The chapter is organized around three sections. To begin, the literature on peer relationships and prosocial behavior is reviewed, and mechanisms underlying peer influence are discussed. The multidimensional nature of prosocial development is apparent in this literature in several respects. First, multiple types of peer relationships have been related to prosocial behavior during adolescence. Second, multiple theoretical perspectives and processes have been proposed to explain these relations. Finally, the unique nature of peer contexts in promoting the development and displays of prosocial behavior stands in contrast to those provided by parents, teachers, schools, and communities described by others in this volume.

Next, a model for understanding adolescent prosocial behavior is presented. This explanatory model reflects the multidimensional nature of adolescent prosocial behavior and its motivational underpinnings in its integration of social cognitive models of prosocial behavior (Bandura, 1986), work on social motivation and social support (Wentzel, 2012), and self-determination theory (R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000). Specifically, the model suggests that prosocial behavior is guided by motivational self-processes (e.g., goals, self-beliefs) and contextual supports (e.g., peer relationships) and that behavioral intent in the form of prosocial goal pursuit serves as a pathway that links these processes to prosocial behavior. Finally, remaining questions and future directions for research are discussed.

Prosocial Behavior and Peer Relationships

Researchers typically have studied adolescents' prosocial behavior and involvement with peers in two ways, within the context of relationships (e.g., degree of peer acceptance by the larger peer group, membership in specific peer groups, and dyadic friendships) and within structured learning activities (e.g., cooperative and collaborative learning). The focus of discussion in the present chapter is on prosocial behavior within the context of peer relationships (see Wentzel & Watkins, 2011, for a review of work on prosocial behavior and cooperative learning). Within the domain of peer relationships research, prosocial behavior is typically assessed using peer nomination procedures (teacher nominations or ratings are also used, but less frequently). This form of assessment requires students to identify classmates who typically display specific behaviors such as being helpful and supportive, showing concern (e.g., empathy), cooperating, and sharing; some procedures ask students to rate how often each of their classmates display these types of behavior.

In this section, research on peer relationships and prosocial behavior during adolescence is briefly reviewed. Next, processes of influence are presented. Although influence is likely bidirectional, such that displays of prosocial behavior can result in the formation of positive relationships with peers, mechanisms that might explain the influence of peer relationships on prosocial behavior are the focus of discussion.

Prosocial Behavior and Peer Relations in Adolescence

Kathryn R. Wentzel

Prosocial behavior in the form of sharing, helping, and cooperating is a hallmark of social competence during adolescence. Prosocial behavior also has been related theoretically and empirically to other forms of social competence such as social acceptance and approval from peers (e.g., Bukowski & Sippola, 1996; Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pate, 1993; Wentzel, 2012) and to intellectual competencies such as academic performance (e.g., Feldhusen, Thurston, & Benning, 1970; Wentzel, 2012). In addition, researchers have identified a range of self-processes related to the development of prosocial behavior, including perspective taking, empathy, levels of moral reasoning, and affective functioning (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Eisenberg, Morris, McDaniel, & Spinrad, 2009).

Although these important correlates of prosocial behavior have been well documented, less is known about social factors that motivate adolescents to display these positive forms of behavior. Of interest for the current chapter is that social interactions with peers have been linked to a range of prosocial actions. Researchers have focused on the role of peers in facilitating the development of cognitive structures that support prosocial behavior during early childhood (e.g., Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). In contrast, work on adolescent prosocial behavior has focused more often on the motivational significance of social supports and resources afforded by peer relationships and interactions. Given that peer acceptance is tied to prosocial behavior (e.g., Wentzel, 1991; Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997; Wentzel & McNamara, 1999) and that adolescents are strongly oriented toward cultivating positive peer relationships, the role of peers in motivating prosocial behavior is likely to be especially important during this stage of development. A motivational perspective is further supported by the fact that displays of prosocial behavior tend to increase from childhood to adolescence (Eisenberg et al., 2009), even though the growth of cognitive skills that support prosocial behavior (e.g., moral reasoning, perspective taking) is relatively stable during adolescence (Eisenberg, Cumberland, Guthrie, Murphy, & Sheehan, 2005).
Research on prosocial behavior and peers has focused on multiple aspects of peer relationships. For example, researchers have documented associations between peer sociometric status and prosocial behavioral outcomes. In general, when compared with their average-status peers, popular students tend to be more prosocial (e.g., helpful, cooperative, sharing), sociable, and less aggressive, and rejected students less compliant, less self-assured, less sociable, and more aggressive and withdrawn (Newcomb et al., 1993; Parkhurst & Asher, 1992; Wentzel, 1991; Wentzel & Asher, 1995). General levels of acceptance, or being liked by peers, also have been linked positively to these same types of prosocial behavior (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura, & Zimbardo, 2000; Eisenberg, Lleww, & Pidada, 2004; Murphy, Shepard, Eisenberg, Fabes, & Guthrie, 1999; Wentzel & McNamara, 1999).

Of interest from a multidimensionality perspective is that prosocial behavior has been linked strongly and consistently to sociometric popularity (i.e., being liked) but not to popularity as indexed by peer centrality or social status (e.g., Ellis, Dumas, Mahdy, & Wolfe, 2012; Gorman, Schwartz, Nakamoto, & Mayeux, 2011; Poorthuis, Thomaes, Denissen, van Aken & de Castro, 2012). Therefore, positive forms of behavior likely result in being liked and accepted by peers but are not central to defining social hierarchies and status among youth.

Adolescent peer relationships also are studied with respect to dyadic friendships. Although friendships have been described most often with respect to their functions (Furman, 1989) and their qualities (Parker & Asher, 1993), simply having a friend at school appears to be related to positive social behavior. Children with friends tend to be more sociable, cooperative, and self-confident when compared with their peers without friends (Coleman & Byrd, 2003; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995; Wentzel, Barry, & Caldwell, 2004). Children with reciprocated friendships also tend to be more independent, emotionally supportive, altruistic and prosocial, and less aggressive than those who do not have such friendships (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996; Wentzel et al., 2004). Although speculative, the fact that having friendships that are reciprocated is related to more frequent displays of prosocial behavior implies that other qualities of friendships might be differentially related to prosocial behavior as well.

**Processes of Peer Influence**

For the most part, this evidence is based on correlational studies lacking strong bases for drawing causal inferences. Therefore, it is not clear whether positive behavioral outcomes are the result of social skill development emanating from peer interactions or from the motivational, social, and emotional benefits of having positive relationships with peers. However, it is reasonable to assume that for many children, peers have the power to influence the development and demonstrations of these competencies in a direct fashion. How then might these constructs be related to each other in theoretically meaningful ways? Is it some aspect of peer relationships that motivates social competencies, or do social competencies lead to positive social relationships and acceptance among peers?

Traditionally, theoretical explanations have focused on the broad notion that peer relationships provide opportunities for children to learn and practice cognitive skills that promote positive social outcomes. For example, Piaget (1965) argued that friendships afford a unique context for interaction and collaboration wherein children socially construct their morality of interpersonal responsibility and mutual concern. Presumably, these dyadic relationships provide a context in which conflicts can be resolved in a more egalitarian, reciprocal fashion than can be done in other relationship contexts with peers (e.g., peer groups) or with parents. In turn, these collaborative interactions motivate the development of cognitive skills such as perspective taking and moral reasoning that support prosocial forms of behavior (Kohlberg, 1986; Piaget, 1965). Youniss (1994) also has argued for a similar approach, whereby peers play a central role in the development of moral reasoning and the ability to engage in cooperative exchange.

These constructivist perspectives have provided a solid foundation for a large corpus of research on the cognitive underpinnings of prosocial behavior such as empathy and perspective taking (see Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). Most of this work has focused on the development of intellectual skills during early and middle childhood, when cognitive structures are undergoing significant developmental changes. By adolescence, however, these skills are fairly stable (Eisenberg et al., 2005). Therefore, the impact of interactions with peers is more likely to take on motivational significance by providing social and emotional supports that promote engagement in prosocial forms of behavior. In this regard, Wentzel (2005) suggests that during adolescence peers can play a central role in motivating prosocial behavior by communicating norms and expectations for behavior valued by the peer group; providing help, advice, and instruction concerning how to accomplish these expectations; and creating interpersonal climates that afford the development of strong affective bonds and a sense of emotional security (see also Ford, 1992).

Several theoretical perspectives provide insights into how these supports might provide the motivational impetus to engage in prosocial behavior. At the simplest level, social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) suggests that direct communication and instruction provides students with valuable information about what is expected and how to accomplish various tasks. Therefore, peers who convey expectations that positive social interactions are important and enjoyable are likely to lead others to form similar positive attitudes (Bandura, 1986). Although this type of support is probably provided most frequently within dyadic or small peer group interactions, the larger peer group also can be a source of behavioral standards, with group pressures providing a mechanism whereby adherence to group standards and expectations is monitored and enforced (Berger & Rodkin, 2006; also Bogg, Baillie, Anderson, & Parker, 2010).
In addition, scholars have argued that adolescents provide straightforward social cues concerning what types of behavior are appropriate and desirable by modeling positive forms of social behavior on a regular basis (e.g., Wentzel et al., 2004). In this regard, it is reasonable to assume that prosocial behavior modeled by close friends should have a relatively strong influence during adolescence, in part because adolescents tend to interact with their friends more often than with adults, they report observing their friends’ behavior with greater frequency than they do their nonfriends’ behavior (Crockett Lusoff, & Peterson, 1984), and prosocial behavior occurs more frequently between friends than between peers who are not friends (Berndt & Keefe, 1995). To strengthen the effects of modeling further, friendships typically are characterized by strong emotional bonds (Berndt & Perry, 1986), thereby increasing the likelihood that friends will imitate each other’s behavior (Bandura, 1986). This added benefit of emotional support should also lead to a sense of emotional well-being and subsequent prosocial behavior. Finally, as part of ongoing friendship interactions, a friend also is likely to reward a peer for behaving in ways that will affirm her personal qualities as well as promote the stability of the friendship.

Peers also can have a critical impact on adolescents’ affective functioning; few would argue that the need to belong and to experience a sense of relatedness with peers is a powerful motivator of behavior (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Theoretical perspectives propose that affectively close and supportive relationships can influence a wide range of competencies, primarily by promoting a positive sense of self and emotional well-being and a willingness to engage with the environment. Attachment theory principles (e.g., Bretherton, 1987) suggest that secure caregiver-child attachments result in a child’s positive sense of self, curiosity and willingness to explore, and trust in others. In turn, these outcomes can be viewed as central precursors to children’s beliefs about their efficacy to interact socially with others, beliefs about personal control, and intrinsic interest in social activities (e.g., Harter, 1978; Raider-Roth, 2003). Social support perspectives (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990) suggest that strong affective bonds and perceived support from others serve as buffers from stress and anxiety and contribute to a positive sense of emotional well-being. Finally, self-determination theory posits that a sense of positive well-being promotes efforts toward social integration and displays of socially desirable behavior (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In support of these perspectives is evidence relating positive behavioral outcomes to perceived emotional support from peers. Specifically, adolescents report that their peer cliques and crowds provide them with a sense of emotional security and a sense of belonging. In contrast, children without friends or who are socially rejected are often lonely, emotionally distressed and depressed, and suffer from poor self-concepts (Wentzel & McNameara, 1999; Wentzel et al., 2004; Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997). In addition, perceived social and emotional support from peers has been associated positively with prosocial outcomes such as helping, sharing, and cooperating and related negatively to antisocial forms of behavior (e.g., Wentzel, 2012). In direct support of a stress-buffering hypothesis, Wentzel and McNameara (1999) documented pathways by which perceived emotional support from peers is related to prosocial behavior by way of emotional well-being. These findings were robust for perceived emotional support from classmates and acquaintances as well as from best friends. Conversely, depressive affect has been related negatively to students’ prosocial behavior (Chen, Li, Li, & Liu, 2000; Wentzel & McNameara, 1999) and pursuit of goals to help, share, and cooperate with others (Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997).

**Summary**

Although not extensive, research on adolescent prosocial behavior underscores the multidimensionality of prosocial behavior at this age. Specifically, the research indicates significant and positive associations between various aspects of peer relationships and prosocial behavior. Assuming that peers have a meaningful impact on prosocial behavior, several social motivational processes were proposed to explain how peers exert such influence during adolescence. These involve communicating norms and expectations for behavior valued by the peer group; providing help, advice, and instruction concerning how to meet these expectations; and creating interpersonal climates that afford the development of strong affective bonds. In the following section, a more specific model that focuses on prosocial behavior as a form of context-specific social competence that is motivated by personal attributes as well as social and emotional supports provided by peers is described.

**A Social Competence and Motivation Perspective on Prosocial Behavior**

In the social developmental literature, social competence has been described from a variety of perspectives ranging from the development of individual skills to a more general adaptation within a particular setting. Ecologically based perspectives argue that both individual and contextual factors contribute to social competence, such that competence can only be understood in terms of context-specific effectiveness, being a product of personal attributes such as goals, values, self-regulatory skills, and cognitive abilities and of ways in which these attributes contribute to meeting situational requirements and demands (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Central to many definitions of social competence is also the notion that contextual affordances and constraints contribute to and mold the development of some individual outcomes in ways that enable individuals to contribute to the social good (Barker, 1961; Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Social contexts are believed to play an integral role in providing opportunities for healthy social development as well as in defining the appropriate parameters of children's social
accomplishments. In this chapter, therefore, social competence reflects this balance between the achievement of positive outcomes for the self and adherence to context-specific expectations for behavior.

Expanding on this notion of situated competence, Wentzel (2004) proposed a conceptual model of social motivation that incorporates self-processes and contextual supports to explain school-based competence, including prosocial behavior (see Wentzel, Filisetti, & Looney, 2007). In this model, students' prosocial behavior is in part a product of social reciprocity between themselves and their classmates. During adolescence, goals to demonstrate competence and to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with peers are especially important to youth as they confront the uncertainty and challenges of multiple cognitive, social, and school-related transitions.

Wentzel (2004, 2005) describes more specifically how peer interactions can promote the achievement of these outcomes, including positive social behavior. She suggests that students will come to value and subsequently pursue goals to behave in prosocial ways when their peers provide clear direction concerning norms and expectations for behavior valued by the peer group; help, advice, and instruction concerning how to accomplish these expectations; and interpersonal climates that afford the development of strong affective bonds and a sense of emotional security (see also Ford, 1992). Therefore, just as students must behave in ways that meet the expectations of their peers in order to be accepted and to experience emotional well-being and a sense of belongingness, so must their peers provide support for the achievement of students' goals.

In addition, Wentzel's model highlights the role of motivation in supporting prosocial behavior. Specifically, it depicts a pathway whereby contextual supports interact with motivational belief systems to influence goal pursuit, which in turn predicts behavior (see Wentzel, 2004; Wentzel et al., 2007). This pathway reflects the notion that people set goals for themselves and that these goals determine the direction of behavior and why people do what they do. In turn, the model also posits that goal pursuit is governed by self-processes and by concerns that emanate from social interactions and contextual cues. Self-processes take the form of beliefs that support decisions concerning goal pursuit, including underlying reasons for engaging in goal pursuits and beliefs about ability. In addition, Wentzel recognizes the importance of beliefs about belongingness and emotional connectedness to others in supporting goal-directed behavior; engagement in socially valued activities at school is more likely to occur if students believe that others care about them. Finally, beliefs about moral and social obligations are believed to influence the outcomes that individuals choose to pursue in a given situation or setting. These typically derive from expectations for behavior communicated by others.

The model suggests that peers might influence motivation in multiple ways, not only by promoting goals to be prosocial but also by providing reasons for doing so and providing information concerning one's ability to behave in a prosocial manner. In the following sections, evidence that peers can contribute to motivational processes that support adolescent prosocial behavior is described.

**Motivational Processes and Peer Influence**

**Goal-Directed Behavior**

A basic tenet of motivational theories is that people set goals for themselves and that these goals can be powerful motivators of behavior (Austin & Vancouver, 1968; Bandura, 1986; Dweck, 1991). Of central interest for this chapter is the fact that pursuit of social goals has been studied as a process that provides direction to behavior that is situation specific. In this case, goals are defined as a cognitive representation of what it is that an individual is trying to achieve in a given situation (see also Ford, 1992; Wentzel, 2003); social goals can emanate from the individual or from external sources such as teachers or peers. Of relevance for a discussion of prosocial behavior would be goals to help, cooperate, and share. In addition, because this definition focuses only on desired outcomes, it includes the possibility that individuals can have multiple goals (or subgoals) for their prosocial actions, such as intended benefits to the self (e.g., social approval) as well as intended benefits for others.

Research on students' prosocial goals has not been frequent. However, studies of social goal pursuit specific to classroom settings indicates that when asked to endorse social and academic goals to pursue at school, adolescent students typically indicate frequent attempts to achieve a range of social behavioral goals, including being dependable and responsible (e.g., following classroom rules, keeping promises with peers) and being helpful and cooperative (e.g., sharing information and resources, helping classmates with problems; Wentzel, 1989). The importance of these endorsements is reflected in findings across multiple studies that pursuit of goals to be prosocial and socially responsible is related significantly and positively to displays of prosocial behavior (Crocker & Canavello, 2008; A. Ryan & Shim, 2006; Salmivalli, Ojanen, Haenpaa, & Peets, 2005; Wentzel, 1991, 1994; Wentzel et al., 2007).

**Peers and Prosocial Goal Pursuit**

Of relevance for Wentzel's social competence approach is that students who endorse prosocial goals are also more likely to be accepted by their peers (Javvinen & Nicholls, 1996; Wentzel, 1991, 1994). When compared with average-status children, popular children tend to report more frequent pursuit of prosocial goals. Students who are "neglected" (i.e., neither liked or disliked by their peers) also report more frequent pursuit of prosocial and social responsibility goals, whereas "controversial" students (i.e., either highly liked or disliked) report less frequent pursuit of responsibility goals (Wentzel, 1991). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that students communicate to each other expectations concerning prosocial
behavior. Limited evidence suggests that at least in some schools peers do actively promote the pursuit of prosocial outcomes: approximately 70% of adolescents from three predominantly middle-class middle schools reported that their peers expected them to be cooperative and helpful in class either sometimes or always (Wentzel, Bailey, Russell, & Looney, 2010). Peer expectations for prosocial forms of behavior also have been related to students’ pursuit of prosocial goals (Wentzel, Baker, & Russell, 2012; Wentzel et al., 2010; Wentzel et al., 2007). Of particular interest is that these relations between peer expectations and prosocial behavior are strongest when adolescents believe that their peers care about them and provide positive emotional supports (Wentzel et al., 2012).

Specific aspects of peer contexts that lead students to adopt these goals and values have not been studied. However, as noted earlier, the larger peer group can be a source of behavioral standards, and group pressures can provide a mechanism whereby adherence to group standards is monitored and enforced. Modeling of prosocial behavior can also promote the adoption of prosocial goals. In line with the basic tenets of social cognitive theory, Wentzel et al. (2004) argued further that although behavior can be learned by observing others, it is likely to be enacted to the extent that an individual is motivated to do so. Therefore, an adolescent’s behavior might become more similar to a friend’s behavior over time because they have adopted similar goals. Therefore, the most proximal target of a friend’s influence should be an adolescent’s pursuit of goals to behave in a prosocial manner. In support of this assertion is longitudinal evidence that the similarity in levels of prosocial intentions and prosocial behavior between friends increases over time and that pursuit of goals to be prosocial is associated positively with prosocial behavior (Wentzel et al., 2004). In addition, Barry and Wentzel (2006) found that a friend’s prosocial behavior was most likely to be associated with an adolescent’s goals to be helpful and cooperative when the individual had a strong, positive bond with that friend, and when interaction with that friend was frequent and cumulative over time.

Reasons for Engaging in Prosocial Behavior

Inherent in a definition of social goals based on content is a distinction between what a student is trying to achieve (i.e., goal content) and why they are trying to achieve it (i.e., their intent or reasons). In general, reasons why a student might want to pursue prosocial goals have been defined with respect to types of behavioral regulation (see Assor, 2011; Ryan & Connell, 1989), with external reasons reflecting fear of punishment or a desire to comply, introjected reasons reflecting desires to maintain a positive sense of self either through gaining social approval or avoiding negative feelings of guilt or shame, identified reasons that are based on acknowledgement that the behavior has value (e.g., it’s the right thing to do), integrated reasons that reflect personal valuing of behavior that reflects a core aspect of one’s identity (e.g., I want to do it because it’s what I do), and intrinsic reasons based on the positive affect that prosocial behavior generates. These dimensions are useful for understanding prosocial behavior in that autonomous reasons (identified, integrated, and intrinsic) have been related positively to prosocial behavior to a greater extent than external and introjected reasons (Ryan & Connell, 1989; Ryan & Ryan, 2010).

Self-determination theory suggests that (not unlike moral reasoning), these reasons reflect a developmental continuum from extrinsic to internalized regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, a simpler explanation that reflects the multidimensional nature of prosocial behavior is that adolescents can have multiple reasons (e.g., extrinsic as well as intrinsic) guiding their behavior (e.g., Batson, Ahmad, Powell, & Stocks, 2008; Staub, 1978). For example, Wentzel et al. (2007) confirmed that adolescents display prosocial behavior for intrinsically motivated reasons but also for reasons extrinsic to the self; adolescents were likely to pursue prosocial goals not only because they thought it was important to do so but also because of the social costs associated with not doing so. However, a comparison of students who reported primarily external reasons for pursuing prosocial goals with those who reported reasons based on personal values revealed that the external reason group also reported less frequent pursuit of prosocial goals than did the personal value group.

Peers and Reasons for Prosocial Behavior

In addition to communicating expectations for engaging in prosocial behavior, it is likely that peers also provide proximal input concerning reasons for doing so. This can happen in a number of ways. For example, students who see that their peers value and enjoy engaging in specific social tasks or interactions are likely to develop similar positive opinions and attitudes about those same tasks (Bandura, 1986). In support of this notion is indirect evidence that perceived expectations from peers for behaving prosocially were significant predictors of internalized reasons (e.g., "I want to make other people happy," "I think it’s important to help others") for engaging in prosocial behavior (Wentzel et al., 2007). These findings were in contrast to those for teacher expectations for prosocial behavior, which were related to more external reasons.

Peers might also influence reasons for prosocial behavior by way of their influence on empathy and perspective-taking. For example, positive interactions with peers have been related to both of these outcomes (e.g., Carlo, McGinley, Hayes, & Martinez, 2012; Dekovic & Gerris, 1994; Fitzgerald & White, 2003). In turn, significant relations between empathy and introjected and internal reasons for prosocial behavior, but not between empathy and external reasons have been reported (Ryan & Connell, 1989). In our own work, empathy and perspective-taking were related most proximally to internal reasons for prosocial behavior and unrelated to external reasons (Wentzel et al., 2007). Finally, other emotional states related to the quality of peer relationships might also contribute to reasons for prosocial behavior. Depressive affect has been associated significantly and positively...
to external and other-focused reasons for prosocial behavior but unrelated to internal reasons (Wentzel et al., 2007).

Finally, Assor (2012) argued that integrated reasons are most likely to emerge during adolescence when identity exploration and consolidation takes place. Therefore, it is likely that peers can also play an integral role in the development of integrated reasons for prosocial behavior by way of their impact on the development of moral identity (see also Hardy & Carlo, 2005). Indeed, within the context of peer crowds and friendships, peers provide unique opportunities for self-exploration, including the discovery of values that are important to self-definition. In this regard, adolescent peer crowds are believed to play a central role in facilitating the formation of students' identity and self-concept (Brown, Mory, & Kinney, 1994; Youniss, McLellan, & Mazer, 2001) by providing adolescents with values, norms, and interaction styles that are sanctioned and commonly displayed. Moral identity development might be especially supported within the context of peer group activities that focus on community service and civic engagement (Youniss, McLellan, Su, et al., 1999).

Perceived Competence

Perceived competence is believed to motivate efforts to achieve personal goals to the extent that the individual believes she has the ability to achieve them (Bandura, 1986). People's beliefs about their abilities influence what they choose to do and why they persist at certain activities and not others; the stronger someone's beliefs about ability, the more likely they are to engage in goal pursuit. Much research has focused on the role of beliefs about ability with respect to specific tasks (see Schunk & Pajares, 2005). Bandura (e.g., 2002, 2006) has also described personal agency more specifically with respect to moral behavior, highlighting the motivational properties of beliefs about one's ability to refrain from actions that will harm others and to engage in behavior that will benefit others. Bandura also notes that as children mature into adolescents and interact with each other more frequently than with adults, peers play an increasingly important role in promoting and sustaining displays of moral behavior (1986).

Studies have documented that adolescents' beliefs about their ability to be helpful are related to their displays of prosocial behavior (Chen et al., 2000; Midlarsky & Hannah, 1985; Thomas & McGarty, 2009; Wentzel et al., 2007). Studies of moral and empathic agency samples also have linked prosocial behavior to positive beliefs about one's ability to respond to the distress of others and to provide help in adolescent samples (e.g., Bandura, Caprara, Barbaraneli, Gerbino, & Pastorelli, 2003; Caprara et al., 2010; Caprara & Steca, 2005; 2007).

Peers and Perceived Competence

Peers can contribute to students' goals and expectations for performance by influencing perceptions of ability (Schunk & Pajares, 2009). Children utilize their peers for comparative purposes as early as four years of age (Butler, 2005). Although few studies have focused on efficacy and prosocial behavior, experimental work has shown that peers serve as powerful models that influence the development of academic self-efficacy (Schunk, 1987), especially when children observe similar peers who demonstrate successful ways to cope with failure. These modeling effects are especially likely to occur when peers are friends (Crockett et al., 1984).

Perhaps the most explicit and obvious way in which peers can have a direct influence on students' sense of competence is by way of help giving. Indeed, students who enjoy positive relationships with their peers will also have greater access to resources and information that can help them accomplish social tasks than those who do not. These resources can take the form of information and advice, modeled behavior, or specific experiences that facilitate specific skills (e.g., Cooper, Ayers-Lopez, & Marquis, 1982; Schunk, 1987). Developmental research on peer help giving is rare. However, findings on middle school students making the transition into high school suggest that receiving help from familiar peers tends to increase over the course of the transition (Wentzel et al., 2007).

SUMMARY

In this section, a model of social competence and motivation was described that is useful for understanding the multiple ways in which adolescents can motivate each other to engage in prosocial behavior. There is limited but convincing support for the notion that adolescent prosocial behavior is motivated by a complex, multidimensional set of self-processes, social supports, and contextual cues, with goal pursuit providing a pathway that links these processes to prosocial behavior. Research suggests that goals to behave in a prosocial manner can be motivated by multiple reasons, ranging from external (e.g., threats of punishment) to internalized (e.g., personal values) concerns. Beliefs about one's ability to engage in prosocial actions are also likely to motivate prosocial actions. Contextual supports in the form of friends and the broader peer group appear to play an additional, significant role by providing clear direction concerning norms and expectations for behavior; help, advice, and instruction concerning how to accomplish these expectations; and interpersonal climates that afford the development of strong affective bonds and a sense of emotional security. Much more work is needed to document the specific processes by which peers exert their influence on prosocial behavior. However, the model provides clear direction for future work in this area. In the following sections, remaining issues and directions for future work in this area are offered.

Remaining Issues and Future Directions

This chapter began by posing the question of how and why students' relationships with peers might be related to their prosocial behavior. In general, multiple aspects of peer relationships have been associated with adolescents' prosocial actions, as
well as to underlying psychological processes that motivate such actions. Although many of these findings are based on concurrent assessments of peer relationships and adolescent behavior, some longitudinal findings indicate that these effects might persist over time. However, the significance of peer interactions and relationships as causal predictors of prosocial behavior is not yet clear. In addition, progress toward understanding the developmental significance of students' relationships with peers requires more systematic attention, conceptual frameworks of prosocial behavior could benefit from consideration of additional contextual influences that contribute to the nature and quality of peer relationships during adolescence, and research designs must take into account more diverse samples. In the following sections, I discuss each of these issues in greater depth.

DEVELOPMENTAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

The underlying premise of this chapter is that having friends and establishing positive interactions and relationships with the larger peer group have the potential to support and facilitate engagement in prosocial behavior in multiple ways. However, there are many unanswered questions concerning when and how peers exert their influence. From a developmental perspective, the role of peers in motivating positive forms of social behavior is likely to be especially critical during the middle and high school years. During this time, children exhibit increased interest in their peers, spend more time with them, and exhibit a growing psychological and emotional dependence on them for support and guidance as they make the transition into adolescence (Youniss & Smollar, 1989). Moreover, peer groups and crowds emerge primarily in the middle school years, peak at the beginning of high school, and then diminish in prevalence as well as influence by the end of high school (Brown, 1989). Therefore, efforts to understand the positive influence of peer relationships on prosocial outcomes must be sensitive to the multidimensional aspects of relationships, that is, the qualities and types of relationships that students form with each other at different points during middle school and high school.

Important differences that could impact motivation to behave prosocially within this age group also might exist. Initial findings indicate that younger adolescents (i.e., sixth graders) tend to experience stronger social influences on their prosocial behavior than do older students (Wentzel et al., 2007; Wentzel & McNamara, 1999). These findings are in line with explanations based on models of stage-environment fit, which highlight early adolescence as a critical period during which developmental needs and contextual affordances often conflict. For example, as children enter into early adolescence they tend to express stronger needs for autonomy and self-control than at other time points, while school contexts tend to provide fewer opportunities for young adolescents to fulfill these needs (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that younger adolescents, who tend to experience fewer opportunities for autonomy and self-control in the classroom, might report more frequent use of external reasons for their classroom prosocial behavior than their older peers.

Further elaboration of Wentzel's model to include additional processes that might influence prosocial behavior in childhood would also provide impetus for longitudinal studies of children as they grow into the adolescent years. Inclusion of other social-cognitive and social-information processing variables (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1994) and aspects of emotion and behavior regulation would add to the explanatory power of the model. In a related vein, the possibility that the positive social feedback from peers associated with prosocial behavior might influence the development of self-processes and the interpretation of contextual cues should not be discounted. To illustrate, it is likely that positive feedback in the form of social approval and acceptance from classmates is likely to increase the degree to which students are empathic toward peers, take their perspective, experience a positive sense of emotional well-being, and perceive positive expectations for continued prosocial behavior. Longitudinal and experimental work that can identify specific causal mechanisms is clearly needed in this regard.

In addition, research that follows individual students over the course of adolescence is needed to determine the extent to which the effects of contextual factors in early adolescence are fleeting or have a significant impact on later prosocial actions. Indeed, the multiple and multidimensional nature of contexts that adolescents experience has been ignored in this work. Moreover, scholars should explore factors that predict prosocial behavior among middle and late adolescents. This is particularly important given that older adolescents who display prosocial behavior appear to be on a positive developmental trajectory for competence as young adults. For instance, university students who report altruistic prosocial tendencies are more likely to have achieved a more consolidated sense of identity than are those reporting less prosocial tendencies (Padilla-Walker, Barry, Carroll, Madsen, & Nelson, 2008). This age group remains an important one to study, especially as adolescents transition into adulthood.

Several assumptions concerning the nature of prosocial behavior also warrant discussion. Specifically, most scholars assume that by adolescence students display prosocial behavior in fairly consistent fashion and therefore that it occurs in large part as a function of other fairly stable self-processes (Carlo, Crockett, Randall, & Roesch, 2007). However, the role of context-specific expectations for behavior that are likely to differ from classroom to classroom due to norms and values communicated by specific teachers and groups of peers are highlighted in this chapter. Empirical findings underscore the importance of these cues in predicting adolescents' behavior. Therefore, further investigations concerning the stability of prosocial behavior across settings and how peer expectations for prosocial behavior are communicated and enforced in multiple contexts are warranted. More in-depth examinations of how adolescents resolve conflicting expectations from peers and adults when making decisions about how to behave would also add to our understanding of these issues.
Finally, the impact of other social context factors such as gender, race, and culture also needs to be incorporated into the model. Continued research on classroom reward structures (Slavin, Hurley, & Chamberlain, 2003), organizational culture and climate (Roese, Urdan, & Stephens, 2009), and person-environment fit (Eccles & Midgley, 1989) also can inform our understanding of how the social institutions and contexts within which adolescents interact can motivate them to behave in positive ways. Understanding ways in which teachers, classroom climates, and school-level policies contribute to these positive outcomes remains an important objective for future studies in this area. The roles of teachers and schools in promoting prosocial behavior are discussed in the following section.

**The Role of Teachers and School Contexts**

In line with a context-specific approach, it also is important to consider ways in which teachers and schools can promote adolescent prosocial behavior and to incorporate these potential influences into behavioral and instructional interventions at school. In this regard, a growing body of work indicates that classroom teachers can have a powerful effect on students’ relationships with peers (see also, Bergin, chapter 14, this volume). Teachers’ expectations concerning students’ aptitude and performance have been related to levels of peer acceptance and rejection (e.g., Donohue, Perry, & Weinstein, 2003; Farmer, Irvin, Sgammon, Dadesman, & Thompson, 2009; Mikami, Griggs, Reuland, & Gregory, 2012). Teachers’ verbal and nonverbal behavior toward certain children, especially when critical, also has been related to how these children are treated by their peers (Harper & McCluskey, 2003).

The instructional approach that a teacher adopts also appears to have an impact on students’ relationships with peers (Epstein, 1983; Farmer et al., 2009). For example, grouping practices have been associated with the quality of peer relationships (Gest & Rodkin, 2011); middle and high school students in classrooms where students are encouraged to talk to each other about class assignments, to work in small groups, and to move about while working on activities also are less likely to be socially isolated or rejected by their classmates, enjoy greater numbers of friends, and experience more diversity and stability in their friendships (e.g., Epstein, 1983; Gest & Rodkin, 2011). Classrooms that are homogeneous with respect to low levels of student ability and problem behavior can be deleterious to the formation and maintenance of positive, high quality, peer relationships over time (Barth, Dunlop, Dane, Lochman, & Wells, 2004).

Finally, the literature offers a range of practices that can facilitate the formation and maintenance of positive peer relationships at school. For example, school administrators can implement strategies to promote the development of positive peer interactions, such as frequent communication of prosocial values, use of inductive discipline to promote empathy and interpersonal understanding, use of collaborative and cooperative activities for instruction, and encouragement of students to help each other (Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaefer, 2002).

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Students also can be taught a range of friendship-making strategies and other specific peer interaction skills (see Gresham, Van, & Cook, 2006).

**Research Design Issues**

There are many issues concerning methodological and design issues in studies of adolescent prosocial behavior (see Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). Different sources of information concerning behavior (e.g., peers, teachers, parents) are likely to have unique impressions of adolescents’ behavior. Similarly, informants’ race and gender also are likely to influence behavioral reports (Wentzel et al., 2007). Therefore, researchers need to be sensitive to the biases and limitations of behavioral ratings that various informants bring to their evaluations. The contexts within which behavior is displayed (e.g., classrooms, after-school activities) also need to be acknowledged when evaluating peer influence on behavior.

In addition to research on adolescents of different ages, researchers also need to focus on more diverse samples. Although it is likely that the underlying psychological processes that contribute to prosocial behavior are similar for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or other contextual and demographic variables, the degree to which these latter factors interact with psychological processes to influence adjustment outcomes is not known. For instance, definitions of what it means to help, cooperate, or share are likely to vary as a function of race, gender, neighborhood, or family background. Expanding our database to include the voices of underrepresented populations can only enrich our understanding of how and why adolescents behave in positive ways toward each other.

Finally, the multidimensional nature of prosocial behavior must be taken into account when designing future work in this area. For the most part, researchers have treated a range of prosocial outcomes as equivalent with respect to predictors, processes, and outcomes. However, it is not clear that the role of peers in motivating various aspects of prosocial behavior (e.g., cooperation vs. sharing vs. altruistic helping) is the same. Similarly, greater specification with respect to types of peer relationships (e.g., friendships vs. groups) and contexts (e.g., in school vs. out of school) is necessary to fully understand the role of peers in promoting displays of prosocial behavior. Therefore, greater attention to conceptual definitions of prosocial constructs that include more precise explanations of antecedents, outcomes, and developmental processes might prove extremely useful for moving the field forward.

**Conclusions**

Prosocial behavior in the form of sharing, helping, and cooperating is a hallmark of social competence during adolescence. However, although important correlates of prosocial behavior have been well documented, less is known about social factors that motivate adolescents to display these positive forms of behavior. This chapter
has documented ways in which social interactions with peers have been linked to a range of prosocial actions, including interactions that facilitate the development of cognitive structures that support prosocial behavior and social supports and resources afforded by peer relationships and interactions that motivate displays of prosocial behavior. In addition, it proposed a more specific model of prosocial behavior that highlights motivational self-processes (e.g., goals, self-beliefs) and contextual supports (e.g., peer relationships) as antecedents of prosocial behavior and behavior intent in the form of prosocial goal pursuit as a pathway that links these processes to prosocial behavior.

The multidimensional nature of prosocial behavior and its development is clearly apparent in this literature, especially as evidenced by the multiple types of peer relationships that have been related to prosocial behavior during adolescence, the multiple theoretical perspectives and processes that have been proposed to explain these relations and the unique affordances of peer contexts that promote the development and displays of prosocial behavior. Viewing the extent literature from a multidimensional perspective also has the potential to guide this area forward in new and important ways. Greater focus on delineating the unique aspects and effects of different types of peer relationships on various types of prosocial behavior can only enrich our understanding of ways in which social interactions with peers might facilitate the development of positive, prosocial actions of adolescents. Designing studies that utilize multiple methods and informants and performing research on more diverse samples that represent various ages within adolescence will also facilitate advancements in the field.

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Socialization Perspectives


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Linking Grandparent Involvement with the Development of Prosocial Behavior in Adolescents

Jeremy B. Yorgason and Kathryn B. Gustafson

The development of prosocial behavior, or voluntary behavior meant to benefit another (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006), during adolescence is influenced by many factors. Although primary influences often reside with parents (see Padilla-Walker, chapter 7, this volume), role models outside the family of origin, such as grandparents, may also play an important role (Dunifon, 2013). Prosocial behavior is fundamentally important for the development of teens, as adolescence indicates a marked difference in the cognition and emotionality of individuals that leads to increased ability, intentionality, and consistency to behave prosocially (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). Although cognitive and emotional strides may result in an increased capacity for prosocial action during adolescence, this time period may also be characterized by increased risk behaviors. Quality relationships with nonparent figures can buffer against the negative aspects of adolescence (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005), and grandparenting is an area of study that deserves more attention in adolescence. The importance of grandparents is highlighted most poignantly with children that are in high-risk situations, such as when grandparents buffer negative effects of economic, parenting, and child temperament risks (Barnett et al., 2010). Some have suggested that the influence of grandparents is mainly beneficial in such high-risk situations and that their influence is otherwise passive or redundant to parenting when risk is low or nonexistent (Lavers & Sonuga-Burke, 1997). In contrast, others have indicated that the influence of grandparents is substantive, even after controlling for parental influence (Yorgason, Padilla-Walker, & Jackson, 2011).

Indeed, a handful of studies have examined the influence that grandparent involvement has on grandchildren, as reported by grandchildren (e.g., Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007). Research in this area is important, as grandparents often invest various resources to benefit their grandchildren (Smith & Drew, 2002), yet little is known about related outcomes. In this chapter, we draw on family solidarity