Chapter 5
Relationships

Humans are born into relationships. We have a strong need to belong to others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), making personal relationships a vital aspect of human life (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000). Relating and being in relationship are primary conditions of human development including development of certain brain structures and neuronal density. Humans develop not only language and social competencies in relationships, but also the ability to act in a goal-directed manner, the ability to steer, control, and regulate behavior, to monitor and reflect on their behavior, and to develop emotional competencies.

Good relationships are beneficial for people. There is a well-documented association between satisfying relationships and physical health (e.g., Berkman, 1995; Myers, 1999). Conversely, relationships can be detrimental during the transition to adulthood and other times in life (Valach et al., 2006a). When relationships are good, they can be important resources during periods of change such as the entry into adulthood. Individuals are more likely to successfully navigate life transitions if they are able to rely on others for support (Galambos, Barker, & Krahn, 2006; Holahan, Valentiner, & Moos, 1994).

Much of the literature on relationships during the transition to adulthood focuses on what relationships "do" for youth or what youth "do" to relationships. Although the research is informative, it yields information about single individuals' behavior rather than understanding relationships. Here, action theory is useful because it focuses our attention on the ways in which two or more people engage over both the mid-term and long-term. It also helps us understand relationships as joint projects and careers. Joint relationship projects can be about, occur within, and serve and are served by family (see Chapter 8), romantic partnerships (see Chapter 11), friendships, or with co-workers. Joint relationship projects are not defined solely by the a priori intentions of their individual members, they are defined by social and communicative processes in which actions, intentions, and goals occur.

This chapter is about the processes that are found across different relationships including relationships during the transition to adulthood. We begin this chapter by describing relationships in the tradition of Hinde (1979) and how this view is consistent with the action theory used throughout this book. We then consider how relationships change through expectancy violations, look at

the associations between communication and relationship, describe how power resides in relationships, describe how actions within a transition project are often impacted by the relationship projects, and illustrate these processes through a case study.

During the transition to adulthood, familial and peer relationships change due to contextual factors such as youth leaving formalized schooling, beginning full-time work, or reaching the age of majority. The people around youth also experience changes. Parents are no longer legal guardians and may help their children leave home and develop projects enabling them to set up their own residences. Peer relationships may alter as young adults look toward establishing longer-term partnerships. Relationships also change because of what happens in them, that is, they are ongoing constructive processes and not expressions of given physical, personal, or social determinants. In other words, during the transition to adulthood relationships are uniquely influenced by, and include, constructive processes and contextual factors, but these relationships also share some characteristics with other interpersonal relationships. These characteristics are described in the next section. These descriptions cut across various types of personal relationships so that we establish the basis for understanding relationships broadly. However, we also consider some of the unique situations faced by those involved with someone in the process of entering adulthood.

Relationship

This chapter and two other chapters in this book describing specific types of relationships, Chapters 8 and 11, are concerned with personal relationships. Personal relationships are distinct from formal relationships. Hinde (1979) suggests that the distinction can be made on the basis of the knowledge the social partners have of one another. In formal relationships, the behaviors of the participants are linked to different values, goals, norms, rules, conventions, and purposes than it is the case in personal relationships. The membership in such a relationship is determined by positions or roles in the society. In formal relationships, the behaviors of the participants are determined by the positions or roles and the intended actions can be performed by or with any person entitled for this role in the society or social organization. Thus, the formal relationship comprises a series of individual and joint actions and projects; however, the relationship is tightly associated with the position or function in society or an organization (and not primarily to the person holding the position). The relationship thus can be transferred easily to another person obtaining this position. In contrast, personal relationships between two people who are known to each other are comprised of actions also over an extended period of time but are directed at the persons due to their personal identity. The relationship does not transfer easily to another person. The type of relationship goals, its participants, as well as the communication community connected with the relationship help distinguish formal and personal relationships.

To understand personal relationships, we turn to Robert Hinde's seminal work. Hinde (1979) describes a personal relationship as a series of interactions across time between two individuals who are known to each other; relationships involve behavioral, cognitive, and affective aspects. Relationship is also when we know that this encounter is not the last one and that there are others to come, reflecting the participants' intentions. This description fits well with the action theory that provides the framework for this book, which sees actions as the integration of manifest actions, subjective and the social processes. We begin first with the behavioral aspects of relationships or actions.

The actions between people are the building blocks of personal relationships (Hinde, 1979, 1997; Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997). Although relationships are comprised of series of actions between people, single actions between people are not relationships. If actions are unrelated to one another, the actions do not constitute a relationship (Hinde, 1979) or relationship project. Linked sets of actions between people over an extended period provide a history that, in turn, contributes toward the development of expectations for future interactions together (Hinde, 1997; Hinde & Stevenson-Hinde, 1987). The connection between action and relationship is revealed by the following youth, talking about the role of going out on dates (action) in maintaining the quality of the relationship that she has with her romantic partner:

> Oftentimes the relationship just gets thrown on the back burner. So, it was really nice when we started putting dates together. So we spend every Saturday together, which is really nice. . . . I always find whenever I'm starting to feel lukewarm about the relationship, as soon as I actually spend some quality time with it, it totally rekindles whatever we've had. Yeah, so that's nice.

It is evident from this young woman's description of her experience that action is distinct from the relationship itself, and yet the relationship is formed and maintained by the couple's actions. There are intentions for the next encounter as well as intentions reaching beyond it. Although we have quoted information from one person in the relationship, we may be able to suggest that this couple communicates about their relationship, not only about the next actions. They may construct a relationship as a topic and a process. They may somehow agree on the definition and understanding of the relationship, develop a set of actions that they usually perform and a set of rules which guide their joint and individual actions. They may adopt some norms addressing what is permissible and what not for them as a couple and as individuals. They may also develop joint ideas of which other projects are agreed upon, which are desirable, and which should or should not be pursued. These ideas can mirror the conventions, rules, and norms of their relationship but are not independent from social conventions, rules, and norms of other social processes and the particular society. Additionally, individuals come to expect their partners to act in a certain way because of past interactions. However, often partners substitute their knowledge of past interactions by their wishes and ideas about how they want this relationship to be and how they want their partner to behave. Over time, the accumulated sets of actions contribute to expectations that the *relationship* will

likely continue into the future. At that point, the relationship becomes the context for interactions (Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997) or joint project.

In action-theoretical terms relationships (Young et al., 1996, 2002) we can view Hinde's (1979) notion of relationships as joint projects. They emerge from series of joint actions over time, which, in turn, contribute to partners anticipating future interactions (Hinde, 1979, 1997; Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997). Joint projects are series of joint actions over a medium term (Young et al., 1996, 2002). Joint relationship projects may become career-like long-term processes. Careers are more complex and longer term than projects. They are more embedded in the societal and organizational forms and resources. An example of a relationship career is a long-term friendship in which partners invest considerable time and energy toward maintaining and revitalizing across several decades. Relationships between parents and their young adult children may also transform into careers. For example, a mother and a daughter (aged 17 years) spent time together planning volunteer activities, going for walks, and cooking together. The mother and daughter were promoting the daughter's transition from high school to university and growing independence in daily tasks, however, these transitions to adulthood processes were secondary to the relationship project. The relationship superseded the transition project and appeared to be developing as part of a career for this mother and daughter.

Expectations and Expectation Violations

The development of expectations for the future of relationships and relationship partners points to one of the many ways that cognitions and affect are aspects of relationships. Hinde (1979) notes that people in a relationship do not act toward each other on the basis of current or present perceptions. They act in the present in accordance with what is expected next (next moment, next week, next year) in interactions and what they assume is the goal of relationship. These expectations are built upon the history of interactions in this relationship as well as in other relationships and upon the desired aims of the relationship. This means that action and projects have a feed forward as well as a feedback dimension. Additionally, actions are goal-directed and intentional. A goal is an expected, anticipated, or desired state or a process at the end of an action. Thus, expectations in a relationship are linked to the goal systems of the participants as well as of the couple in relationship. This important extension of the expectation concept suggests that relationships are not repetitions of the past events.

Expectations that partners will act in a certain way and that the relationship will continue in the future are not always met (e.g., Collins & Luebker, 1994). That is, partners sometimes act in ways that are incongruent with past experiences and present expectations. This is particularly evident during periods of rapid change of one or both partners (Collins, 1997). Building on Hinde's model, Collins (1995,

1997) suggested that expectancy violations could lead to realignment of the relationship. The violation could be of a convention of a particular relationship convention (e.g., "what we usually do or not do"), rules (e.g., "what is or is not desirable"), or norms (e.g., "what is or is not forbidden and what is negatively sanctioned"). The experience of an expectancy violation elicits cognitions and emotions (e.g., surprise, anger, anxiety) which then steer one or both partners toward altering expectations or changing behaviors. It also can elicit changes in the climate of the relationship, which then leads the couple to change goals, behavior, or some other standards of the relationship. Expectancy violations are not necessarily negative experiences, nor do they necessarily generate conflict. Individuals may violate expectations by engaging in neutral or positive behaviors or actions (Collins, 1997). Realignment of cognitions or behaviors diminishes the incongruence between partners and the anxiety provoked by the expectancy violation. Realignment also contributes toward maintaining the relationship because it allows for transformation (Collins, 1995, 1997). Although not part of the model proposed by Collins, it is reasonable to suggest that expectancy violations that cannot be accommodated will contribute to deterioration of the relationship, particularly if the expectancy violations stem from behavior that is experienced in a negative way.

For example, difficulty in accommodating expectations was evident in one couple participating in a study of joint action in youths' romantic relationships. This couple, undergraduate students in a serious dating relationship, was engaged in a project to "balanc[e] aspirations for a life together with making progress in our education and careers." Despite efforts to find a workable balance, the couple split up in the middle of their research involvement, at least in part because they were unable to reconcile the young man's expectations for a family and having children in the near future with the young woman's desire to pursue advanced education. In this case, failure to accommodate to the differing expectations, developing a mid-term and long-term joint goal, attending to individual goals, and accompanying actions (e.g., choosing to prioritize schoolwork over spending time with the other member of the couple) resulted not only in a deterioration of the relationship, but also to its termination.

Relationship and Context

Relationships are not series of joint actions isolated from the surrounding social context or culture. In Chapter 10 we describe culture as "a field of action" (Boesch, 1991, p. 29). This field of action is inducing and controlling joint actions, and is continuously changed by the actions of the field. This field of action co-constructs with relationship partners, the criteria, and other parameters for relationships. Criteria include the eligibility for relationships, the beginning, course, and ending among many other features of relationship actions, projects, and careers. Criteria include the ease with which relationships can be dissolved. Across cultures, we find that some relationships are more readily dissolved than others. Those that

are pressed to be maintained by the culture and relationship partners are closed relationships. Closed relationships are those for which eligibility is not achieved but ascribed, and thus the entry in such a relationship is partly non-voluntary (Berscheid, 1986; Murstein, 1970). Such relationships are generally quite stable (Laursen & Collins, 1994; Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997) for several reasons. It could be because their dissolving could be tied to a negative social sanction or because there is a strong emotional involvement based on childhood experiences. Examples of closed relationships are parent–child, conjugal, or sibling relationships. The criteria for these relationships are bound in cultural artifacts such as kinship norms and laws (Laursen & Collins, 1994), and therefore are more often maintained by the social partners and through constraints imposed by the surrounding social context. Open relationships are voluntary and are formed, and transformed with much more flexibility than closed relationships (Laursen & Collins, 1994; Laursen & Jensen-Campbell, 1999). Friendships or early romantic relationships are examples of open relationships. However, with time and investment, friendship or romantic partners and the people around them may tend to view the friendship or romantic relationship as closed and even go so far as to declare it closed through public signals (e.g., marriage) (Laursen & Jensen-Campbell, 1999). Declaration of a relationship as closed is a signal that the partners are intentionally jointly acting in a way that will make the relationship endure over a long period of time. Such a declaration is an outward sign of an exclusive joint relationship project or career.

Communication

A fundamental process in relationships is communication. Relationships cannot occur without communication. However, relationships and communication are not synonymous. We show this by distinguishing how communication and relationship intersect.

Communication is the means by which people construct and maintain their relationships (Baxter, 2004; Sillars & Vangelisti, 2006). Although we describe relationships as involving intentional goal-directed series of actions between two people, communication is more than goal-directed messages constructed for the purposes of achieving goals (Burleson, Metts, & Kirch, 2000). This is because communication is constitutive (e.g., Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Mead, 1934; Pearce, 1989). That is, communication defines and constructs personal relationships and the individuals in the relationships. For example, a mother and a son discuss how to rearrange and clean some living space in the house. The following excerpt from their conversation illustrates how the topic of cleaning a room is the construction of relationship boundaries.

Parent: Did you try my plan of recycle, give away?
Youth: No I didn't.
Parent: Do you see that could work?

Youth:	Yeah it could.
Parent:	I would like that room to be empty to the point where Melinda could clean it tomorrow. Is that feasible? If I went and helped you today. . .
Youth:	No. No, you're not gonna come and help me because when you help me, you sit down and you point to stuff and say, put that away, put that away.
Parent:	What if I helped. . .
Youth:	And to be perfectly frank, it's irritating.

This mother and son not only are negotiating boundaries, but they are also constructing who each person is becoming through their dialogue. In this case, the mother feels she is trying to "give him some respect for being an adult" and, in doing so, positions herself to become a mother of an adult son who knows how to be responsible for physical space in the home. However, just as the mother is trying to help her son be more independent, she is proposing a joint action that the son experiences as independence threatening. So she is saying one thing and doing the exact opposite. Nonetheless, this strategy is functional in some way. The son is able to resist his mother's action and thus assert his independence. He attempts to portray himself as an adult and, through his communication, make himself an equal partner with his mother. The mother and son would not be becoming who they are if they were not engaged in this type of joint action together or if they were to have a conversation with other people. The two are shaped and being shaped by the way they present themselves to each other as well as their shared communication process.

Over time, relationship partners create a set of communication practices which create what some researchers call a relational culture (Burleson et al., 2000). This relational culture is in line with our description of culture in Chapter 10. Relationship partners are, over time, creating and being transformed by their communication practices and actions. In due course, relationships emerge as unique and non-predictable (Lollis, 2003). They are less causal and more of an intentional and emergent process. But relationships are not so unique that they are incomprehensible to others. Relationship partners draw their communication practices from the larger culture in which they are embedded but their joint actions create variations that are unique to the dyad (Sillars & Vangelisti, 2006). For example, joint actions contributing to the creation of unique communication include the construction of special vocabularies that symbolize the relationship (Baxter, 1987).

As we have already noted, communication contributes to and it is important to the construction of the relationship, but we cannot assume that it is the same as the relationship. Even when relationship partners are not meeting or communicating, they are involved in constructing meaning for the relationship through reflexive processes. For example, relationship partners may separately think about their relationship using processes (e.g., thinking about alternative relationships, satisfaction with the relationship) that either reinforce or diminish their commitment to the relationship.

Power

The transition to adulthood has often been associated with transformations in the parent–child relationship from a generally vertical power relationship to a more equitable or horizontal arrangement (Russell, Pettit, & Mize, 1998). What does the change in power relations mean during the transition to adulthood? To understand this change in power relations, it is critical to first outline what we mean by power.

Power is often considered to be a resource that resides within a person (for example, the classic description by French & Raven, 1959). But individuals do not have power just because they have resources – there has to be someone to have power "over". For this reason, Emerson (1962) suggested that "power is a property of the social relation; it is not an attribute of the actor." (p. 32). He also proposed that dependence of one person provides the basis for the other person's power. For example, if a youth depends on a parent for financial resources, the parent has some power over the youth. But that same parent likely depends on the youth for love and fulfillment of the parent–child relationship which provides the youth with some power as well (Kuczynski, 2003). Both partners have power in the relationship because they are mutually dependent upon one another. Drawn from Young and colleagues' (2006) transition to adulthood study, the following sequence of conversation involves a mother who is trying to convince her daughter of the need to be responsible with money when the daughter leaves for university. This conversation illustrates the way that resources and withdrawal of love can be used to exert power in the relationship:

Parent:	And, I think it's better to figure out exactly how much money you'll need per month. Like, who, and who's gonna pay for your flights to come back, and when are you gonna come back [cut off]
Youth:	Well, if you wanna see me, then I'll come back. If you don't, then I'll stay there.
Parent:	Well [cut off]
Youth:	So if you want me to come, you can pay for it. If you don't [cut off]
Parent:	Yeah, I know.
Youth:	Want me to come, then I'll stay there, I don't care. I'm not flying myself home. I'll just stay there the whole time. I really don't care.

From an action-theoretical perspective, power dynamics are observed by considering the goals for actions. Goals which are founded upon dependence on another person will reveal power dynamics. For example, a parent's support of his or her child to gain employment might be founded upon a goal of feeling successful as a parent. The youth has power over the parent because the parent is dependent upon the youth gaining a feeling of success.

So why do power arrangements in parent–child relationships change during youths' transition to adulthood? Youths' resources change. Over time, they are able

to supply their own needs in certain areas of their lives. This means that youths depend on their parents for reasons that are distinct from prior periods of their lives. One example is in the area of finances, where the dependency often shifts from one where a child expects the parent to provide not only for their food and shelter but also for toys and entertainment, to one where a young adult is employed but continues to require an adult with an established credit history to act as a cosigner for things such as student and car loans, and renting an apartment. Although parents retain some power, for example, having the ability to refuse to cosign for a loan, and remain responsible should the youth default on their loan, the parents' ability to dictate what apartment, or vehicle or educational path the youth should pursue is diminished by the youth's independent source of income. Power relationships also change as youths develop satisfactory bounded, reliable, and secure sense of themselves, and can cope with patronizing suggestions without feeling hurt and threatened.

Power relations and the link between power and dependency are evident in other kinds of relationships during the transition to adulthood. The experience of one young adult dating couple in a post-secondary education program illustrates this sense of powerlessness due to dependency on the partner within the context of a romantic relationship, wishing, at the same time, to be independent. This couple had begun discussing future plans for marriage and careers, but the woman felt as if she could not proceed with considering her future work or need to contribute to the household income until the man's plans became more firmly established. She felt frustrated and somewhat helpless because of this,

> We'd always talked about, as soon as you finish school, go back to . . . to work, but I . . . don't really know what he planned on working as. Whether he's just gonna continue being a landscaper like he's done all these years . . . or would he want to get started in his career as a film-maker.

Her sense of powerlessness and frustration were exacerbated by their different attitudes toward employment:

> He's like very particular about what he likes, and what he doesn't like, and . . . you know. If, there's a job, you know, it's like, there's an easy job, but he, he won't do it just because it's easy money, it's like, you know, he thinks it, through and it has to match with like his values and stuff, and I'm not [like that]. Pretty much, like, if there was a job that, I wasn't really interested, like, you know, I don't know like, cleaning bathrooms and it paid well, I would take it. But he wouldn't.

Thus, power is situated in the dependence of partners on each other. In romantic partnerships and friendships, power is not being transformed as it is expected in parent–child relationships during the transition to adulthood. Nonetheless, the same dynamics and principles hold across relationships with power situated in the relationship rather than within individuals.

Case Example

Amelia, a single mother working as a hairdresser, lived with her son, Jordon. Jordon was in his last year of high school. When he is not in school, Jordon works for his father's business. Jordon has older siblings who are now living on their own. Jordon is the last child to enter adulthood.

In the spring of Jordon's last year of high school, Amelia and Jordon talked about what might happen in the following year. They were engaged in a joint educational/career development project. Conversations related to the project were respectful and infused with humor. They spoke to one another with ease while addressing important issues related to Jordon's educational options for the following year. Amelia believed it was important to provide Jordon with the security of living at home while he attended college. She said, "It will be easier for him if he finishes his education and has a profession before moving out of the house." In addition, Amelia wanted Jordon to focus more on his studies because "being out there without education will be harder for him." Jordon wanted to finish high school but was not entirely sure of the next step in his path toward gaining higher education.

By late spring, Amelia took on a second job to help pay off her debts. The second job, working in retail, was in the evening hours so she was rarely at home. Jordon, a very sociable person, felt lonely and wanted people around to talk to. He felt lonely and angry because there was nothing to do at home. Rather than spending most evenings home alone, Jordon moved to his father's home. The change in work schedules and residential arrangements limited the number of opportunities for conversations between Amelia and Jordon.

The limited interactions bothered Amelia because the ability to talk with Jordon also meant she held some influence. She particularly wanted to influence Jordon's decisions about education and career. Jordon, although wanting his mother's support, found that not having his mother around meant that he had learned how to be more independent at an important time in his life. He began to feel solely responsible for finishing the current phase of his schooling rather than relying on his mother pushing him to work hard. But Jordon failed some courses in his final year of high school. This meant that all of Amelia's plans for Jordon to gain more education while living at home were put on hold.

Jordon's failure at school was met with Amelia initiating discussions about education, "Okay . . . we have to talk about your education – what you're doing now in your schooling – how you're doing – what your plans are – because this is your last year in the school – the high school – so I want to know – if you're [unclear] at the end of the year what your plans are. . ." But Jordon felt frustration because he felt his mother was asking him for information that she already had. He began to use sarcasm or change the topic to avoid engaging with his mother. Amelia felt that her expressions of worries and fears about her son's future were expressions of concern that would help her regain the closeness they once had.

Over the summer and fall months, Jordon and Amelia attended mass together on Sundays and occasionally talked on the telephone. Increasingly, however, Jordon felt irritated by his mother's efforts to guide him. Amelia worried for Jordon's

well-being, "Like he's – he's avoiding to talk about how he's doing – I doubt it that he's doing good . . . his body language – and he's not – speaking like . . . he doesn't look at me . . . and he tried to avoid . . . it's a sign that he's not doing that well in school – so I'm kind of sad there . . . because he's pretending that he's doing well."

The change in the frequency of contact between Amelia and Jordon did not provide the impetus for the deterioration of their relationship. Although joint actions are the foundation of relationships, by the time parents and children have lived together for almost two decades, they have established a long history of joint actions. Reducing the number of joint actions will not, by itself, generate tension in the relationship. However, there was incongruence in expectations and strategies to develop their relationship. Jordon expected his mother to be around the home and support him. When she went to work at night, Jordon became lonely, felt deprived of the traditional way their relationship functioned. Thus, he elected to live at his father's house where he could join in family interactions. Amelia did not expect Jordon to live elsewhere because he had previously only lived with her. Amelia also felt she lost influence because Jordon's father had more frequent opportunities for input regarding school and work. The changes in Amelia and Jordon's daily lives were not congruent with their expectations of and goals for one another. The difficulty in adjusting to the changes, and resetting new expectations and goals as well as the appropriate strategies to achieve them, may have contributed to the deteriorating quality of interactions. Jordon wanted to take responsibility for his life and no longer wanted his mother's input. Amelia wanted to influence Jordon's future because, like many parents, she wanted him to be financial secure during his adult life. She may have underestimated the role of emotional support. Jordon's power, in this case, was Amelia's desire to be influential. Amelia had diminished power in the relationship because Jordon had found more opportunities for social contact at his father's house and was receiving social support from his girlfriend.

Although both wanted a positive future for Jordon's educational/career development project, they each began to have different expectations about steering and controlling the project. They also began to find that their expectations of one another were incongruent with current actions. There was little accommodation of emerging differences in expectations of the relationship or the differences in expectations of the ongoing educational/career development project. They were unable to interpret and understand each other goals. Without adjustment to each other, the relationship was deteriorating. Interestingly, Amelia and Jordon did not change the focus of their joint project to a relationship project. Rather, the joint educational/career development project carried on but with difficulty because of the conflict in the relationship.

Conclusion

In summary, Hinde's (1979, 1997) description of relationships maps well onto the action-theoretical perspective (Young et al., 1996, 2002) that informs the foundation

of this book. Relationships are sets of joint goal-directed actions over a period of time between people who are known to each other and connected by joint goals. Past interactions and the anticipated future states and processes, that is, goals, inform what happens in the present. In the present, internal processes (expectations) steer actions.

Discrepancies between expectancies and present experiences contribute to realignment of cognitions and behaviors, which accommodate transformation and preservation of the relationship; expectancy violations that cannot be accommodated may contribute to the deterioration of the relationship. During counseling with youth (and their relational partners if available), it may be useful to use self-confrontation procedures (see Chapter 15) to gain insight into expectancy violations. It is in the discrepancy between current actions and expectations that violations emerge. Self-confrontation procedures may also support clients' transformation of expectations and goals and, in turn, the preservation of the relationship. It enables the partners to explain their own expectations, goals, feelings, and any other cognitions and emotions which occur during a relationship action and of which they may not be fully conscious. The networks of projects we all engage in and their connections to specific actions are complex. We also are not fully aware of them. Clarifying what we want and trying to reduce the number of projects the action serves is often helpful, as mindfulness interventions teach us. Thinking about the goals, in regard to external and internal end states and processes of the other person is a very helpful tool for developing, maintaining, or transforming a relationship.

Partners and the social context in which the relationship is embedded endow meanings on the relationship. Meanings include how easily the relationship may be dissolved. People are loath to leave closed field relationships due to the social pressures and norms to refrain from ending the relationships, as relationship are not only personal but also social ventures. As such, these relationships may supersede other projects such as career development projects. Youth and their relationship partners may temporarily or permanently abandon some projects in order to focus on and preserve their relationship. Once the relationship project is stabilized, youth and their partners may attend to other projects.

Relationships may be the means by which other projects are pursued such as career or work (see Chapter 8). Thus, the maintenance of the relationship project is important for the pursuit of other projects. But other projects may also be the way in which relational partners are engaged together. Take, for example, a parent and youth who worked for several months together investigating various universities for the purposes of selecting a career path for the youth. The project of selecting a career path was facilitated by a relationship characterized by good relationship skills and communication. But the relationship was also enhanced by the joint pursuit of a long-term goal. That is, the parent and youth enjoyed investigating university programs and visiting campuses together. The joint actions related to the career development project were rooted in the relationship but also part of the relationship project. There is a synergistic association between relationship projects and other projects. Mindful attention to the intersections between relationship projects and

other projects during counseling will assist in understanding the goals and actions of youth and their relational partners.

Power, from an action theory approach, does not reside within a person but within relationships. Helping clients understand how power resides in relationships rather than in another person may help them navigate frustrating impasses. Here, again, self-confrontation procedures may be useful for observing what clients "want" from their partners during communicative acts. Understanding what they want from each other will help illuminate power struggles which can then be addressed in counseling.

Personal relationships are central to human life (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Reis et al., 2000) and therefore the transition to adulthood. Relationship projects are more often super-ordinate in relation to other projects, particularly those with parents or intimate partners. Thus, counseling with clients who are entering adulthood will likely involve work on, or about, relationships, as the transition to adulthood is a joint process.