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Introduction: Observational investigations of adolescent romantic relationships

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The importance of directly observed interaction has been documented in numerous studies of parent-adolescent, adolescent-peer, and adult marital relationships. Observational investigations focused on adolescent romantic relationships have recently received attention from researchers around the world coinciding with the current burgeoning field of adolescent development in general. In 2004, we organized the first symposium focused on observational investigations of adolescents' communications in their romantic relationships at the Society for Research on Adolescence conference in Baltimore, Maryland. This symposium included the empirical work of five different research laboratories as well as a thoughtful discussion facilitated by Joseph Allen that inspired lively audience participation and generated enthusiastic interest in the investigation of adolescent couples' interactions. Four years later, we bring you the first published special issue focused on empirical investigations of the observed interaction of adolescent romantic couples. This issue includes the work of eleven different research programs located throughout the world who report on their innovative observational investigations of adolescent romantic relationships. We also provide a final integrative analysis of the body of papers presented in this special issue and suggest avenues for future investigations at the end of the issue. We hope that this special issue will make an important contribution to the study of adolescents with implications for future research and intervention.

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