Understanding personal relationships throughout the life course is one of the most crucial issues in the behavioral and social sciences. This book brings together perspectives from different disciplines on individual development and personal relationships across the life span. The book addresses two pertinent dimensions of personal relationships: 1) structures of relationship networks (e.g., kin vs. non-kin, peripheral vs. intimate, short-term vs. long-term) and 2) processes (i.e., change or stability) and outcomes of personal relationships across the life span. The book stimulates discussion of personal relationships as resources for and outcomes of individual development throughout the life course. Different qualities of personal relationships serve as catalysts for individual development. At the same time, relationship qualities reflect changes of developing individuals. The book does not give exclusive priority to one phase of the human life span. Rather, each chapter addresses social development across the entire life span from childhood to later adulthood.

Frieder R. Lang is Professor of Developmental Psychology at the Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg. His research is on self-regulatory and control processes in social relationships across the life span. He has published numerous journal articles and book chapters. He was a Fellow at the Max-Planck Institute for Human Development and has worked as a member of the Berlin Aging Study since 1994. The German Research Foundation (DFG) has funded his research project on successful aging and life experience (1996–1999, together with Margret M. Baltes). He has received several awards for his work. Among these is the Margret Baltes Award for Early Career Achievement in Behavioral and Social Gerontology from the Gerontological Society of America in 2000.

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Although scholars from a variety of disciplines have written and conversed about the importance of personal relationships for decades, the emergence of personal relationships as a field of study is relatively recent. Advances in Personal Relationships represents the culmination of years of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary work on personal relationships. Sponsored by the International Association for Relationship Research, the series offers readers cutting-edge research and theory in the field. Contributing authors are internationally known scholars from a variety of disciplines, including social psychology, clinical psychology, communication, history, sociology, gerontology, and family studies. Volumes include integrative reviews, conceptual pieces, summaries of research programs, and major theoretical works. Advances in Personal Relationships presents first-rate scholarship that is both provocative and theoretically grounded. The theoretical and empirical work described by authors will stimulate readers and advance the field by offering up new ideas and retooling old ones. The series will be of interest to upper division undergraduate students, graduate students, researchers, and practitioners.

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Personal Relationships across the Life Span

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To Margret M. Baltes with gratitude
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