, 1994).¹ Third, in many parts of the world there are more adolescents who are living with no family at all. In Africa, massive numbers of children and adolescents have been orphaned by AIDS, a phenomenon soon expected to spread to South and Southeast Asia (WHO, 2000). Poverty and family disruption are leading to increasing numbers of street youth worldwide who have limited or no contact with parents (Raffaelli & Larson, 1999).

These general trends toward smaller and more diverse family units partly stem from adults' greater exercise of deliberate choice over family composition. These trends are expected to persist in Western nations and become more prevalent in parts of the world where traditional family norms are being relaxed and eroded. Families can also be expected to develop new adaptations to these changing family forms. For example, communication technology is likely to provide new opportunities for adolescents to maintain connection to extended family and nonresident parents, and "family" may be less defined by coresidence than in the past (Bertram, 2000).

Connections to other institutions. In addition to changes in internal composition, there are worldwide changes in how the family is linked to external institutions. To recount an old but continuing story, in traditional rural life, large extended families were embedded in a local web of connections within the clan, tribe, or community. These webs facilitated family economic activities, reinforced control of children, and supported systems of meaning (Hess, 1995; Mandelbaum, 1970). As families have moved to urban areas and adapted more mobile lifestyles, these connections to thick community networks of support and meaning have been reduced (Bharat, 1991). Urban families connect to new networks, but these tend to be less dense and less residentially based (Putnam, 2000); and family moves disrupt adolescents' support networks and feelings of connection (Calabrese, 1989; Parasuraman, 1986). Residential mobility can be particularly frequent for poorer families, due to unstable housing and the shifting availability of work (Ambert, 1997; Tinker, 1999). Poor families are more likely

¹A countertrend is that in many parts of the world, there also appear to be more "good fathers" who are loving, nurturing, and engaged with children in ways they were not permitted to be in traditional families; Engle & Breaux, 1998; Furstenberg, 1988.

to find habitation in neighborhoods in which poverty, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential instability create lower neighborhood cohesion, less informal community regulation of adolescent behavior, and less community social capital for a family to draw on (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Aber, 1997; Tinker, 1997).

Traditional rural communities, to be sure, can be closed, restrictive, deficient in opportunities, and harsh on people or groups who do not fit the mold. In fact, although rural communities provide more “bonding social capital” (connections that tie a family to a homogeneous group), urban areas often provide more “bridging social capital” (connections that link family members across diverse sectors of society; Putnam, 2000). The types of jobs that parents obtain in urban settings provide one new source of bridging social capital. With formal employment of mothers increasing in nearly all parts of the world (Castells, 1997), families are benefitting from women’s new social connections with co-workers. Parents are also forming new kinds of connections to the community. Poor women in some parts of the world, for example, are becoming involved in community organizations, such as Grameen Bank initiatives and neighborhood cooperatives, that provide new social resources to themselves and their families (Tinker, 1999). Similar connections may develop for middle-class families through their increasing use of external institutions for a variety of services, from food preparation to assistance with parental functions. Thus, the path into the future is a mixture of reorganized family connections to other people and institutions, in the general direction of more far-ranging and heterogeneous ties.

Marriage. Changes in marriage are important to our topic because they affect adolescents’ family experience and alter the family roles many will hold as adults. We have already mentioned that marriage is becoming less absolute—divorce and parenting without marriage is more common in Western nations and Africa. Other changes are occurring too. First, in most parts of the world, marriage is occurring at later ages (Castells, 1997; but not in Russia and Latin America, Stetsenko, 2002; Welti, 2002). This is most evident among middle-class youth who pursue higher education, but also among the poor in some parts of the world for whom marriage is occurring in late rather than early adolescence (Verma & Saraswathi, 2002). Later family formation is significant, among other reasons, because it means that the period of adolescent dependency and preparation is longer.

Second, around the world, the value placed on the emotional quality of marital bonds is increasing. In India, a husband’s relationship to his mother was traditionally more important than his relationship with his

wife, and communication between spouses was limited. This is reversing among urban middle-class couples, however, Indian husbands and wives now engage in much more sustained interaction and develop close interpersonal ties (Ramu, 1988). This shift toward a "companionate marriage" has occurred in North America and Europe over the last century; indeed, the high rate of divorce partly reflects higher expectation for the quality of marital relationships (Goldscheider, 1997). Research suggests that, when it works, this type of marriage is beneficial to both partners (Waite, 2000), and the benefits of marriage are expected to remain real and highly valued for those able to achieve it. Expectations of what constitutes a good relationship are likely to continue to rise, however, leading people to test and retest them through cohabitation and marital succession (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). It should also be noted that changes in marital expectations have not led to reductions in marital violence: rates of violence between spouses range from 20% to 60% across nations (Engle & Breaux, 1998). The conclusion to be drawn is that adolescents need to develop skills to participate in intimate relationships, but also need to be ready to protect themselves if and when such relationships go bad—a need reinforced by our next point.

A final marital trend is toward more flexible and negotiated roles between husbands and wives, with the changes in women's roles most marked. Women's increased employment gives them more control over resources and empowers them to exercise more influence in family decision making (Burns & Scott, 1994). Changes in laws and attitudes are altering women's position from that of dependent recipients toward that of independent agents with more bargaining power (Nussbaum, 2000; Sinha, 1984). We are avoiding saying that women's roles have become more "equal," because, although that may be true in many cases, men's bargaining position has also changed in ways that suggest caution. Greater mobility in men's employment and the relaxation of norms regarding family commitment have increased men's rate of family desertion, which, even if not exercised, is a powerful bargaining chip (Jaquette, 1993; Sen, 1990). Thus, for example, women continue to do the bulk of parenting and family work in nearly all societies (Tsuya & Mason, 1995; UNICEF, 1995), and this work continues to be undervalued. Even in Sweden, which has had aggressive gender-blind policies for several decades, women continue to play a disproportionate role in child-rearing (Hoem, 1995). In addition, a traditional patriarchal family remains in the Middle East (Booth, 2002; Burns & Scott, 1994); and in Russia, the fall of communism led to a resurgence of gender polarization in marital roles (Stetsenko, 2002). The important implication of all these changes is that adolescents, especially girls, need to develop skills for

what Sen (1990) calls “cooperative conflict.” Sen introduced this concept in evaluating the challenges that women face in balancing care, family interest, and self-protection within the arena of intimate family relationships. To be competent, Sen’s argument suggests, young women must acquire the ability to combine strategies of familial cooperation with bargaining, including adversarial bargaining if necessary.

Parent–adolescent relationships and exchange. The family changes most relevant to adolescents’ immediate experiences are with regard to how parents and parent–figures treat them. There is a strong trend toward more economic investment in youth. For poor families in developing countries, allowing one’s children to go to school is a tremendous economic commitment and sacrifice because it means forgoing their labor (Minge-Klevana, 1980). Economically, children become a cost instead of an asset. Nonetheless, virtually all countries of the world have shown dramatic increases in years of education during the 20th century (UNESCO, 1999), and this trend is likely to continue throughout this century, placing more burden on families to support youth. As a nation becomes economically developed, the costs to parents increase as years of schooling rise and extras, such as lessons, camps, extracurricular activities, and high-quality tutors—which are out of the reach of poor families—become increasingly viewed by middle-class families as essential to adolescents’ upbringing. These rising costs go hand-in-hand with the decision of families to have fewer children. Rather than diluting their resources, parents are opting to raise one or two “high-quality” children.

In addition to investing more money, many parents are investing more of their attention, certainly on a per child basis. Contrary to the public belief that parents are less involved in the day-to-day lives of their children, some evidence points in the opposite direction (Bianci, 2000; Gauthier, Smeeding, & Furstenberg, 2000). In India, middle-class parents spend much time supervising their adolescents’ homework through early adulthood, often putting substantial pressure on youth to do well (Verma, Sharma, & Larson, in press). Many U.S. parents spend more time chauffeuring adolescent children between activities than they did a generation ago, when youth were permitted a high amount of unsupervised time outside of the home (Lareau, 2000); and U.S. parents’ knowledge of their children’s friends, activities, and time outside of the home is probably greater than ever before (Furstenberg, 1999; Gillis, 1996). The future will likely see more parents—including, in some cases, nonresident parents—using pagers, cell phones, and global positioning systems to be in constant contact with their children. Although some youth may suffer oversupervision

by their parents (Zelizer, 1985), in general, this trend is likely to provide adolescents with the benefit of more personalized support and assistance.

Parents' management style is also changing in many parts of the world, becoming less authoritarian and more responsive to the adolescent. Hollos and Leis (1989) reported that among the Ijo of Nigeria, when a teenage boy was asked to run an errand by his father or another senior male, he knew he must obey immediately. This type of absolute authority, however, has been declining in the West over the last century, with more parents seeking out children's point of view and offering explanations for parenting decisions (Settles, 1999). Similar trends toward open communication and more democratic parenting are now evident in Southeast Asia (Santa Maria, 2002); India (with changes particularly evident among fathers; Desai, 1993); and, to some extent, the Arab world (Booth, 2002). At the same time, there is concern across most societies about the loss of adult control over adolescents (Schlegel & Barry, 1991). Stable middle-class families are shifting toward "authoritative parenting" in which parental responsiveness and control are combined, but families that face stresses related to poverty, frequent moves, neighborhood disorganization, or a parent working in a distant city often find it harder to maintain control over their adolescent children.

There are also trends in many countries toward more equitable treatment and expectations for boys and girls. As with trends in marital roles, there is a long way to go, and the possibility of steps backward. Unequal treatment of girls by families, most notable in South Asia, is evident in the poorer nutrition and health care that girls receive (WHO, 1999a) and their greater infant mortality (Mensch et al., 1998) and, across most developing nations, in girls' lower rates of school enrollment (UNESCO, 1999). Girls also have heavier responsibility for household chores than boys in virtually all parts of the developing world (Mensch et al., 1998). Girls' life expectancy is catching up with boys' in a number of developing countries (United Nations, 1995), however, indicating that they are receiving care. Further, girls' school enrollment has matched boys' in Latin America, Japan, the Philippines, and Western nations (UNDP, 1998). Larson, Verma, and Dworkin (2001) also found evidence of gender equity among middle-class families in India, which offers hope that it will spread to the rest of that society.

In general, then, trends suggest positive changes in how parents relate to adolescents. Particularly in the middle class, parents are investing more money and attention in their children and relating to both boys and girls in more responsive ways. Nonetheless, generation gaps are expected to manifest in new ways, and family conflict is expected to continue in various forms. In traditional societies there was comparatively little discrepancy

between adolescents and adults because they grew up in comparable worlds (Schlegel & Barry, 1991); but with rapid change and media that bring outside worlds into teens' lives, there are generational differences in experience that can be sources of misunderstanding. Youth in Russia, for example, are coming of age in a dramatically different society than their parents and grandparents (Stetsenko, 2002). A. B. Nsamenang (personal communication, February 19, 2000) reported that African parents want a better life for their children, but generational conflict is created when young people succeed and give up traditional lifestyles. It is also important to note that rates of physical and sexual abuse of children have not fallen with increased prosperity and education in Western nations; indeed they may have risen (Hess, 1995). Social and cultural dislocation and unstable parenting arrangements may increase the risk of family violence for adolescents in developing countries as well (Virani, 2000). Overall, adolescent–parent relationships are changing in ways that permit better communication, but it would be naive to ignore the many variations.

Varied and confluent directions of family change. In concluding this section, we want to emphasize that the family changes described are likely to take different casts within diverse cultural traditions, such as Hinduism, Islam, Confucian, and so forth, which provide different conceptual foundations for family life. Thus, although autonomy from family is seen as an adolescent developmental task in Western culture, this is not the case in the Arab world (Booth, 2002), nor in India, where middle-class teens report being just as interested in spending time with their families as with their friends (Larson et al., 2001), and two thirds of all adolescents continue to prefer arranged marriages (Verma & Saraswathi, 2002). Even so, common forces are leading to some of the same changes in families across these differing cultural systems (Table 1).

The enormous variations within societies should also be emphasized. It would be naive to make a sweeping conclusion in any setting that either all families are disintegrating or all are providing better environments for adolescents. Although families are getting smaller and thus diminishing adolescents' fund of kin to draw on, many are also gaining more far-reaching social networks that provide adolescents with more diverse social capital. Many adolescents are also benefitting from more parental attention, although other adolescents (and sometimes the same adolescents) are experiencing more disruptions in family relationships. Additionally, the demands of adult family roles require not only a greater capacity for intimacy, but also a greater capacity for negotiation and balancing needs. These various trends, with their positive and negative implications, can be expected to occur in different combination across families.

Nonfamily Institutions and Relationships

Unlike the family, other institutions and contexts of interpersonal life—schools, work, friendships, and communities—tend to separate adolescents and adults. When they leave home, adolescents and parents generally go to different settings. Later we will ask how adolescents' experiences in the settings they go to help prepare them for participation in the settings that adults go to. First, however, we need to examine the trends for each independently beginning with adolescents' experiences in their distinct settings (Table 2).

Changing institutional contexts of adolescents' social experience. A major change that is altering adolescents' interpersonal experience is that time previously spent in work is being replaced by time in school (Larson & Verma, 1999). Nearly all youth in developed nations and all middle-class youth in developing nations now attend secondary school, with the enrollment of lower SES youth in developing countries progressively increasing. Both work and school are hierarchal contexts controlled by adults, but there are important differences. Work settings vary widely in

TABLE 2
Trends in Nonfamily Relationships

Changing institutional contexts of adolescents' social experience
1. School replaces work as a major context of interpersonal experience
2. After-school activities expand as a context of experience
Expanding adolescent peer worlds
3. Peers become more important and fill more leisure time in adolescents' lives
4. Emergence and growth of youth cultures
5. The Internet becomes an increasing context of peer interactions
Romantic relationships and sexuality
6. Romantic love and sex are brought out in the open, especially through the media
7. Greater acceptance of gay and lesbian relationships
8. Earlier involvement in romantic and sexual relationships
General trends in adult social life
9. Deinstitutionalization of relationships
10. Relationships more negotiated around personal goals
11. Greater importance of horizontal relationships
12. Growth of new norms in some spheres of life
13. Depersonalization of public social life
14. Many relationships are more transitory
15. Increasing interaction across diverse worlds

the nature of this hierarchical relationship. Young people's work in the past typically occurred in family contexts and thus reinforced filial relationships. With industrialization and urbanization, working youth around the world are now more likely to be employed in factories, domestic employment, service jobs, or on the street—settings in which interpersonal relationships are more authoritarian, unpredictable, and sometimes exploitative (International Labour Office, 1996; Verma, 1999). School settings, in contrast, involve relationships with teachers—professionals who are trained within a cultural tradition of mentoring (Serpell & Hatano, 1997).

The most significant interpersonal effect of schooling, however, may be that it creates opportunities for peer interaction—between classes, at lunch, and when going to and from school. Thus, schooling expands the amount of time and, inevitably, the personal importance that adolescents give to peer relationships. Many schools also increase adolescents' contact with peers who differ in ethnicity, religion, social class, and gender. Of course, this opportunity for diverse contact varies widely. Residential segregation of ethnic and SES groups often limits the diversity of local schools. The persistence of same-sex schools in some parts of the world (Booth, 2002), the current growth of elite private and religious schools in many localities, and the growth of home schooling in the United States prevent many youth from obtaining this diverse social experience.

Along with schooling, some nations are expanding institutions to fill young people's after-school hours, and also provide new opportunities for interactions with peers including, in some cases, diverse peers. China has developed extensive systems of clubs to which membership is often required, and these are described as the most significant source of friendships for adolescents (Stevenson & Zusho, 2002). Youth clubs have also been developed in the Arab Gulf countries (Booth, 2002) and are being planned in Brazil (Pereira & Heringer, 1994). In the United States, participation in sports, music, and organizations is already frequent, and there is convergent government and public interest in creating more after-school programs (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Community sports and music activities for youth are also common in Europe (Alsaker & Flammer, 1999), although in Eastern Europe and Russia, the collapse of communism led to reductions in government programs for youth (Roberts & Jung, 1995; Stetsenko, 2002).

Expanding adolescent peer worlds. Adolescents' increased involvement with peers in school and after-school settings carries over to the informal, leisure segment of their lives. In sub-Saharan Africa and the United States, peer groups were a part of the traditional way of life (Kett, 1977; Nsamenang, 2002), but in many societies in the developing world, peer

relationships are secondary to family ties, or are limited by parents, particularly for girls who have more household responsibilities (Mensch et al., 1998; Schlegel & Barry, 1991). Numerous factors (smaller families, contact with peers through secondary education, and later age of marriage), however, have led to increases in young people's leisure time with same-age friends in the Arab states, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, especially in the urban middle class (Booth, 2002; Sandhu & Mehrotra, 1999; Santa Maria, 2002). Young people also are increasingly turning to peers for emotional support (Gibson-Cline, 1996). These trends mean that the talk, play, and leisure activities of adolescent peer relationships are becoming a more substantial forum for adolescents' preparation for adulthood. It also means that bullying, aggression, and competitive interactions among peer crowds are a larger part of adolescents' socialization: indeed, evidence suggests that poor youth in urban areas around the world are becoming more involved in gangs (Hazlehurst & Hazlehurst, 1998).

As adolescents spend more time with peers, they are also participating in and creating youth cultures, which, in turn, reinforce the meanings and values of the peer world. At the surface level, there is a growing, world-wide, middle-class youth culture, which shares styles of clothing and other consumer products and revolves around leisure activities involving music, having fun, going to malls, and transient romantic relationships (Santa Maria, 2002; Stetsenko, 2002; Verma & Saraswathi, 2002). Beneath the surface there are many local variations in youth cultures, reflecting adolescents' active development of these cultures to serve their group and personal needs (Schade-Poulsen, 1995; Schlegel, 1999). Maori youth in New Zealand, for example, have appropriated the rap music of African Americans to articulate a stance of separation from the dominant European New Zealand culture (Tupuola, 2000). Algerian urban youth have developed "Rai" music (which employs Western electronic instruments and often adapts local popular songs and rhythms) to define a cultural space separate from the world of adults, within which they explore and negotiate the duality of traditional and modern influences (Schade-Poulsen, 1995).

The Internet can be expected to further enlarge adolescents' world of peer interactions. It opens new paths of communication with people outside their immediate community, and across barriers of distance, ethnicity, age, physical appearance, and, as translation programs become available, language. One study of heavy users in the United States found that much of adolescents' Internet interactions were with friends they knew from face-to-face relationships, and merely extended those relationships. Contact with strangers was most frequent among youth who were more solitary and lonely (Gross, Juvonen, & Gable, in press). Thus, the social impact

of this new mode of communication may be greatest for adolescents who, for this or other reasons, do not fit into their local peer networks. For example, the Internet is providing a new means for sexual minority youth to connect to communities of similar peers (Hellenga, 2002). It is also a means for youth with antisocial tendencies to connect to hate groups or form other deviant enclaves. As of this writing, the Internet plays a “minuscule” role in the lives of adolescents in India (Verma & Saraswathi, 2002) and other developing countries, but it may be a significant arena of peer interaction in the future.

Romantic relationships and sexuality. Within the domain of peer interactions, romantic relationships are an important expanding subdomain of adolescent interpersonal experience. Some of this change has less to do with adolescence and more to do with society in general. Across nations, romantic love and sexuality are being brought into the open more so than in the past, especially via the media. Romantic relationships are topics of film and TV, billboards on sex clinics appear on the street in India, the sexual behavior of national leaders is openly discussed, and pornography is easily available to all with the means to be on the Internet (Altman, 2001; Kashyap, 1996; Lesthaeghe, 1995). In traditional societies, stories and fables often included passionate love, but almost always with cautionary messages about the havoc it can create (Giddens, 1992). The increased media presentations of intimacy and sexuality are less likely to take the form of morality tales, and more likely to be associated with pleasure, satisfaction of desire, attractiveness, conquest, and recreation (Altman, 2001; Ward, 1995).

A related trend has been the growing legitimization of diverse sexual identities. Reform movements in some nations have led to passage of laws to protect the rights and safety of sexual minorities. Gay and lesbian communities have emerged in South Africa, Mexico, Brazil, Thailand, and Western nations, and there has been more public acknowledgment of sexual minorities (Altman, 2001; Murray & Roscoe, 1998). To be sure, discrimination remains in most parts of the world, and it would be a mistake to assume that counterreactions to these trends will not occur in the future (Herdt, 1997). Nonetheless, this greater public visibility legitimizes these relationships—and the underlying feelings.

A product of these public changes and other trends, such as earlier puberty and lessening of parental and community controls, is that more adolescents around the world are becoming involved in romantic and sexual relationships, and at earlier ages. Of course, there has been and continues to be a great deal of variability across cultures. At one extreme, some Middle Eastern and African peoples have been known to publicly beat or even kill a girl who has dishonored her family by losing her virginity (Davis &

Davis, 1989; Schlegel & Barry, 1991). At the other extreme, some cultures have maintained "adolescent houses" in which young people are expected and encouraged to have sexual intercourse with a number of partners (Schlegel & Barry, 1991). In some, adult men initiate boys in homosexual relations (Herdt, 1997). Across these variant cultural backgrounds, however, the general trend is toward earlier involvement. Rules limiting cross-sex contact and romantic relationships are becoming more flexible for urban Arabic and Indian youth (Booth, 2002; Shukla, 1994). The age of sexual initiation (outside of marriage) is falling in China, Japan, Latin America, Africa, Russia, and India (Mensch et al., 1998; Stetsenko, 2002; Stevenson & Zusho, 2002; Verma & Saraswathi, 2002; Welti, 2002), although there remains a double standard of expectations for boys and girls in many settings (Davis, 1995; Echeverria, 1994; Santa Maria, 2002). Data on gay and lesbian relationships is limited to the West, but show that adolescents in this region are coming out at earlier ages than in the past (Cohen & Savin-Williams, 1996).

Looking to the future, it is hard to foresee whether there will be counter-swings in societal norms regarding love and sexuality. For example, it is possible that the ravages of the AIDS pandemic might create a pragmatic reckoning leading to reduced sexual involvement (as appears to have happened in Uganda; Altman, 2001). On the other hand, the discovery of a vaccine for AIDS might lead to new sexual revolutions. The Internet provides a new vehicle for meeting partners, engaging in romantic relationships, and developing intimacy skills. Teens who are on line already have the opportunity to go to an international "video café," go on an electronic "date," and even "have sex" with someone on the other side of the world (Merkle & Richardson, 2000).

To summarize, adolescents' interpersonal lives are currently undergoing dramatic changes, involving increased time spent in institutional settings, more interactions with peers, development of youth cultures that reinforce peer worlds, and more involvement in romantic and sexual relationships. Many of these changes have progressed furthest in Western nations, Africa, and among the middle class in other nations. The evidence, however, suggests that these changes are in progress among youth in much of the world. Do these changes better prepare adolescents for the adult lives of the future? Before addressing that question, it is necessary to look at trends in the demands of adults' interpersonal lives.

General trends in adult social life. To examine changes in adults' family lives, we could track counts in legal and biological kin household composition, and transformations in specific family relationships. It is much harder to track changes in the informal associations and diverse institu-

tional worlds that structure adult social life outside of the family. Even if we agreed what to assess, there are fewer data to draw on, particularly in developing countries. What the literature offers instead are broad postulates, based on general observations rather than hard evidence (summarized in Table 2). Many of these postulates apply to family as well as non-family relationships; thus, our discussion of them also serves as an overview of general trends in the nature of adults' interpersonal lives.

The social theorist Anthony Giddens (1990) argues that the underlying cultural frames for organizing and stabilizing social life are changing. Interpersonal relationships are being deinstitutionalized; they are being released from "traditional ligatures" (Bertram, 2000, p. 157). Many tribal and traditional customs, rituals, and sanctions that structure relationships are disappearing (Omololu, 1997; Shukla, 1994). With urbanization, community and kin norms are playing a smaller role in scripting social behavior. In their place, Giddens states, personal instrumental and affective goals are becoming the organizers of interpersonal behavior. Mutual satisfaction, voluntary exchange, and other personal goals are replacing fixed norms as the guides of social interactions; thus, relationships are more often negotiated around personal intentions. We have already seen this change in families—in the increasing emphasis given to emotional quality in marital and parenting relationships and in the greater transience in marital relationships when partners do not achieve this quality. Giddens believes that people are more guided in friendships, relationships at work, and interactions with strangers by the personal functions that these relationships serve.

Closely related is the postulate that adult interpersonal life is becoming more democratic and that daily life involves more horizontal transactions between putative equals (Giddens, 1992; Lesthaeghe, 1995). This trend is a core objective of the international human rights movement, which stresses the value and dignity of all people. Although there is a long way to go, dramatic progress in human rights was made across the 20th century (Sen, 1999; UNDP, 2000). Democratization is also evident in the culture of the new high-tech workplace in the West and Asia, within which skilled work (but not necessarily unskilled work) increasingly involves horizontal, collaborative teams (Burris, 1998; Kao, Sinha, & Wilpert, 1999). Democratization is also evident in the new culture of the Internet, in which young and old, workers and bosses, and people from diverse worlds can interact with fewer markers and barriers of status (Hellenga, 2002). Certainly the claim is not that vertical, hierarchical relationships are disappearing (they remain particularly strong in the Muslim world; Serpell & Hatano, 1997), only that horizontal relationships are becoming more common.

Another postulate is that although adult social life is being freed from

old norms, new norms are emerging that shape adults' interpersonal lives. Deinstitutionalization is accompanied by a process of reinstitutionalization or renorming, particularly in the economic and governmental spheres. Giddens (1992) argues that abstract systems, including codes of professional ethics, bureaucracies, procedures for economic transactions, and numerous other "rational" codes of modern life, are emerging as new rules for organizing social interactions. More adults, especially women, are employed in formal work settings and must adapt to the guild and professional codes of these settings. Even in the private sphere of personal relationships, however, we note that the language of psychology and therapy is creeping into many cultures around the world, leading to new informal interpersonal codes that demand, for example, increased attentiveness to a friend's feelings (Gibson-Cline, 1996; Giddens, 1992). New religious movements are also providing new and newly adapted precepts to guide interpersonal life (Marty & Appleby, 1994).

The growth of systems for regulating economic, governmental, and other institutions of "mass society" contributes to the depersonalization of public social life. Discussion of this trend occurs in many parts of the world (e.g., Prasad, 1995) and goes back at least to Max Weber, who characterized modern life as bureaucratic and dehumanizing. Depersonalization appears in many forms. Instead of buying food from people we know in a market or neighborhood store, we are now more likely to buy it in large anonymous supermarkets. In the 1990s, Asian businesses reduced their commitment to offering "lifelong employment," and some businesses in the West have gone as far as to redefine employees as temporary consultants (Fussell, 2002). Research in the United States suggests that friendship is being crowded out by work life; for example adults are having fewer dinner parties and spending less time in sociable conversation (Putnam, 2000). The latest target of this discourse is the Internet, which is said to flatten self-expression and involve more superficial relationships (Locke, 1998). Summarizing this overall trend, Locke (p. 18) says, "Warm personal chats with friends are being replaced by coolly efficient 'info-speech' with strangers." We think this quote overdramatizes the trend: even in the "cold and efficient" United States, much research shows that personal relationships are important to adults' well-being (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000). Nonetheless, it does appear that modern life involves more impersonal interactions—with colleagues, acquaintances, and strangers. We have also noted that professional, personal, and even family relationships are more likely to be transitory than in the past.

A final postulate is that modern life involves increasing interaction across diverse worlds. Processes of globalization are bringing adults into greater contact with people from diverse spheres of life (defined by eth-

nicity, culture, religion, gender, and occupation). In this volume, Larson (2002) reports that migration, national fragmentation, and urbanization have increased the number of culturally heterogeneous populations across the globe. At their jobs and in their communities, people are more likely to be required to cross ethnic boundaries. Verma and Saraswathi (2002) report that in India, religion and caste are less of a barrier to friendship than they were in the past; indeed intergroup romantic involvement and marriage is increasing in many parts of the world (Altman, 2001). This trend involves more than ethnicity and culture, it also involves increased interaction across boundaries between male and female, occupational worlds, and other categories. The media brings these numerous other worlds into the home, and the Internet is a vehicle by which adults readily interact across heterogeneous worlds.

Going back a couple of centuries, the world consisted of many isolated, insular social worlds. It would be risky to claim that the number or diversity of social worlds has increased, even with the explosive growth in the world population and the flourishing of new career worlds and interest cultures. What has changed, however, is the interconnection and permeability of these worlds. Boundaries still exist between the spheres of male and female, Islam and Christian, and gay and straight, but they are more penetrable, and competence in daily life often requires the ability to move across these semipermeable barriers. The general trends in social life discussed previously require adults not only to understand more of these worlds but to exercise personal agency within them, to adapt their language and behavior to function effectively within them. Are adolescents being prepared? Will the changes in their family and nonfamily social experience give them the interpersonal repertoire they will need? We now turn to this question.

PART II. MATCHES AND MISMATCHES IN ADOLESCENTS' PREPARATION FOR ADULT SOCIAL LIFE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In this second part of the article, we evaluate adolescents' acquisition of a set of interpersonal resources and competencies that we think they will need for their social lives in the future. This set is derived from the trends in adult life just discussed; it also encompasses universals of human relationships that are not likely to change, such as parenting skills. We stress that this set is by no means comprehensive, and that our analysis is speculative—others in our shoes might well make different projections. In many sections we conclude that the future is likely to entail both positive

and negative scenarios, and suggest social policy directions aimed at promoting the positive and limiting the negative scenarios.

Relationships to Carry into Adulthood

The most important social resource that adolescents need for the transition into the adulthood of the future is probably not abstract "social competencies" but rather relationships themselves. More than ever, entering adulthood in the future will require having a network of people one can draw on to help secure instrumental needs. In a heterogeneous global society, individuals need more social capital of a kind that provides bridges to diverse social, cultural, and institutional worlds. Those who are entering adulthood need to be connected to kin or nonkin who can help them navigate systems of education, employment, housing, health care, and so forth. Having a social network is also important to existential and emotional needs, especially as young adults attempt to make their way in a large impersonal society. Relationships play a vital role in affirming one's sense of meaning and providing social support, as demonstrated by their strong empirical association with mental and physical health (Reis et al., 2000).

Do the trends discussed above suggest that adolescents will acquire relationships that serve these functions? We think the answer will be "yes" for many youth. True, families are getting smaller and youth are less likely to inherit thick ties to the community than in the rural past, but many of the previously discussed changes in adolescent life connect them to a larger and more diverse portfolio of relationships. School and after-school activities bring youth into contact with adults from more far-ranging worlds than are available in traditional village settings. Young people, especially in the middle class, accumulate a cadre of former coaches, tutors, babysitters, and music teachers, whom they can call on for letters of reference or advice about finding a job or choosing a college. Adolescents' increased involvement with friends also link them to a larger and more diverse set of peers, who are sources of social capital and emotional support. The Internet, too, has been found to reinforce existing social ties and create new ties, which provide an expanding stock of social capital (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001).

Even the family, although smaller, may in many cases serve youth better. By historical standards, fewer children are being shared by a large number of longer living adult relatives, which could mean that individual youth get more substantive help. Male and female adult kin are also likely to be employed in a wider array of occupations than in the past and have more far-ranging ties outside of the family, and thus provide young people

with more connections to diverse social worlds. In many modernizing societies, too, lifelong sibling relationships remain vital as units of mutual economic and emotional support (Aruna & Reddy, 2001; Booth, 2002; Peterson, 1990). Even youth in disrupted families may acquire more nuclear, extended, step, and fictive kin through parents' divorce and remarriage which may replace their fewer uncles, aunts, and cousins (although these new family members may be less invested and provide less help; Furstenberg, 1998).

Thus, we foresee many youth experiencing new and richer opportunities to form relationships with a more varied set of adults, friends, and kin. They gain more of the "bridging social capital" that we see to be increasingly important in the heterogeneous modern world. In many societies, such as those in Southeast Asia (Santa Maria, 2002), the biggest changes are for girls and young women, who have traditionally been restricted to a limited social world of home and immediate neighborhood, and are now gaining opportunities to form connections beyond the family.

The trends toward the future will also leave many youth with few or no relationships to help them with the transition into adulthood. These include youth with no families or small families, a generation of African youth orphaned by AIDS, youth for whom frequent moves have repeatedly disrupted relationships, adolescents who are dispositionally introverted, and middle-class youth in societies in which pressure to do well on the college entrance exam squeezes out time for cultivation of relationships (Lee & Larson, 2000). Deficits can also be expected among youth who do have a kin and community network, but live in communities where people lack the kind of social capital needed for modern life. This includes youth currently being raised in isolated rural communities, those living in "hypersegregated" urban ghettos that are low on social capital (Wilson, 1987), and many girls in the Middle East and South Asia who remain restricted in their social contact (Booth, 2002; Kashyap, 1996). Of course, our labeling these as "deficits" is controversial. Many traditional communities see these factors as strengths and believe that they are protecting their youth from negative influences; indeed, lower rates of pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and delinquency may confirm this. The trade-off, however, is that, whether they like it or not, many of these youth will be required to live adulthood in more "modern" settings and will find themselves needing more diverse social capital.

To conclude, the paths into the future create new categories of youth who are "haves" and "have nots." Social policies need to be directed at helping all youth form lasting relationships that provide social capital and support, but special attention needs to be given to promoting these relationships for the groups who have been identified as potential "have nots."

Creative efforts are needed to find ways to keep committed adults involved in youths' lives (including nonresident parents and kin), and create lasting ties to community members that provide diverse social capital (e.g., Benson, 1997; Grossman & Rhodes, in press). Of course, youth also need to be able to make and remake relationships on their own—which leads us to one of the most important social competencies of the 21st century.

Skills for Forming, Maintaining, and Leaving Relationships

In traditional rural societies, children are born into family and community relationships that serve for an entire lifetime. Adult relationships (including family relationships), however, are now often more transient. They are also less scripted by institutional norms and depend more on personal agency. To become competent adults, adolescents in this emerging world will need to master the skills to form, manage, and end relationships. They need to be adept at sizing up people, negotiating trust, and seeking support; they need skills for creating communities, managing conflicts, and repairing breaches; and they need to have the ability, when necessary, to sever relationships in an ethical manner and to manage emotional upheavals when relationships end. In subsequent sections, we will discuss skills in hierarchical, horizontal, and intimate relationships. Here we look at management skills that apply across all three.

The trends in adolescents' experiences suggest that many will be getting more opportunities to develop these skills. Many psychologists believe that the foundation of interpersonal competence lies in young children's experience of secure attachment relationships in early childhood; and it has been argued that the experience of family disruption—now frequent in the West, the Carribean, and Africa—leads to the development of insecure or avoidant working models that handicap formation of secure relationships later in life (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). This is a real concern for increasing numbers of youth who grow up without parents, or with no continuous, reliable parent figure. It should be recognized, however, that many cultures have built-in systems for providing continuing care for youth (e.g., Goldstein, 1987; Gonzalez, 1969), and we should not assume that Western research and discourse on "single-parent families" necessarily applies elsewhere. It has also been argued that the experience of diverse and changing family arrangements leads to the development of new, more complex social personalities that, although perhaps less secure, acquire skills for adapting to changing roles and renegotiating autonomy and connection to others (Skolnick, 2000).

What may be more important is that the social systems in which chil-

dren and adolescents learn relationship skills are changing. Among agricultural and pastoral peoples, parents and extended family groom young people to preserve the family's place within the community (Schlegel & Barry, 1991), and it is understood that breaches in relationships can have lifelong consequences for the family. In the more diffusely knit and less stable modern, urban world, adolescents' relationships are less embedded in family networks, and there are fewer consequences for breaking them. Daily interactions with peers and others—in school, after school, on the Internet, in the Raï clubs of Algeria and North Africa—provide a large arena of opportunities in which young people learn through trial and error. In addition, because adulthood starts later, adolescents experience more cycles of forming and ending bonds with friends, as well as with teachers, neighbors, youth leaders, and so forth. A youth can shed past friendships and enmities, bury the shame of failure and mistakes, and come away with useful lessons for starting again. In many of these shifting relationships, parents are less directly invested but, given the more responsive style of parenting, may be better able to play a detached role as coach, providing guidance based on their years of experience.

Societies are also furnishing youth with new cultural languages for negotiating relationships. Models for forming and ending relationships are embedded in the narratives of film and television and in the catchy refrains of popular songs (as in Paul Simon's "50 Ways to Leave your Lover"). The new psychological languages provide rationalized frameworks (promoted all over the world in advice programs, such as the Oprah Show); and the "cultures" of the school and work spheres contain professional norms for cooperation, competition, and the conduct of more depersonalized relationships.

In general, we think changes in social experience give young people more opportunities to learn skills for negotiating the new, more transient social worlds of adulthood. Youth in many settings are having more experiences of varied relationships, and, thus, learning more versatile skills for creating and managing connections to others. This does not mean that we are sanguine, however, and emphasize again that many teens (e.g., rural youth, girls confined to restricted environments) have limited experiences in diverse relationships and thus fewer opportunities to develop these relationship skills. Life-skills training programs are one useful vehicle being developed that enhances young people's social competencies (WHO, 1994).

Skills for Parenting and Hierarchal Relationships

We have argued that the adulthood of the future will entail fewer hierarchical relationships; nonetheless, these will remain important in the con-

text of family, in which parental figures must be sure and competent in exercising authority. In the workplace and community, too, leadership of various kinds (and conscientious "followership") will always be needed. The skills required for participating in hierarchical relationships in subordinate positions include those for respecting, obeying, learning, and protecting oneself from abusive and exploitative superiors. The skills for being a "good" superior include those for leadership, mentoring, nurturing, and balancing one's own needs with those of subordinates. As an example of the latter, Doi (1973) articulates how a model parent, teacher, or boss in Japan is one who is attentive to the needs of those dependent on him or her.

Do the changes in adolescents' experience suggest that they will develop greater or lesser skills for participating in these relationships? On the positive side, the trend of parent figures becoming less authoritarian and more responsive means increasing numbers of young people are observing and experiencing a kind of authority that is based on reasoning, explanation, and merit (Alwin, 1996). Research suggests that this is an efficacious model of parenting that promotes prosocial behavior (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Hess, 1995); thus, we can be encouraged that more youth will be exposed to this model. Outside of the family, the expanding institutional spheres of school and after-school activities provide settings in which youth potentially experience subordinate–superior relationships with teachers and youth leaders that are also authoritative and responsive—although it should be noted that styles of authority differ across cultural traditions, from an emphasis on modeling in Confucian education to an emphasis on submissive acceptance in Islam (Serpell & Hatano, 1997). As school and after-school institutions become increasingly professionalized, we can be optimistic that they will further develop formal checks and balances that limit adult abuses of control, and codes of mentoring that promote positive models of authority.

On the negative side, some trends suggest fewer opportunities for adolescents to develop skills for hierarchical relationships. Although increases in authoritative parenting have been noted, there is also evidence that more parents are losing control over adolescents, and these youth are not likely to assimilate effective styles of authority. In increasing numbers of families, adolescents also have fewer adult models to learn from and do not experience both women and men in positions of family leadership. High rates of family disruption and family violence may leave adolescents with negative models of authority, colored by feelings of betrayal. In addition, having fewer siblings reduces important opportunities for learning nurturing skills by caring for a younger brother or sister. Maccoby (1998) comments that boys, in particular, are getting few opportunities to learn parenting skills through child-care experiences.

The worlds outside of the family and school also provide real threats to adolescents' acquisition of good models of hierarchical relationships. In traditional societies, children and adolescents learn respect, deference, and leadership by observation and participation in the tradition-based status hierarchy of the community (Harrison, Serafica, & McAdoo, 1984). In all too many parts of the world the most visible community authorities are now drug leaders, criminal bosses, and feudal warlords who model authority based on intimidation and violence (Kaplan, 2000). Returning the rule of law in these settings is important not only for the order it creates in the present, but for the models of authority it teaches the adults of the future.

Thus, the good news is that many youth now have opportunities to learn styles of authority and leadership that are attentive, responsive, and professional. The bad news, which is becoming a repeated story in this article, is that there are many gaps—many youth who are exposed to negative models or who do not have opportunities to learn positive models of parental and other hierarchical relationships. Programs to teach adolescents, especially boys, parenting skills are increasingly needed (Maccoby, 1998). In addition, aggressive campaigns should be undertaken in all parts of the world to eliminate conditions that create violence both within and outside of the family.

Skills for Prosocial Horizontal Relationships

Although skills for hierarchical relationships may be in jeopardy of declining, it seems safe to forecast that skills for relationships with equals will inevitably expand as a result of adolescents' increased involvement with peers. Thus, youth of the present and future may be better prepared for the growth of horizontal relationships in adult social life. The important question, however, is what skills will they develop?

Scholarship with children and adolescents has focused on skills for prosocial and cooperative peer interaction. These include dispositions for reciprocity, altruism, and mutual problem solving (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Youniss, 1980). Research suggests that some of the changes in families just discussed—toward responsive parenting and toward greater disruption in family relationships—affect adjustment in peer relationships (Hess, 1995; Scott & Scott, 1998). Thus, these trends may also have positive and negative effects on development of prosocial peer relationships. Prosocial behavior is also found more commonly in families with fewer siblings and families in which women are employed (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). Therefore, these trends may promote positive skills.

The biggest question, however, is whether adolescents' increased time

with friends will lead to development of prosocial and cooperative patterns of relating. Piaget (1965) argued that youth spontaneously learn these patterns from peer interactions; that the trial and error of interacting with equals leads them to develop relationship principles of equality, empathy, mutual responsiveness, and symmetrical reciprocity. If this is true, then merely by spending more time with peers, adolescents of the present and future will become better prepared for horizontal relationships in adulthood. The evidence, however, suggests caution. Controlled longitudinal research in Sweden and the United States has found that teens who spend large amounts of time in unstructured interactions with peers show increases in deviant and antisocial behavior in early adulthood (Mahoney, Stattin, & Magnusson, 2000; Osgood, Wilson, O'Malley, Bachman, & Johnston, 1996). This and other research indicates that when youth interact together without adult structure and supervision, they can get into negative dynamics of interaction that involve manipulation and coercion.

It is possible, therefore, that increased time with peers will lead some youth to develop skills for horizontal relationships that are not prosocial. Negative peer dynamics (such as negative peer influence, bullying, and gang formation) have been described among adolescents, particularly boys, across regions of the world (Hazlehurst & Hazlehurst, 1998; Stetsenko, 2002; Welti, 2002). A WHO report (2000, p. 43) concluded that in some low-income communities, "violence has survival and status function for young men"; in other words, such skills are demanded by the environment. Although girls are less involved in physical aggression toward peers, they are more likely to engage in "relational aggression," actions that harm others by damaging their relationships or their acceptance in peer groups (Crick et al., 1999).

Thus, greater peer interaction alone can not be assumed to increase adolescents' prosocial skills. Nsamenang (2002) provides insight by observing that youth in traditional African same-age peer sets develop a cooperative, autonomous internal culture of group self-regulation, but that this culture is influenced by the internalized "word of the adult." The point is that adults matter. Adult models and supervision affect dynamics in the peer group. Thus, early family experiences that instill distrust, as well as current experiences of daily life that promote suspicion and antagonism—such as poverty, community disorganization, and family violence— influence the type of dynamic occurring in adolescent peer groups, and, in turn, the types of peer skills that youth develop (Patterson, 1986). To the extent that families and communities of the future continue to create these adverse conditions, we can expect these coercive patterns to shape adolescents' interpersonal development. The most efficacious social policies will be those that reduce these larger social conditions. Nonetheless, more tar-

geted youth policies aimed at providing supervised after-school settings for youth (Eccles & Gootman, 2002) and antibullying programs (Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999) can play a role in reducing negative peer dynamics and reinforcing positive prosocial experience.

Skills for Intimate Relationships

The need for skill development in the domain of romantic and sexual relationships is one of particular urgency. Current trends in many parts of the world are toward relaxation of institutional controls over adult interpersonal life: Family and community norms are becoming less absolute, marriages are less permanent, and diverse sexualities are becoming more acceptable. As a result, individuals are being required to exercise more personal agency over this domain of their lives. Yet, intimacy behavior is shaped by strong psychological drives and the personal and societal costs from misjudgments in the private realm (e.g., unhappy marriages, children born without a surround of caring adults, AIDS and other STDs) remain extraordinarily high. What this situation urgently calls for is the development by youth of greater capabilities to self-regulate their intimacy needs and exercise control over intimate relationships—by no means an easy task. The shift toward more flexible gender roles and companionate marriages also places increased demands on adolescents to develop skills for cultivating long-term relationships of trust and mutuality.

Is there basis for optimism that young people are or will learn these demanding skills? The picture is quite mixed. One way that adolescents learn intimacy skills is through observation. More adolescents are having the opportunity to observe engaged companionate marriages between their parents, but more are also observing relationships that are short lived and sometimes violent. The impact of parents' marital quality on adolescents' subsequent romantic and spousal relationships is well documented (Hess, 1995); thus, the positive and negative trends in current marriages are likely to affect the next generation. Adolescents also observe images of intimate relationships in the media that place greater emphasis on pleasure than on the realities of navigating long-term committed relationships. Furthermore, many are exposed to cultural values that support violence and sexual coercion within intimate relationships (WHO, 2000).

Another way that adolescents learn intimacy skills is through instruction. Nsamenang (2002) expressed concern that traditional African systems for teaching adolescents about sexuality are deteriorating; this may be true elsewhere, as well. The trends toward less authoritarian parent-adolescent relationships may provide greater openness for adolescents to

discuss intimate relationships and receive guidance from family adults. Sexuality is a topic that parents in many parts of the world do not discuss with their children (e.g., Davis & Davis, 1989), however, even in contemporary Europe, parents report difficulty talking with their children about sexuality (Arnett, 2002).

A final way that adolescents might learn to manage intimate relationships is through direct experience, and, as discussed previously, adolescents are engaging in romantic and sexual activities at younger ages in many parts of the world. Increased legitimization of gay and lesbian identities in some parts of the world permits gay and lesbian youth to explore intimate relationships. Young people have new opportunities for romantic interactions via the Internet. In addition, the trend toward later marriage lengthens the span of time that adolescents have to experience these "practice" relationships. Thus, adolescents are having more opportunities to learn intimacy skills through direct experience. It must be emphasized, however, that research on what, how, and in what situations teens learn through such trial relationships is in an infancy stage (Furman, Brown, & Feiring, 1999); and research in the United States suggests that romantic involvement in early and middle adolescence can have negative consequences for development and functioning (Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbruner, & Collins, 2001). Adolescents' romantic relationships have been found to be emotionally charged and negotiated in a very ad hoc manner, with enormous variability in experiences ranging from emotionally devastating to highly rewarding (Furman & Simon, 1999).

Differences must also be recognized in male and female adolescents' experience. In heterosexual relationships, boys are more likely to dominate and be inattentive to their partners (Maccoby, 1998). Will more experiences with practice romantic relationships help them to develop skills in mutuality? Possibly being rejected for insensitivity in multiple relationships will lead boys to learn these skills, although there is no guarantee. In contrast, girls are more likely to use self-subordinating strategies in romantic relationships; they are also more likely to be involved with older males, which further increases their likelihood of being in a subordinate position in which they are less able to exercise agency (Maccoby, 1998). Such experiences may or may not provide young women with the stimulus to develop greater assertiveness and become more adept at "cooperative conflict." Girls also face greater risks (e.g., pregnancy, violence), which may far outweigh benefits of any knowledge gained.

In conclusion, this is a domain of concern. Education and social policy could do much to promote growth of competency in this area. Research shows that intimate heterosexual relations are improved when children have early interaction with the other gender in cooperative tasks in school

or other settings (Maccoby, 1998). Youth need to develop experience with the interaction strategies typical of the other gender before they find themselves in a romantic relationship or marriage. As an antidote to media images, adolescents need more realistic information about what happens in both healthy and unhealthy relationships within their culture. Although sex education is vitally important to preparation for adulthood, it seems all the more critical that youth learn skills for managing the intimate relationships in which sexuality occurs. They need educational programs that address feelings, examine choices, cultivate positive skills, and reinforce a sense of self-worth (WHO, 1999b). Public campaigns to repudiate cultures of violence against women are also needed (WHO, 2000)

Skills for Moving between Worlds

An international group of educators, charged with identifying important skills for the future, gave emphasis to those for understanding, accepting, and appreciating cultural differences, working with others in cooperative ways, and solving conflicts in a nonviolent manner (Parker, Ninomiya, & Cogan, 1999). For us these abilities include those for negotiating worlds defined by ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and other categories that define the wide array of semipermeable spheres of contemporary global life. Given the proliferation and confluence of multiple worlds, it is no longer sufficient to be able to simply tolerate other cultural groups; people must be able to engage in hierarchical, horizontal, and intimate relationships within multiple cultural settings. Adults, for example, must be prepared to enter a mixed-sex work setting or move into a neighborhood (or marry into a family) composed of a different cultural group than their own. LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) describe this ability as "bicultural competence"; we would cast it as "multicultural competence." It includes knowledge of and positive attitudes toward diverse groups, abilities to communicate within their vernaculars (of language, body signals, communicative rhythms), and the capacity to manage ambiguity in situations in which multiple worlds intersect. It also includes development of a secure and flexible internal self that allows one to shift between worlds, languages, and negotiating conditions.

Are adolescents getting opportunities to develop these competencies? Although there is a long way to go, we see some signs of progress. Many schools require students to learn multiple languages (three in most of India), and some have curricula for cross-group understanding and peaceable conflict resolution. More directly, some schools and after-school settings often bring boys and girls as well as youth from diverse backgrounds

into contact with each other (although, as previously noted, residential segregation and other factors prevent many of these settings from being as diverse as they might be). The media also bring images of differing groups into the home.

It is not enough, however, just to bring diverse groups of youth into contact. In some circumstances contact has been found to amplify stereotypes, increase intergroup hostility, and have other negative consequences (e.g., Rosenberg & Simmons, 1971). In situations in which young people feel threatened by the presence of another group, it can intensify their identification with reactionary tribal, ethnic, or national identities (Hazlehurst & Hazlehurst, 1998). Research shows that mutual understanding and trust are most likely to occur in school or other settings when the following conditions are created:

- Groups are brought together in positions of equal status.
- Groups are engaged in cooperative (rather than competitive) pursuit of a shared goal.
- Interaction occurs between individual members of groups.
- Adults in the setting vocally support the goal of intergroup understanding, while also acknowledging group differences.
- Adults are prepared to serve functions as “role models, pathfinders, arbitrators, peacemakers, interpreters, mentors, promoters of civic ethics, and administrators” (National Research Council, 2000).

As the world gets more crowded and the number of regional ethnic conflicts increase (Larson, 2002, this volume), it is imperative that education and social policies intervene early in life to prevent growth of divisive group relationships, and instead equip young people with skills for bridging group differences.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, we have argued that globalization and other worldwide changes are adding to the repertoire of social resources and competencies that adolescents need to function effectively as adults. Certainly many of these resources have always been important. What is changing is the increasing significance of skills for social versatility: abilities to exercise agency in multiple types of relationships—hierarchical, horizontal, and intimate—and in multiple social worlds, including diverse and fluid family worlds, heterogeneous occupational worlds, male and female worlds, and worlds defined by ethnicity, language, and religion. As we move fur-

ther into the 21st century, adults who have only one form of relating and mastery of only one social world are likely to be increasingly handicapped. To earn one's keep, take care of one's kin, and maintain a stable existence as an adult in the new global society, it will be increasingly important to be able to move between heterogeneous types of relationships and social systems and be able to operate effectively within each.

It might be argued that adolescents can always acquire these skills in adulthood, when they need them. We agree that the processes of updating social knowledge and developing social maturity continue throughout life. We believe, however, that adolescence is a particularly important period for acquisition of this versatile social repertoire. For one thing, adolescents have available time that they will not have later for learning new languages, social rules, and vernaculars and for experiencing cycles of trial and error in relationships. Adolescence may also be a foundational period for developing attitudes and habits related to versatility. Schlegel and Barry (1991) found that across nearly all cultures, adolescence is when people adopt their "social persona." We suspect that once adolescents adopt a social persona that is rigid and closed, it is much harder to change it and expand their social repertoire later.

The good news is that although the demands on adolescents are increasing, it appears that opportunities to develop this fuller social repertoire are expanding. We have argued that some of the modern institutions of adolescent life help create a "match." Families, schools, after-school activities, and the Internet are providing youth with new opportunities to develop relationships that bridge diverse worlds and acquire more versatile social skills. Many youth have relationships with a more varied set of peers and adults than in the past, and have more chances to teach themselves skills for forming, managing, and, when necessary, ending relationships. Evidence suggests that more youth are experiencing attentive and responsive parenting, which is likely to improve their capacities to function in both hierarchical and horizontal relationships as adults. Many are also experimenting with intimacy, although they may experience both costs and benefits from these trial relationships. In addition, many adolescents have more opportunities to develop skills for participation in diverse cultural worlds.

This optimism, however, is tempered by strong concern that these opportunities are not as complete as they need to be, with some groups of youth being particularly disadvantaged. This includes many girls in the Middle East and South Asia who are confined to the family courtyard; other adolescents who are growing up in restricted traditional settings and will find themselves handicapped if required to live adulthood in more modern worlds; youth in segregated urban ghettos or isolated rural areas

who interact with a world that is deficient in social capital; and street youth in many cities, who have few opportunities to build and learn about trusting relationships. Deprivation in social experience often corresponds to family poverty: Poor parents generally have less social capital and fewer resources to get their adolescents into well-run schools or after-school activities; they are more likely to move frequently, leading to disruptions in children's networks; and they tend to live in neighborhoods in which social capital is low and their children learn models of relating based on coercion. Deprivation in social experience is also seen among youth in elite private schools and wealthy homogeneous residential enclaves, whose social experience is limited to a narrow socioeconomic stratum. In addition, the effects of high-stakes college entrance examinations in some parts of the world that restrict adolescents' social experience are cause for concern.

The future, however, is not fixed. Societies need to provide an expanding curriculum of social resources and competencies. Although the emerging information age would appear to put a premium on cognitive skills, development of social skills is, in fact, more important than ever before. In addition to being essential for individuals' livelihoods and well-being as adults, social skills are critical building blocks to civil society (Youniss et al., 2002, this volume). Parents, teachers, youth workers, community members, business and religious leaders, and policy makers need to look for small and large ways that they can support development of these social resources and competencies among all youth. We have stressed that adolescents' social development is collaborative: it is shaped by the many people with whom they interact. Adults make important contributions as models, supports, coaches, and partners in relationships. They also play an important behind-the-scenes role by managing adolescents' opportunities (Jarrett, 1997), and structuring (or failing to structure) the institutions and settings in which adolescents spend time and that shape their social development.

Researchers, too, have an important role to play in filling the many gaps in our knowledge. We have been able to draw on a substantial amount of descriptive research on adolescents' social experiences in non-Western countries, but when making inferences about underlying societal, community, family, and developmental processes, we were much more dependent on Western research. There is a serious need for non-Western perspectives and data to verify, correct, and provide alternatives to the processes we have described here (Sinha, 1997). Much descriptive family research is available from outside the West. Less research on family processes, however, and remarkably little research on peer relationships exists in non-Western nations (Brown, Larson, & Saraswathi, 2002)—the latter being a critical need given the expanding role of peers in adolescents' lives. There

is also little available research on the vital topic of adolescents' romantic relationships, even in the West. Finally, there is a need for more research that evaluates policies and programs that can improve adolescents' social resources. To understand adolescents' interpersonal lives and shape practices and policies that better prepare them for the future, it is essential that we obtain knowledge—viewed from multiple cultural perspectives—on all these vital domains of social development.

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