PATTERNS
I started the book with the story of an individual. I now turn to the patterns or themes that I detected after reading, sorting, categorizing, and rereading the interview data of twenty-four adolescents over three years. While in qualitative research it often seems as if the researcher simply read the interviews and immediately detected themes, this is typically not the case. The themes presented in this book are the outcome of two years of sifting through and analyzing over three thousand pages of interview transcripts and listening repeatedly to over 120 hours of audiotapes. My goal in this long process was, once again, not to determine themes within each topic addressed in the interview protocol (e.g., self- and future perspectives, drug and alcohol use, relationships with each family member), but to detect themes when the adolescents spoke about their worlds (which includes all of these topics). I listened to their interviews in a holistic way, trying to capture the most prevalent themes. Therefore, some of the topics addressed in the interview protocol are discussed (e.g., relationships with friends and mothers), and some are not (e.g., drug and alcohol use). When a topic is discussed, it is because I detected a pattern regarding this particular topic.

Listening to seventy-one interviews (twenty-three adolescents over three years and one adolescent over two years), I detected six common themes—and numerous subthemes—in the data. Some of the themes overlap across chapters while others stand alone. The location of each of the themes varied from being topic-specific to being evident across topics in the interviews. For example, those discussed in chapter 4—speaking out or being silenced in relationships—were evident when the adolescents spoke about their friends, parents, role models, school, and society (i.e., across topics). On the other hand, the themes discussed in chapter 5—themes of betrayal and distrust in peer relations—were evident only when the adolescents were asked about friendships (i.e., within one topic). The theme discussed in chapter 6—the importance of mothers—was evident
throughout each interview, not only when the adolescents were asked about their mothers. The themes discussed in chapters 7, 8, and 9 were either evident across or within individual topics. A consequence of such a theme-centered discussion is that not all of the adolescents will be discussed in each chapter. The chapters focus only on those teens who suggested the particular theme being discussed. In addition, in some chapters where gender differences are discussed, the boys’ and girls’ stories are presented separately while in other chapters they are presented together.