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One of the most dramatic developments in adolescence is the onset of romance. The emergence of romantic relationships introduces adolescents to a key interpersonal context that will continue throughout the life span to be an important, often central, component of social well-being. Little research has explicitly examined how social anxiety—a prevalent problem in adolescence—influences the development of romantic behaviors in adolescence, but existing studies strongly suggest that it is linked to impairments in both romantic behaviors and the interpersonal environment in which they emerge. We begin by describing the nature and developmental significance of adolescent romantic relationships and then discuss how social anxiety affects, and is affected by, them.

Nature of Romantic Relationships in Adolescence

Romantic relationships in adolescence are a normative aspect of development, whose prevalence in the USA rises with age. By age 13, over one-third of adolescents have had a romantic relationship, and by age 17, over 70 % have done so (Carver et al. 2003). Although relationships tend to be short-lived in early adolescence, they increase in length over time (Carver et al. 2003), as well as in depth. In early adolescence, relationships are characterized by affiliation and companionship rather than intimacy (Shulman and Scharf 2000). As adolescence

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progresses, teens are more likely to engage in dyadic dating that involves higher levels of intimacy and closeness, deeper mutual feelings, and more extensive sexual activity (Connolly and Goldberg 1999; Shulman and Scharf 2000). By late adolescence, teens' romantic relationships also include caretaking and caregiving functions and begin to resemble what we typically think of as adult dyadic relationships (Furman and Wehner 1994). In addition, over time, youth spend more time with romantic partners and, by late adolescence, report greater closeness with their romantic partners than with their best friends or their parents (Kuttler and La Greca 2004; Laursen 1996).

The rates of engagement in sexual intercourse among never-married US adolescents show a similar developmental progression to romantic relationships. Approximately 15 % of youth have engaged in sexual intercourse before age 15 years, and rates rise to nearly 70 % by age 19 (Abma et al. 2004). Not surprisingly for most adolescents, dating activities and romantic relationships provide the context for engaging in sexual activities (Kuttler and La Greca 2004).

Adolescent romantic relationships are adaptive in numerous ways that may benefit development and emotional functioning, particularly with regard to identity development and the capacity for intimacy (see Collins 2003; Furman and Shaffer 2003). For instance, high-quality romantic relationships are associated with positive affect, positive self-worth, and a sense of social competence (Connolly and Konarski 1994; Harter 1999; Larson and Richards 1998; Masten et al. 1995; Zimmer-Gembeck et al. 2001, 2004). In addition, affectionate intimate behaviors (e.g., kissing, hugging, holding hands) are associated with positive family relationships, romantic relationship satisfaction, and commitment (e.g., Welsh et al. 2005; Williams et al. 2008).

Adolescent romantic relationships also provide learning experiences that can set the stage for romantic functioning in adulthood. For example, lower romantic competence is associated with early adolescent girls making stronger predictions that they will be unlikely to marry and also with greater engagement in potentially risky sexual activity (Davila et al. 2009a). In addition, higher-quality romantic relationships in adolescence are associated with positive relationships and commitment in early adult relationships (Seiffge-Krenke and Lang 2002), as well as with more adaptive relationship processes (e.g., better conflict resolution and caregiving) in young adulthood (Madsen and Collins 2011).

Adolescent romantic relationships can, however, be a significant challenge or stressor that contributes to psychosocial distress. Romantic relationships are associated with strong negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, anger, jealousy, and depression) among high school youth (Larson et al. 1999). In addition, most adolescents will face specific relationship stressors, including breakups, and interactions with a romantic partner that may involve criticism, conflict, and pressure. Some adolescents will engage in risky sexual activity (e.g., failure to use condoms, multiple sexual partners) that results in negative outcomes (e.g., unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections), and they will face or engage in relationship aggression. Romantic experiences also can teach young people dysfunctional beliefs about relationships and maladaptive interpersonal behaviors, which they

may repeat over time (Waldinger et al. 2002). Not surprisingly then, adolescent romantic relationships and what happens in them are associated with numerous types of psychopathology, including externalizing problems, depression, and anxiety disorders (for a review, see Davila et al. in press).

Adolescent Romantic Relationships and Social Anxiety

Research on associations between social anxiety and romantic processes in adolescence is strikingly limited. This represents a significant shortcoming of the literature, as there are strong empirical and conceptual reasons to believe that social anxiety would influence the development of romantic behaviors. Social anxiety is fundamentally an interpersonal problem, and romantic relationships become an increasingly salient interpersonal context during adolescence. Fear of negative evaluation is a core aspect of social anxiety disorder, and beginning to date inherently exposes youth to interpersonal scrutiny. Thus, the emergence of dating may activate socially anxious youth' fears. In turn, social anxiety may impair the acquisition of romantic skills. We begin with a discussion of how social anxiety impairs a key context in which romantic relationships emerge—peer relationships.

Peer Dysfunction and Implications for the Emergence of Romantic Relationships

Although research explicitly examining the link between social anxiety and adolescent romantic functioning has been fairly limited, studies have clearly tied social anxiety to a variety of impairments in peer relations during adolescence (see Biggs et al. 2011; Davila et al. 2010; Starr et al. 2011), and these may in turn have implications for romantic relationships. Social anxiety is related to peer rejection (Inderbitzen et al. 1997; Vernberg et al. 1992). Peer victimization and exclusion predict social anxiety both cross-sectionally and longitudinally (La Greca and Harrison 2005; Ranta el al. 2009, 2013; Siegel et al. 2009; Storch and Masia-Warner 2004; Vernberg et al. 1992), and socially anxious youth may be more likely to be targeted with peer victimization (although evidence for the latter is somewhat mixed; Siegel et al. 2009; Storch et al. 2005; Vernberg et al. 1992). Socially anxious adolescents are also less likely to belong to high-status peer crowds (La Greca and Harrison 2005). Furthermore, adolescents with social anxiety also report fewer close friends, including friends of the opposite sex (La Greca and Lopez 1998; La Greca and Mackey 2007; Starr and Davila 2008a). Within existing peer relationships and friendships, social anxiety predicts lower perceived support, intimacy, communication, and trust, and fewer positive and more negative interactions (La Greca and Harrison 2005; La Greca and Lopez 1998; Starr and Davila 2008a). In addition, compared to non-anxious youth, socially anxious youth perceive themselves as less interpersonally competent (Starr and Davila 2008a). Disruptions in peer functioning are maintained when controlling for concurrent depressive

symptoms (Starr and Davila 2008a), suggesting that they are relatively specific to social anxiety. In sum, adolescents who are socially anxious often find themselves with fewer friends, lower quality friendships, fewer interpersonal skills, and more negative peer experiences.

These impairments in peer relations are likely to generalize to romantic contexts. Romantic relationships rely on many of the same competencies that are important to friendships (e.g., conflict management, emotion regulation, capacity for intimacy, support provision), so to the extent that socially anxious youth lack these skills, they may have difficulty navigating romantic activities. Moreover, early romantic experiences often take place directly within peer contexts. Partners are typically drawn from within social cliques, early dating activities frequently occur in mixed-sex group settings, and friends are often key sources of social support (Brown 1999; Connolly and Goldberg 1999). Thus, if socially anxious youth have fewer friendships, they may have a more difficult time finding a partner in the first place and fewer available social resources for managing the relationships that they are able to establish. Friendships also provide a setting in which interpersonal skills needed for relationships can be modeled, practiced, and mastered; in particular, other-sex friendships provide opportunities to learn how to interact with and relate to other-sex peers (Collins et al. 2009; Connolly et al. 2004; Connolly and Goldberg 1999; Zimmer-Gembeck 2002). Consequently, if social anxiety impedes the development of strong friendships (including heterosocial friendships), it may also leave the youth less developmentally prepared for the relational demands of romantic involvement. Finally, adolescents who are sensitive to stressful peer experiences, such as peer victimization and rejection, may also struggle with romantic activities, which often expose the youth to potentially anxiety-provoking circumstances. In direct support of the idea that the effects of social anxiety on platonic peer relationships generalize to romantic experiences, Hebert et al. (2013) found cross-sectional support for a mediation model in which social anxiety indirectly influenced romantic functioning via disruptions in same-sex friendships, which then predicted impairments in other-sex friendships, which was in turn associated with romantic relationship functioning.

Dating Anxiety

Among some adolescents, social fears and avoidance are relatively specific to romantic situations. *Dating anxiety* refers to worries and inhibition in mixed-sex social situations involving interaction with romantic partners or potential partners, including concerns about negative romantic evaluations (Chorney and Morris 2008; Glickman and La Greca 2004). The construct of dating anxiety is conceptually rooted in social anxiety, and social anxiety is highly correlated with but empirically distinct from dating anxiety (Glickman and La Greca 2004). For example, dating anxiety predicts dating activities beyond the contributions of social anxiety (Glickman and La Greca 2004), predicting lower engagement in dating and heterosocial friendships and fewer positive and more negative qualities within existing

romantic relationships (Glickman and La Greca 2004; La Greca and Mackey 2007). Fortunately, dating anxiety appears to decline with age (Glickman and La Greca 2004; Nieder and Seiffge-Krenke 2001), perhaps decreasing as familiarity with dating situations increases and relational skills are acquired.

Romantic Behaviors of Socially Anxious Youth

Social anxiety creates numerous barriers to the formation of romantic relationships. Avoidance of social situations, particularly those that present opportunities for negative evaluation by others (such as asking someone out or going on a date), is a core feature of social anxiety disorder. Social anxiety is also tied to difficulties with key relationship formation mechanisms, such as self-disclosure (Alden and Taylor 2004; Meleshko and Alden 1993; Papsdorf and Alden 1998), meaning that socially anxious youth who attempt to build relationships may often have trouble doing so. Finally, socially anxious individuals are often interpersonally awkward, frequently displaying self-preserving micro-behaviors that provoke rejection by others (Alden and Taylor 2004). As a consequence, they may be less sought after as romantic partners, particularly in adolescence, when the social desirability of one's dating partner has a particularly strong influence on social status and popularity (Brown 1999).

It is therefore not surprising that socially anxious adolescents report lower rates of engagement in romantic relationships and in the heterosocial situations in which they often emerge (Glickman and La Greca 2004; La Greca et al. 2011; La Greca and Harrison 2005; La Greca and Mackey 2007). This pattern is not unique to adolescence. Adults with social anxiety disorder are more likely to report never having been married (Lampe et al. 2003; Schneier et al. 1992; Wittchen et al. 1999), especially those with more severe symptoms (Hart et al. 1999). Social inhibition in childhood prospectively predicts delayed marriage (Caspi et al. 1988), and socially anxious college students report fewer interactions with the opposite sex and less sexual activity (Dodge et al. 1988; Leary and Dobbins 1983). However, the link between social anxiety and adolescent romantic involvement may be particularly important for two reasons. First, romantic interactions may be particularly triggering to socially anxious youth during adolescence simply because they are new and unfamiliar. Second, given the developmental significance of dating and other heterosocial activities during adolescence, inability or unwillingness to pursue these relationships may prevent the acquisition of important developmental skills that contribute to relational functioning throughout the life span. Cross-sectional research has already suggested that social impairments related to adolescent social anxiety seep across different types of interpersonal relationships (Hebert et al. 2013), and an important next step will be to evaluate cascading effects of interpersonal difficulties across developmental stages. For example, it would be interesting to prospectively explore whether socially anxious youth who withdraw from dating during adolescence show greater problems in their relationships later in life.

Less is known about the specific characteristics of the romantic relationships that socially anxious adolescents do manage to establish. However, evidence from the adult literature tentatively suggests that social anxiety predicts a range of problems with romantic functioning. Social anxiety is associated with poorer marital adjustment (Filsinger and Wilson 1983; Whisman 2007). Compared to non-anxious controls, romantically involved adults with social anxiety report lower intimacy, self-disclosure, and emotional expression and are more likely to attribute blame for conflicts to stable partner characteristics (Sparrevohn and Rapee 2009; Wenzel 2002). In one small study, Wenzel et al. (2005) coded videotaped conversations between socially anxious individuals and their romantic partners and found that compared to non-anxious controls, partners with social anxiety displayed more "very negative" behaviors (e.g., character assassination, kitchen sinking, "yes, but" statements; Floyd and Markman 1984) and showed overall poorer social skills. Socially anxious adults also generally display maladaptive interpersonal styles within their close relationships, including problems with assertion, self-disclosure, conflict avoidance, and avoidance of expressing emotion (Cuming and Rapee 2010; Davila and Beck 2002; Grant et al. 2007).

Although social anxiety is typically associated with interpersonal avoidance, among anxious youth who are able to establish satisfying romantic relationships, patterns of interpersonal dependence may sometimes emerge (Darcy et al. 2005). Imagine a socially anxious teen has overcome her social fears to pursue and establish a romantic relationship. She has likely had to battle her fears of negative evaluation at every step of the relationship building process, from initiating contact with her partner to establishing and fostering intimacy. She may not have many other individuals in her life who provide support and companionship and may perceive her chances of attracting another partner as limited. All together, she has invested significant effort in the relationship, relies heavily upon her partner for emotional support and companionship, and lacks confidence in her ability to initiate another relationship. These forces could easily accumulate into a powerful motivation to keep her current relationship intact, resulting in dependent behaviors. Supporting this notion, Darcy et al. (2005) provided evidence that social anxiety is associated with interpersonal dependence in romantic relationships among college students.

More research is needed to establish whether social anxiety also predicts interpersonal dependence on romantic partners at earlier ages. To the extent that it does, however, it may have implications for important relationship processes. Socially anxious teens may be more likely to self-silence in romantic relationships, withholding their opinions and thoughts to maintain the relationship, and this tendency has been linked to depression and relationship problems (Harper et al. 2006; Harper and Welsh 2007). Socially anxious teens may also have difficulty asserting themselves in sexual situations and may make risky sexual choices to preserve their relationships and avoid embarrassment (Bell 2009; Kashdan et al. 2006). Thus, although social anxiety is associated with lower levels of sexual experience overall (Leary and Dobbins 1983), it is possible that among sexually active youth, social anxiety predicts risky sex and problematic outcomes, such as unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

While some socially anxious teens may engage in self-silencing and other relationship-preserving behaviors, others may perceive their romantic relationships as safe places for them to express negative emotions that they normally keep concealed. Supporting this idea, Beck et al. (2006) found that when faced with a social threat task, socially anxious women in more satisfying relationships displayed more negative relationship behaviors. The authors suggested that for socially anxious women, satisfying relationships could function as a secure base where they can feel comfortable expressing negative feelings without fears of rejection. Unfortunately, this tendency may backfire, as another study suggested that uninhibited expression of negative emotions, although beneficial to the romantic relationships of nonsocially anxious individuals, prospectively predicts deteriorating closeness ratings among those with high social anxiety (Kashdan et al. 2007). These studies may suggest a sad irony: once socially anxious individuals finally overcome their social fears to establish closeness and security with romantic partners, they may over-rely on their partners as an outlet for their negative emotions, and this may become burdensome to their partners, ultimately provoking rejection and confirming fears of negative evaluation (not unlike the excessive reassurance-seeking model in depression; Joiner et al. 1999; Starr and Davila 2008b).

Potential Impact of Romantic Involvement on Social Anxiety

Little research has evaluated whether dating has an impact on social anxiety symptoms. On one hand, romantic relationships during early or mid-adolescence longitudinally predict depression and other maladaptive outcomes (see Davila 2008; Davila et al. in press), perhaps because they introduce challenges that young people are developmentally unprepared to manage. As anxiety and depression share core internalizing pathology (Krueger 1999), it is possible that among adolescents predisposed to anxiety, romantic stressors would lead to anxiety symptoms in addition to depression, particularly when youth make helpless attributions about the romantic events. Supporting this idea, in a 1-year follow-up of early adolescent girls, dating activities predicted significant increases in anxiety disorder symptoms (including but not limited to social phobia symptoms), controlling for comorbid disorders (Starr et al. 2012).

On the other hand, romantic relationships may offer corrective experiences to many anxious youth. Romantic activities may serve as a context in which socially anxious adolescents can confront and habituate to feared social situations, practice interpersonal skills, build self-confidence, reduce avoidance, and modify maladaptive schemas. Romantic partners can offer support and encouragement, reducing negative self-concepts and rejection fears. Indeed, in one study, socially anxious college students perceived their romantic relationships as beneficial to their psychological health (Gordon et al. 2012). Of course, negative romantic experiences may have the reverse effect, confirming rejection fears and increasing social anxiety, so the quality of the romantic relationship may be a key moderator of outcomes. However, simple exposure to romantic situations—whether or not they are overwhelmingly positive experiences—would at the very least strip them of

their unfamiliarity, and that alone may make them less threatening. Consistent with this idea, Nieder and Seiffge-Krenke (2001) followed adolescents prospectively between ages 14 and 17 and found that self-reported stress related to romantic situations declined over time, suggesting that comfort with dating activities increases along with increased exposure to romantic situations.

Social Anxiety and Same-Sex Relationships

If we know little about how social anxiety affects and is affected by adolescent heterosexual romantic relationships, we barely know anything about its implications for same-sex relationships. Sexual minorities show elevated rates of social phobia, sometimes related to (often accurate) expectations of rejection and victimization based on their sexual orientation (Gilman et al. 2001; Pachankis and Goldfried 2006; Roberts et al. 2011). Social anxiety may inhibit the romantic pursuits of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth even more that it does for heterosexual teens, given the significant stigma surrounding the formation of same-sex relationships. Many teens may not feel prepared to disclose their sexual minority status to potential partners, and many will avoid that situation by choosing to date other-sex partners (Diamond et al. 1999). Even openly gay youth may feel scrutinized as they pursue developmentally normative dating activities with same-sex partners in public arenas (especially in less tolerant communities). Some evidence suggests that social anxiety leads to sexual risk-taking among gay adolescents. Hart and Heimberg (2005) found that social anxiety predicted unprotected sex among gay male late adolescents, perhaps because socially anxious boys were focused on performance rather than safety or because they were too embarrassed to discuss condom use. More research is needed to understand how social anxiety (including stigma-related fears) interferes with the development of healthy romantic functioning among sexual minority youth.

Future Research Directions

As we have previously emphasized, research examining social anxiety within the context of adolescent romantic experiences is remarkably limited. Researchers are increasingly taking an interest in the ties between the emergence of romantic relationships and psychopathology (Davila et al. in press), and it is surprising that social anxiety, which by definition influences social processes, has been relatively neglected. This is a research area clearly ripe for exploration, with an abundance of intriguing, unanswered questions.

Social Anxiety and Basic Romantic Relationship Processes in Adolescence

One important topic that has been unaddressed in the literature is how social anxiety influences basic relationship processes and romantic milestones in adolescents. For

example, an initial stage of romantic contact is infatuation, where adolescents harbor "crushes" on potential partners (Connolly and Goldberg 1999). Many adolescents experience intense emotions and embarrassment during the infatuation stage (especially when interacting with their "crush"), and difficult emotions are often mitigated by friend support. How might these emotions interplay with social anxiety, especially for those with little peer support? In addition, do socially inhibited teens follow typical developmental trajectories in their romantic interactions (i.e., progressing from same-sex friendships to affiliative heterosocial socialization to dyadic dating and adultlike partnerships, with partners becoming an increasingly important source of support over time; Collins et al. 2009; Connolly and Goldberg 1999)? If trajectories are delayed, most of their peers may have moved forward to other stages, leaving socially anxious teens with less peer support. Or, if social anxiety prevents some adolescents from participating in early stages of dating at normative ages, do they progress immediately to dyadic dating to catch up with their peers, and if so, does the lack of exposure to the activities that set the stage for romantic involvement leave them less prepared for the relational demands of dyadic dating (see Hebert et al. 2013)? On an encouraging note, research tentatively suggests that most "late bloomers" do progress through typical stages and, unlike early daters, are not at elevated risk for internalizing disorders (Connolly et al. 2013); however, research on late-starting daters is very limited and has not specifically focused on socially anxious populations.

Moderators and Partner Factors

Another important next step will be to identify moderating variables that intensify or attenuate the association between social anxiety and romantic dysfunction. In the parallel literature on depression, several moderators have been shown to increase the link between depressive symptoms and adolescent romantic activities, including family factors (Davila et al. 2009b; Doyle et al. 2003; Steinberg and Davila 2008), attachment style (Davila et al. 2004), co-rumination (Starr and Davila 2009), pubertal timing (Stroud and Davila 2008), classroom context (Hou et al. 2013), genetic vulnerability (Starr et al. 2014), and female gender (Joyner and Udry 2000; Starr and Davila 2008c).

We expect that several factors also influence social anxiety's relationship to romantic experiences. In line with the adult literature (Hart et al. 1999), we would naturally expect the nature and severity of the social anxiety symptoms to make a difference; for example, we would not anticipate situation-bound social phobia (such as public speaking anxiety) to play a significant role in romantic functioning. Furthermore, the quality of the adolescent's non-romantic relationships likely contributes to romantic impairments. Adolescents who are able to establish at least one high-quality friendship or who have strong, communicative relationships with their family members would have a context to develop interpersonal skills and close relationship models even in the absence of romantic activities. Among romantically involved socially anxious adolescents, those with strong external relationships that provide support and companionship may be less likely to become dependent on their romantic partners and may have better support when relationships turn sour.

Romantic relationships are a two-way street, and an important and often overlooked factor is partner selection. Some youth will respond to their partner's distress with support and patience, and others will lack the capacity, maturity, or inclination to do so. It stands to reason that a more supportive partner could provide a corrective learning experience, whereas a more rejecting partner could confirm social fears and aggravate symptoms. An interesting related question is whether socially anxious youth selectively gravitate toward partners with particular characteristics. Researchers have long observed patterns of assortative mating related to psychiatric disorder and personality traits (Merikangas 1982; Merikangas and Spiker 1982), although less research has directly examined this phenomenon in socially anxious populations. If socially anxious youth are more likely to select partners who are also interpersonally withdrawn, for example, it could have multiple effects; partners may be more able to provide empathetic support and understanding for each other's fears, but they may also end up reinforcing each other's social avoidance.

Effects of Internet-Based Social Networking and Other New Technologies

Modern forms of communication and social networking provide a whole new venue for romantic contact, and these may have ups and downs for socially anxious youth. Communicating with peers, including love interests, via a computer screen or text message strips social interactions of many of their anxiety-inducing elements, potentially reducing the inhibitions of socially anxious youth. This could conceivably have numerous benefits for socially anxious adolescents, including providing more opportunities to initiate romantic contact and obtain social support (e.g., Indian and Grieve 2014; Valkenburg and Peter 2009).

Research in this area is new, and it is too early to say whether the developmental skills practiced in online interactions generalize to face-to-face relationships, but existing evidence suggests that online communication enhances adolescents' relationships, social connectedness, and general well-being (Indian and Grieve 2014; Valkenburg and Peter 2009), as well as romantic relationship qualities (Blais et al. 2008). That said, new technologies may also introduce risky or stressful experiences. For example, negative social networking experiences have been associated with adolescents' reports of social anxiety (Landoll et al. 2013). In addition, one might speculate that socially anxious teens (being eager to please) might be more susceptible to high-risk online romantic interactions (e.g., linking up with high-risk or predatory partners online, "sexting," etc.). As these technologies are new, research investigating them is correspondingly nascent; so far more studies are needed before we can understand the trade-offs of digital social networking for the romantic functioning of socially anxious youth.

Implications for Prevention and Intervention

Given the developmental salience of romantic relationships in adolescence, it is important for therapists treating socially anxious youth to assess romantic behaviors and competencies and determine how these may be influenced by anxiety pathology. Deficits or dating-specific fears may be addressed in treatment using a variety of approaches that have been developed to target general social fears and interpersonal effectiveness, including behavioral rehearsal, imaginal or in vivo exposure to feared situations, cognitive restructuring, assertiveness training, and mindfulness techniques (e.g., Albano et al. 1995; Albano and DiBartolo 2007; Beidel et al. 2000; Garcia-Lopez 2000, 2007, 2013, Garcia-Lopez et al. 2002, 2006, 2009, 2014; Hayward et al. 2000; Masia et al. 2001, 2005, 2007; Roemer and Orsillo 2010). For more details, please see Chap. 8, 12 and 13. In addition, interpersonal psychotherapy may be well suited for anxious adolescents with dating-related concerns, as this therapeutic approach acknowledges the interconnection between relationship problems and emotional functioning and directly targets interpersonal deficits and has been adapted for adolescents and for socially anxious populations (see Mufson et al. this volume, Chap. 11).

Although numerous treatment and prevention programs targeting social anxiety in adolescent populations have garnered empirical support, none of them have incorporated components specifically aimed at improving romantic relationships, and treatment development researchers should consider doing so (see Davila et al. in press). In the 1970s, researchers developed intervention protocols specifically targeting dating anxiety, using methods such as systematic desensitization, social skills training, and other behavioral techniques, and demonstrated preliminary support for their effectiveness, largely in college samples (e.g., Bander et al. 1975; Curran 1975, 1977). However, this research mostly petered out, and to our knowledge, there have been no recent attempts to update these treatments to incorporate more newly developed psychotherapeutic techniques and tailor approaches to modern audiences, nor have there been any dating anxiety interventions specifically developed for adolescents. As dating-specific anxiety is pervasive among early adolescents, prevention-based psychoeducational programs teaching romantic skills and anxiety management at a community level may help instill core romantic competencies and prevent future anxiety-related distress and impairment.

In conclusion, although they have long been marginalized in the psychological literature, researchers are increasingly recognizing the developmental significance of romantic relationships in adolescence. Social anxiety is a widespread problem during adolescence, with dramatic implications for peer functioning. Far more research is needed to understand how this key peer context—romantic relationships—influences and is influenced by the prevalent and socially impairing psychological condition of social anxiety. Better understanding of these associations may have long-term consequences for the amelioration of social anxiety symptoms and the enrichment of romantic functioning among youth.

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