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## Introduction: For Better or Worse: Intimate Relationships as Sources of Risk or Resilience for Girls' Delinquency

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The recent rise in arrest rates for violent offenses among girls has sparked an increased interest in understanding the risk and protective factors associated with girls' aggression. Particular attention has been drawn to the role that girls' intimate relationships may play in promoting persistence or desistence from delinquency. To this end, a number of independent laboratories have been engaged in conducting prospective longitudinal studies to uncover the influence of romantic relationships on girls' antisocial behavior through the transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood, which are gathered together in this special section. This article introduces the contributions to the special section and considers both the lessons provided and the directions needed for future research devoted to understanding girls' delinquency and aggression.

As statistics derived from national crime databases evidence, over the past decade, girls have become the fastest-growing segment of the juvenile justice population, with rates of arrest, particularly for violent crimes, outpacing those of boys (Schwartz & Steffensmeier, 2012). Although the reasons for this phenomenon are debated (Chesney-Lind & Belknap, 2004; Feld, 2009; Goodkind, Wallace, Shook, Bachman, & O'Malley, 2009; Tracy, Kempf-Leonard, & Abramoske-James, 2009), these gendered increases in juvenile justice involvement have sparked a keen interest in understanding the mechanisms underlying antisocial behavior among adolescent girls (Hawkins, Graham, Williams, & Zahn, 2009; Kerig & Becker, 2012; Miller, Leve, & Kerig, 2012; Moretti, Odgers, & Jackson, 2004; Pepler, Madsen, Webster, & Levene, 2005; Putallaz & Bierman, 2004; Zahn et al., 2010).

Recognizing that traditional models developed to explain boys' delinquency are not necessarily a good fit to that of girls, researchers have begun to explore risk factors that have a particular salience for female development. One gender-relevant factor that arises repeatedly in theory and research into girls' delinquency is the role of intimate relationships in girls' lives. Research in developmental psychology and developmental psychopathology teaches us that, in comparison with boys, girls in general are socialized to be more attentive to relationships (Zahn-Waxler, Crick, Shirtcliff, & Woods, 2006). Moreover, particularly in adolescence, girls are highly focused on interpersonal relationships

(Zahn-Waxler & Polanichka, 2004), are inclined to derive their sense of self from their associations with others (Crick & Zahn-Waxler, 2003), and are strongly reactive to disruptions of those connections (Davies & Windle, 1997). In adolescence, both girls and boys increasingly begin to look toward peer relationships as sources of support, connection, and intimacy. However, although close relationships with nonfamily members might have the potential to act as sources of resilience that buffer girls from other risks associated with delinquency, the romantic relationships that troubled girls enter into all too often are themselves troubled and thus operate as influences for the worse rather than for the better (Cauffman, Farruggia, & Goldweber, 2008; Odgers & Moretti, 2002).

### INTERCONNECTIONS AMONG GENDER, RELATIONSHIPS, AND GIRLS' DELINQUENCY

One of the reasons for the link between intimate relationships and antisocial behavior among girls may be that delinquency and romantic relationship dysfunction share many of the same risk factors. For example, a large body of research shows that juvenile justice-involved girls have disproportionately experienced such forms of interpersonal adversity as childhood maltreatment, peer victimization, and sexual violence and that these sources of traumatic stress are predictive of subsequent delinquent behavior (Kerig & Becker, 2012). In

turn, histories of exposure to child abuse and family violence disrupt the development of capacities that undergird the formation of healthy and mutually satisfying close personal relationships in adolescence (Kerig, Volz, Arnzen Moeddel, & Cuellar, 2010; Wolfe & Feiring, 2000), including trust, mutuality of autonomy, relational security, affect regulation, and adaptive interpersonal problem-solving strategies (Galliher & Bentley, 2010; Grych & Kinsfogel, 2010; Volz & Kerig, 2010). These risks also appear to be gendered in that they are particularly salient for girls. Family strife is associated with an increased likelihood that girls will deviate from the normative pathway by gravitating away from relying on same-sex peers as sources of emotional support (Miller, Winn, Taylor, & Wiki, 2012). Instead, girls on a troubled pathway are at risk of becoming precociously involved in dating relationships, often with males who are older and involved in antisocial behavior (Cauffman et al., 2008; Odgers & Moretti, 2002). Research confirms that attaching to romantic partners early in adolescence is associated with increased conduct problems and aggression (Miller et al., 2009). Moreover, while biologically precocious, these early-onset romantic attachments are often psychologically immature (Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009) and colored by a high level of emotional intensity as well as a propensity toward physical and psychological aggression (Wolfe & Wekerle, 1997). The experience of dating violence, in turn, acts as a catalyst for further problem behavior among girls (Oudekerk & Reppucci, 2009; Roberts & Klein, 2003). Research has further suggested that these dynamics too are gendered in that, more so than for boys, adolescent girls' delinquency is influenced by the quality of their relationships with romantic partners and those partners' antisocial propensities (Cauffman et al., 2008; Haynie, Giordano, Manning, & Longmore, 2005; Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter, & Silva, 2001; Odgers & Moretti, 2002; Oudekerk & Reppucci, 2009; Young & d'Arcy, 2005). Again, these effects may be for better or for worse in that a prosocial partner may help to divert girls onto to a path toward desistance from antisocial behavior in adulthood (Moffitt et al., 2001).

With these findings as groundwork and inspiration, investigators from a number of different research groups from diverse geographic regions have been making important advances in illuminating the roles of close personal relationships as either risk factors or sources of resilience in the lives of delinquent girls. The purpose of this special section is to bring together some of the leading

investigators on this topic in order to paint a picture of the current state of knowledge and to point the way toward future research. To this end, this special section presents new research from six independent laboratories involved in conducting longitudinal investigations of antisocial behavior among girls and investigating the roles of intimate relationships in their persistence or desistence from delinquency.

## THE TROUBLE WITH BOYS

Leading off the issue, Monahan, Dmitrieva, and Cauffman's (2013) study of "bad romance" follows up on a longitudinal sample of ethnically diverse female offenders first reported on in an article in the *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 5 years ago (Cauffman et al., 2008). Revisiting these participants, now engaged in navigating the developmental transition between adolescence and emerging adulthood, Monahan and colleagues investigate the differential influence of romantic relationships on the persistence of antisocial behavior. A particular strength of their design is that they compare the trajectories of these 184 girls to a matched sample of juvenile justice-involved boys, thus allowing for a direct test of the ways in which the patterns observed differ by gender. A second notable feature of this study is its attention to the length of the romantic relationships in which youth were involved. Length of commitment may act as a moderator of the effect of social contagion on boys' and girls' delinquency, given that perceived pressure to mirror one another's behavior and interests is more characteristic of newly coupled partners than it is of mature relationships. Finally, the authors make an important distinction between partners' passive modeling and active encouragement of antisocial behavior. For example, in their previous study of this sample, Cauffman et al. (2008) found that partners' encouragement of anti-social behavior was predictive of girls' but not boys' delinquency. Intriguingly, the girls who were most vulnerable to partners' encouragement of antisociality were those who had warm relationships with their fathers, suggesting the possibility that these were girls who were especially receptive to the perceived benefits of positive male attention.

Were similar effects seen when these participants were revisited 5 years later? Now between 14 and 25 years of age, the participants were entering emerging adulthood when the social influences so powerful in adolescence might be expected to abate. However, whereas boys' antisocial behavior

was less influenced by that of their partners during the early adult transition, girls became *increasingly* susceptible to antisocial partners' influence over the course of development. Also unique to girls was the way in which this effect was moderated by relationship length: girls were more vulnerable to the effects of partner encouragement of delinquency when the relationship was a short-lived one. The explanation for this finding bears further scrutiny and suggests a number of interesting directions for future research. One potential explanation is that partner influences are strongest at the beginning of a relationship, when couples are courting and attempting to create a sense of commonality and intimacy with one another. A quite different explanation might be that the girls who are the most highly susceptible to partner influences are those who are the least emotionally well-grounded and secure in their sense of self, qualities that contribute not only to poor boundaries between self and other but to relationship malfunction and brevity. For example, borderline personality features have been found to be a significant contributor to delinquency among girls, particularly those who have experienced familial and interpersonal violence in childhood (Burnette & Reppucci, 2009; Penney & Lee, 2009). Many factors also associated with delinquency may contribute to youth's participation in short-lived romantic relationships, including emotional dysregulation, impulsivity, unconventionality, and the lack of interpersonal skills needed to resolve problems and maintain intimacy (Cui, Ueno, Fincham, Donnellan, & Wickrama, 2012). Moreover, longitudinal research shows that youths' involvement in transient and poor-quality romantic relationships contributes to the development of further psychosocial problems (Davies & Windle, 2000) and predicts increases in delinquency over time (Cui et al., 2012). Given these interrelated risks, an important direction for future research on the developmental psychopathology of delinquency will be the incorporation of actor-partner models into longitudinal studies to investigate bidirectional influences among romantic partners, their individual characteristics, and the dynamics of their relationships.

Oudekerk, Burgers, and Reppucci (2013) also follow up with a sample of young women who had been detained by the juvenile justice system after committing serious offenses in adolescence. Five years later, now ages 20–23, almost half of the 120 youth acknowledged participating in ongoing offending and, among those offenders, over half had committed a violent crime. Moreover, in line

with assortative mating theory, those demonstrating persistent antisocial behavior were more likely than those who desisted to become involved with an antisocial partner. Further, partner antisociality predicted continuity in girls' violence across the transition from adolescence to young adulthood. Interestingly, these largely were stable relationships lasting a year or more; however, in a bookend to Monahan and colleagues' findings regarding relationship transience as a risk factor, participation in longer-duration relationships was associated with a reduction in girls' violent offending. Another important dimension examined by Oudekerk and colleagues concerns the role that deviant nonromantic relationships play in the persistence of girls' antisocial behavior. Particularly during the adolescent and emerging adult period, it is debatable whether it is safe to assume that the relationships conferring the greatest depth of emotional intimacy and psychological influence are those involving romantic partners rather than friends (Furman & Hand, 2006; Kerig, Swanson & Ward, 2012), and deviant friends also have been found to make an independent contribution to girls' offending (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Holland, 2003). In the present study, consistent with an "assortative befriending" hypothesis, girls' level of violence demonstrated higher concordance with that of their friends than their romantic partners. However, looking longitudinally, the contagion effect on the continuity of violent offending was specific to romantic partners: partner deviance alone, and not peer deviance, exacerbated the association between offending in adolescence and emerging adulthood.

One of the important observations that Oudekerk and colleagues offer from these findings is how specific these predictors of persistence were to violent offending. None of the models tested with their data predicted variance associated with the persistence of nonviolent offending from girlhood to young womanhood. On the one hand, factors other than antisociality, such as limited economic resources, might be implicated in the commission of nonviolent "survival crimes" such as theft, drug dealing, or sex work. On the other hand, perpetration of violence may represent a behavior that is quite a thing apart, particularly among girls and women, for whom it falls outside the norm. For example, Pepler, Craig, Yuile, & Connolly (2004) have noted that aggressive girls are ostracized from the normative peer group precisely because their behavior is gender nonconforming, and Maccoby (2004) has proposed that the non-normativeness of

aggression among girls suggests that such behavior may be associated with significant levels of psychopathology. In this regard, a valuable direction for future research on girls' antisocial behavior will be to investigate the presence of callous-unemotional (CU) traits in themselves as well as their peers and partners. CU traits are predictive of the most intentional, intractable, and violent forms of antisocial behavior (Frick & White, 2008; Kerig & Stellwagen, 2010) and, interestingly, are defined by the absence of one of the characteristics most consistently associated with the female gender role across childhood and adulthood, which is empathy (Brody & Hall, 2008). Little is known about assortative pairing among those high in CU traits, nor whether partnering with a callous person might serve to dampen one's own empathy over time. Nonetheless, it will be an interesting set of hypothesis to test, that those girls who engage in persistent violence are characterized by unconventionally high levels of CU traits and that they are differentially drawn to, sought out by, or are able to maintain intimate relationships with partners who share that characteristic.

In turn, Rhoades, Leve, and Kim (2013) investigate girls' desistence from delinquency not as a naturally occurring phenomenon, but as one facilitated by intervention. Their study follows over the course of 2 years a group of 153 girls referred from the juvenile justice system to participate in a randomized controlled trial of Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC), an evidence-based treatment especially tailored to address risk factors associated with girls' delinquency (Chamberlain & Smith, 2005; Leve, Chamberlain, Smith, & Harold, 2012). Relationships are very much at the heart of many of the adaptations made to more effectively target girls' delinquency in MTFC, including helping girls to develop capacities for coping with relational aggression, form positive peer relationships, avoid risky sexual behaviors and substance use, and regulate emotions; strategies for foster mothers including helping them to cope with the often emotionally stormy and ambivalent reactions of these girls to female caregivers (Chamberlain & Moore, 2002). In the present study, the investigators focused specifically on substance use among participants and the role that romantic relationships might play in its persistence or desistence. As they note, substance use is one of the delinquent behaviors that, among girls particularly, is highly vulnerable to the contagion or "snare" effects associated with having a drug-using partner (Bright & Jonson-Reid, 2010; Hussong, Curran, Moffitt, Caspi, & Carrig, 2004). In addition, sub-

stance use has particularly pernicious associations and ramifications for girls. In comparison with boys, not only is substance use associated with higher levels of concurrent psychological disorders in girls, who may in fact initiate illicit drug use in an attempt to manage emotional distress, but, once on a trajectory of substance use, girls more quickly fall into addiction and suffer more severe physical and psychological consequences than their male peers (Kerig, Ludlow, & Wenar, 2012; National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 2003). Consequently, substance use is a well-considered target for intervention.

Although MTFC's strategy of placing girls out of the home with carefully trained foster families increases the prospects for separating girls from deviant peer and romantic partner influences, most of the girls in the sample were involved in dating relationships. Whether those relationships were newly formed in the schools and neighborhoods they entered when they began residing with their treatment foster families, or whether these romances were carried over from their prefoster care lives, is unknown but would be of abiding interest. Nonetheless, a striking finding is the effectiveness of the treatment in not only reducing girls' illicit substance use in comparison with treatment as usual, but also in weakening the link between partner and participant drug use. An interesting next step for research on the process and outcome of MTFC will be to attempt to dismantle the treatment to identify which components comprise the "effective ingredients" for reducing the influence of partners' substance use on the girls who participate in the intervention. The motivational interviewing and behavioral monitoring strategies used to increase the youths' compliance with abstinence are likely contenders; however, it is also intriguing to speculate that the enhanced capacity to form and maintain positive relationships with prosocial peers and caregivers might have reduced the emotional distress that leads some girls to engage in drug use.

## ANTICIPATING REJECTION

Another way in which girls' aggression has been described as gender-distinct is that it is much more likely than that of boys to occur specifically in the context of close personal relationships—toward parents, particularly mothers, when girls are young (Chesney-Lind & Belknap, 2004; Stahl & Coontz, 2012; Zahn et al., 2008), toward romantic partners in later adolescence (Capaldi, Kim, &

Shortt, 2004), and toward their own children in adulthood (Serbin et al., 2004; Zoccolillo, Paquette, & Tremblay, 2005). Child maltreatment, domestic violence, and intimate partner abuse are particularly important subjects of study in that these are offenses that often go unreported and unadjudicated and thus "fly under the radar" of official statistics regarding recidivism. Moreover, the "gender parity" (Gray & Foshee, 1997; Sears & Byers, 2010) in adolescent girls' and boys' perpetration of dating violence is a widely replicated finding but is poorly understood. Therefore, research that casts light on the factors underlying both victimization and perpetration of dating violence among girls is needed.

One underlying mechanism that has been proposed as a link between familial and dating violence is rejection sensitivity. Research has demonstrated that children who grow up in maltreating homes develop a tendency to be hypervigilant and hyperreactive to cues of rejection in interpersonal relationships (Downey, Khouri, & Feldman, 1997) and that this rejection sensitivity is associated with dating violence perpetration and victimization by both boys and girls (Downey, Irwin, Ramsay, & Ayduk, 2004; Galliher & Bentley, 2010; Volz & Kerig, 2010). There are a number of ways in which rejection sensitivity might contribute to dating violence. First, as noted earlier, parental maltreatment might increase the likelihood that rejection-sensitive youth will seek to fill attachment needs by precociously becoming involved in intense romantic relationships for which they are emotionally unprepared (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999). Secondly, and related, youth high in rejection sensitivity might be drawn to one another and might form partnerships that are characterized by emotional storminess, possessiveness and neediness, all of which are risk factors for intimate partner violence (Downey, Bonica, & Rincon, 1999). Third, anxiety about loss may increase rejection-sensitive youths' willingness to remain in a dysfunctional relationship and to "do anything" in order to avoid abandonment (Purdie & Downey, 2001; Volz & Kerig, 2010). For example, Wolfe, Wekerle, Reitzel-Jaffe, & Lefebvre (1998) suggest that "insecurity in adolescent partner relationships may promote a controlling and even violent interaction dynamic to ensure that partner stays in the relationship" (p. 64), just as Bartholomew, Henderson, & Dutton (2001) propose that, "torn between a pathological need for approval from their partner and the terror of never feeling satiated in this regard, [youth] may become increasingly more demanding and

potentially aggressive when attachment needs are not fulfilled" (p. 50).

With these ideas in mind, Hafen, Spilker, Chango, Marston, and Allen (2013) set the stage by exploring how rejection sensitivity might affect the normative process of navigating entry into romantic relationships during the transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood. These investigators followed a sample of 180 community girls from ages 16 to 22 and collected information regarding their self-reports of rejection sensitivity, the formation and quality of their dating relationships, as well as their tendency to demonstrate anxious versus avoidant attachment styles in close personal relationships. In contrast to the suggestion that rejection sensitivity might propel girls from maltreating homes into the arms of early romances, within this normative sample, rejection-sensitive girls were less likely than others to have established a romantic partnership in early adulthood. Nonetheless, rejection sensitivity in adolescence was associated with more negativity in romantic relationships, as well as higher levels of anxiety and avoidance. Interestingly, in this normative sample, girls whose rejection sensitivity increased over the adolescent transition were those most likely to adapt a submissive stance toward their partners. Overaccommodation and the tendency focus on others' needs at one's own expense is an indicator of a failure to establish mutuality of autonomy, the capacity to "balance concerns with the self's and other's needs and feelings and to maintain both separate space and closeness in the relationship" (Neff & Harter, 2003, p. 83). Research evidences that young adults who fail to achieve this kind of balance between focusing on the needs of self or other are less psychologically well-adapted and less satisfied in their intimate relationships than their peers (Neff & Harter, 2002), and their relationships are more likely to involve the use of abusive strategies for conflict resolution, such as relational aggression (Kerig & Swanson, 2010; Kerig, Swanson, et al., 2012). Moreover, an intriguing experimental study (Romero-Canyas, Reddy, Rodriguez, & Downey, 2013) demonstrated that the overly accommodating strategy of self-silencing was associated with increased hostility in rejection-sensitive college women who experienced a staged rejection from a potential dating partner. Perhaps the underlying dynamics are akin to the shame-rage cycle associated with the link between childhood sexual abuse and female delinquency and dating violence (Feiring, Miller-Johnson, & Cleland, 2007; Feiring, Simon, Cleland, & Barrett,

2012), such that the humiliation of a thwarted self-sacrifice arouses anger in those who are desperate to obtain acceptance. The implications of these results for the development of more serious kinds of relational dysfunctions among girls are compelling.

In turn, the next two studies in this special issue investigate the role of rejection sensitivity in the development of intimate partner relationships among high-risk samples of aggressive girls. First, Hipwell et al. (2013) offer important insights into the predictors and consequences of girls' involvement in violent dating relationships in the transition across adolescence. The investigators draw on prospective longitudinal data gathered in the context of the Pittsburgh Girls Study in order to study the associations among parental maltreatment, peer victimization, rejection sensitivity, and dating violence among 475 girls followed from age 10 to age 17. In addition to showing that early experience of harsh parenting is predictive of adolescent dating violence perpetration among these girls, the investigators also were able to detect developmental sensitivity in the timing of these effects. Whereas escalation of parental harshness in early adolescence contributed to girls' aggression toward dating partners, these effects tapered off later in the adolescent period. The possibility that this result is the effect of the decreasing influence of parents and increasing salience of peers in these girls' lives is strengthened by the finding that ongoing peer victimization was implicated in the propensity to engage in violent dating relationships. Somewhat surprisingly, although rejection sensitivity was associated with harsh parenting and victimization by peers, it was not a predictor of dating violence in the current study. As the authors note, one reason for this finding may be that the dependent variable combined dating violence perpetration and victimization into a single variable, and some research has indicated that rejection sensitivity is a predictor of girls' perpetration only. Although, as noted above, a large body of research has indicated that dating violence among adolescents frequently is reciprocal, of particular interest for future research will be to distinguish between the predictors of victimization and perpetration among girls at risk.

Moretti, Bartolo, Craig, Slaney, and Odgers (2013) illustrate this point in their investigation of the longitudinal associations among family violence, rejection sensitivity, and dating violence perpetration, which is presented next in this special issue. Moretti and colleagues attend to a different

family contextual risk factor for girls' aggression than did Hipwell and her associates, focusing on the effects of exposure to interparental violence rather than child maltreatment. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that just as dating violence and perpetration often co-occur, so do the "double whammy" (Hughes, Parkinson, & Vargo, 1989) effects for children of both witnessing and being victimized by parental violence in the home (Herrenkohl, Sousa, Tajima, Herrenkohl, & Moylan, 2008; Park, Smith, & Ireland, 2012). Although substantial research shows that children who observe their parents engaging in violence toward one another are at risk of perpetrating aggression in their close relationships (Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Smith, Ireland, Park, Elwyn, & Thornberry, 2011; Stith et al., 2000), little is known about the social-psychological processes that underlie this vulnerability. Moretti and colleagues offer to fill this gap by considering how exposure to family violence might promote the development of rejection sensitivity in both its forms—anxious expectations of rejection and angry reactions to anticipated rejection. Although these two dimensions of the rejection sensitivity construct are rarely considered separately, some research suggests that rejection-fueled anger is more strongly linked to aggression in young women than men (Downey et al., 2004), and thus, this is a promising line of inquiry for investigating gender-specific pathways to violence.

In addition, Moretti and colleagues point to another important point of refinement and that is to take into account parent gender when considering the source of influence on girls' antisocial behavior. Although previous research has demonstrated that observing maternal perpetration of intimate partner violence is associated with higher levels of child aggression than is observation of paternal violence (Moretti, Obsuth, Odgers, & Reebye, 2006; Ulman & Straus, 2003), given the salience and importance of mother-daughter relationships in girls' lives, there are reasons to suspect that maternal influences would be particularly important for understanding the developmental psychopathology of girls' aggression.

These predictions were tested in a sample of adolescent female offenders at high risk of aggressive and antisocial behavior, recruited from a residential treatment center when they were between 13 and 19 years of age and assessed at three time points over a 5-year period. As predicted, the results show that exposure to maternal perpetration of intimate partner violence is associated concurrently with girls' aggression toward their

own dating partners and that this association is mediated by appraisals of angry rejection sensitivity. However, prospective analyses confirmed that only mothers' aggression toward partners was predictive of daughters' aggression toward partners in young adulthood, with only indirect associations with rejection sensitivity. Strikingly, the investigators were able to demonstrate that these effects were unique to observing maternal, and not paternal, domestic violence and were independent of any variance accounted for by co-occurring child abuse victimization at the hands of either mothers or fathers.

The implication of attachment theory in the interpretation of these results raises a number of intriguing questions for future research on girls' delinquency. Mothering is inherently a gendered enterprise (Chodorow, 1989) and the fact that their primary caregivers (Hendy et al., 2003) and the figures children identify at top of their attachment hierarchies (Rosenthal & Kobak, 2010) are typically female suggests that the intersections among attachment relationships, gender role socialization, and female violence may be ripe for investigation. Attachment theorists have pointed toward the dilemma of the child exposed to maternal aggression, which activates the attachment system and need for proximity-seeking while at the same time serving as the source of threat (Lyons-Ruth & Jacobvitz, 2008; Main & Hesse, 1990). One defensive maneuver that might provide children with a method of emotional survival in the face of that kind of threat is to identify with the aggressor and to internalize the abusers' role (Cicchetti & Howes, 1991). When the abusive parent is the mother, this might be a process that is especially salient for girls, who look toward their same-sex parent for information relevant not only to their internal working models of self and other but also to their developing gender role. As gender roles consolidate over the course of adolescence, girls may take very much to heart the lessons they have learned from internalizing their aggressive mothers' ways of being in intimate relationships and come to view violence not only as permissible and expected but, ironically, as an integral dimension of their femininity. Although stereotypes suggest that identification with violence is the purview of masculinity, qualitative data instead indicate that, particularly within certain subcultures and rough environments in which girls are growing up hard, being "tough" is highly valued among girls, and proactively perpetrating against others—including dating partners—is a way of demonstrating that toughness (Kerig et al., 2010).

## LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Taken together, the contributions to this special section underscore the importance of attending to the interpersonal context in which girls' delinquency arises. The studies presented here advance our understanding of the role of romantic relationships in promoting persistence of antisocial behavior during the transition from adolescence to young adulthood and also point to ways in which interventions attending to those relationships might have a role in promoting desistence. These studies also elucidate underlying mechanisms by which negative experiences in the family of origin might translate into interpersonal dysfunction among adolescent girls, which may act as a catalyst, potentiator, and further consequence of engagement in delinquency and relationships with delinquent boys. Given the dynamic interrelations among these variables, valuable directions for future research will be to examine transactional associations between the characteristics of aggressive girls, their friends, romantic partners, and the qualities of their relationships. As Zahn-Waxler and Polanichka (2004) suggest, understanding girls' delinquency is a matter of "all things interpersonal" (p. 48).

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