

## CHAPTER 1

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# ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT FROM AN AGENTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Different periods of life present certain prototypic challenges and competency demands for successful functioning. Changing aspirations, time perspectives, and societal systems over the course of the life span alter how people structure, regulate, and evaluate their lives. Psychosocial changes with age do not represent lock-step stages through which everyone must inevitably pass as part of a preordained developmental sequence. There are many pathways through life and, at any given period, people vary substantially in how successfully they manage their lives in the milieus in which they are immersed. The beliefs they hold about their capabilities to produce results by their actions are an influential personal resource in negotiating their lives through the life cycle.

Social cognitive theory analyzes developmental changes across the life span in terms of evolvment and exercise of human agency. When viewed from this perspective, the paths that lives take are shaped by the reciprocal interplay between personal factors and diverse influences in ever-changing societies. The environment in which people live their lives is not a situational entity that ordains their life course. Rather, it is a varied suc-

cession of transactional life events in which individuals play a role in shaping the course of their personal development (Baltes, 1983; Bandura, 1997; Hultsch & Plemons, 1979). Some of the influential events involve biological changes. Others are normative social events linked to people's age, status, and their roles in educational, familial, occupational, and other institutional systems. Virtually everyone engages in these latter activities at certain phases in their development. Other life events involve unpredictable occurrences in the physical environment or irregular life events such as career changes, divorce, migration, accidents, and illnesses

There is much that people do designedly to exercise some control over their self-development and life circumstances. But there is a lot of fortuity in the courses lives take (Bandura, 1982, 1998). People are often inaugurated into new life trajectories through fortuitous circumstances. Fortuity does not mean uncontrollability of its effects. There are ways that people capitalize on the fortuitous character of life. They make chance happen by pursuing an active life that increases the fortuitous encounters they will experience. People also make chance work for them by cultivating their interests, enabling beliefs, and competencies. These personal resources enable them to make the most of opportunities that arise unexpectedly.

Lives are historically placed and socially developed in milieus that present unique opportunities, constraints, and challenges. Elder (1994) has argued eloquently for the analysis of people's lives over time as they are shaped by the distinctive life experiences provided by the eras in which they live. For example, the adolescents of yesteryear grew up in an environment quite different from that of the youth of today. They are players in an electronic era of rapid social and technological change that is transforming how people communicate, educate, work, relate to each other, and conduct their business and daily affairs.

The youth culture in this multimedia electronic generation is immersed in new forms of social interactions (Oksman & Turtiainen, 2004). Contemporary teenagers are filling empty periods of their everyday lives using mobile communication, text messaging, and chat sites in expanded personal and virtual networks. In these disembodied communications, the participants can control their self-presentation and shape their personal identities. These private forms of communication permit independence from parental supervision of the virtual world of teenagers. Parents, in turn, favor these mobile devices for security reassurance, to monitor their children's whereabouts, and to try to influence them in extra-familial contexts. Some teenagers complain about the parental intrusion ("My mom's been texting me a lot").

Major sociocultural changes that make life markedly different—such as technological innovations, economic depressions, military conflicts, cultural upheavals, and political changes—modify the character of the soci-

ety in ways that have strong impact on life courses. Life trajectories differ depending on where people are in their lives at the time of such changes (Elder, 1981). Whatever the social conditions might be, personal lives take varied directions at any given time and place. It is the way in which people take advantage of opportunity structures and manage constraints under the prevailing sociocultural conditions that make the difference.

The present chapter addresses adolescent development and self-renewal from an agentic perspective (Bandura, 1986, 2001). In this conception, people are self-organizing, proactive, self-regulating, and self-reflecting. They are contributors to their life circumstances not just products of them. To be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances. There are four core features of human agency. One such feature is intentionality. People form intentions that include action plans and strategies for realizing them. The second feature involves the temporal extension of agency through forethought. This includes more than future-directed plans. People set themselves goals and anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions to guide and motivate their efforts anticipatorily. A future cannot be a cause of current behavior because it has no material existence. But by being represented cognitively in the present, visualized futures serve as current guides and motivators of behavior.

Agents are not only planners and forethinkers. They are also self-regulators. They adopt personal standards and monitor and regulate their actions by self-reactive influence. They do things that give them satisfaction and a sense of self-worth, and refrain from actions that bring self-censure. People are not only agents of action. They are self-examiners of their own functioning. Through functional self-awareness they reflect on their personal efficacy, the soundness of their thoughts and actions, and the meaning of their pursuits, and they make corrective adjustments if necessary. Forethought and self-influence are important parts of a causal structure.

### **FOUNDATION OF HUMAN AGENCY**

Among the mechanisms of human agency, none is more central or pervasive than beliefs of personal efficacy. This core belief is the foundation of human motivation, well-being, and accomplishments. Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Whatever other factors serve as guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to effect changes by one's actions.

Belief in one's efficacy is a key personal resource in self-development, successful adaptation, and change. It operates through its impact on cognitive, motivational, affective, and decisional processes. Efficacy beliefs affect whether individuals think optimistically or pessimistically, in self-enhancing or self-debilitating ways. Such beliefs affect people's goals and aspirations, how well they motivate themselves, and their perseverance in the face of difficulties and adversity. Efficacy beliefs also shape people's outcome expectations—whether they expect their efforts to produce favorable outcomes or adverse ones. In addition, efficacy beliefs determine how environmental opportunities and impediments are viewed. People of low efficacy are easily convinced of the futility of effort in the face of difficulties. They quickly give up trying. Those of high efficacy view impediments as surmountable by self-development and perseverant effort. They stay the course in the face of difficulties and remain resilient to adversity.

Efficacy beliefs also affect the quality of emotional life and vulnerability to stress and depression. And last, but not least, efficacy beliefs determine the choices people make at important decisional points. A factor that influences choice behavior can profoundly affect the courses lives take. This is because the social influences operating in the selected environments continue to promote certain competencies, values, and lifestyles.

Many meta-analyses have been conducted across diverse spheres of functioning in both laboratory and field studies, with diverse populations of varying ages and sociodemographic characteristics, in different cultural milieus, and for both individual and collective efficacy (Bandura, 2002). The evidence from these meta-analyses shows that efficacy beliefs contribute significantly to level of motivation, socio-cognitive functioning, emotional well-being, and performance accomplishments.

### **MODES OF AGENCY**

Social cognitive theory distinguishes among three modes of agency, each of which is founded in people's beliefs that they can influence the course of events by their actions. These include *individual*, *proxy*, and *collective* agency. In personal agency exercised individually, people bring their influence to bear on their own functioning and on environmental events.

In many spheres of functioning, people do not have direct control over the social conditions and institutional practices that affect their everyday lives. Under these circumstances, they seek their well-being, security, and valued outcomes through the exercise of proxy agency. In this socially-mediated mode of agency, people try by one means or another to get those who have access to resources or expertise or who wield influence to

act at their behest to secure the outcomes they desire (Baltes, 1996; Brandstädter, 1992). For example, children turn to parents, and marital partners to spouses to act for them. Proxy agency relies heavily on perceived social efficacy to enlist the mediative efforts of others.

People do not live their lives in isolation. Many of the things they seek are achievable only through socially interdependent effort. Social cognitive theory extends the conception of human agency to collective agency (Bandura, 2000, 2001). In the exercise of collective agency, people pool their knowledge, skills, and resources, provide mutual support, form alliances, and work together to secure what they cannot accomplish on their own. People's shared beliefs in their joint capabilities to bring about desired changes in their lives are the foundation of collective agency. Perceived collective efficacy raises people's vision of what they wish to achieve, enhances motivational commitment to their endeavors, strengthens resilience to adversity, and enhances group accomplishments.

### **INTERDEPENDENCE OF HUMAN AGENCY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE**

Human functioning is rooted in social systems. Therefore, human agency operates within a broad network of socio-structural influences. These social systems are not the workings of impersonal forces disembodied from the activities of individuals. Social structures are created by human activity to organize, guide, and regulate human affairs in given domains by authorized rules and sanctions (Giddens, 1984). Social systems necessarily operate through the activities of individuals who preside over them. The socio-structural practices, in turn, impose constraints and provide resources and opportunity structures for personal development and functioning. Given this dynamic bi-directionality of influence, social cognitive theory rejects a dualism between human agency and a disembodied social structure.

Socio-structural theories and psychological theories are often regarded as rival conceptions of human behavior or as representing different levels and temporal proximities of causation. Human behavior cannot be fully understood solely in terms of socio-structural factors or psychological factors. A full understanding requires an integrated causal system in which socio-structural influences operate through psychological mechanisms to produce behavioral effects. However, the self system is not merely a conduit for environmental influences. The self is socially constituted, but, by exercising personal and collective influence, human agency operates generatively and proactively on social systems, not just reactively. In short, social systems are the product of human activity.

In the theory of triadic reciprocal causation, socio-structural and personal determinants are treated as co-factors within a unified causal structure. For example, poverty is not a matter of multilayered or distal causation. Lacking the money to provide for the subsistence of one's family impinges pervasively on everyday life in a very proximal way. Economic conditions, socioeconomic status, and family structure affect behavior mainly through their impact on people's aspirations, sense of efficacy, and other self-regulatory factors rather than directly (Baldwin, Baldwin, Sameroff, & Seifer, 1989; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996, 2001; Elder & Ardel, 1992).

### **ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT**

Each period of human development brings with it new competency requirements, challenges, and opportunities for personal growth. As an important transitional phase in the life course, adolescence presents a host of new challenges. Adolescents have to manage major biological, educational, and social role transitions concurrently. Learning how to deal with pubertal changes, emotionally invested partnerships, and the emergence of sexuality becomes a matter of considerable importance. Adolescents must manage not only pervasive physical changes but difficult educational transitions as well. The transition to middle-level schools involves a major environmental change that taxes personal efficacy.

In late adolescence, the roles of adulthood must begin to be addressed in almost every dimension of life. Adolescents must begin to consider seriously what they want to do with their lives occupationally. During this time, they have to master many new skills and the ways of adult society. They must do all this in a society that does not provide many preparatory roles for them.

Unlike childhood involvements, as adolescents expand the nature and scope of their activities into the larger social community, they have to assume increasing responsibility for conduct that plays a more decisive role in fostering or foreclosing various life courses. The way in which adolescents develop and exercise their personal efficacy during this transitional period can play a key role in setting the course their life paths take.

Adolescence has often been characterized as a period of psychosocial turmoil and discontinuity. While no period of life is ever free of problems, contrary to the stereotype of "storm and stress," most adolescents negotiate the important transitions of this period without inordinate disturbance or discord (Bandura, 1964; Petersen, 1988; Rutter, Graham, Chadwick, & Yule, 1976). Rather than construing adolescence as a time of turmoil and discontinuity, social cognitive theory emphasizes personal

growth through mastery and other enabling experiences as the more normative developmental process.

Because of the salience of pubertal changes and their social impact, there is excessive attribution of changes in adolescence to perturbing sociobiological factors. The more histrionic theorizing depicts these factors as convulsive forces driven by raging pubertal hormones. Human functioning is embedded interdependently in changing social systems. Given the interdependent personal and cultural co-development, the changes that adolescents undergo cannot be fully understood disembodied from the evolving social systems through which they navigate. Some of the changes in adolescent functioning and well-being have more to do with how the social systems are structured than with intrapsychic and biological upheaval supposedly endemic to adolescence (Eccles et al., 1993).

### **ROLE OF EFFICACY BELIEFS IN FAMILY FUNCTIONING**

Social cognitive theory assigns a prominent role to the perceived efficacy of families to manage the many aspects of familial relationships and the quality of family life (Bandura, 1997). To date, much of the self-efficacy research on family functioning has focused on dyadic parent-child relationships. These studies have added to our understanding of how parents' sense of efficacy contributes to children's development and reduces the stressfulness of parenthood.

Perceived parenting efficacy plays a key role in adaptation to parenthood. Mothers with strong beliefs in their parenting efficacy experience more positive emotional well-being and better adjustment to the parenting role, and they achieve a better marital relationship than do mothers who hold weaker beliefs about their parenting capabilities (Williams et al., 1987). The positive impact of parenting efficacy beliefs on their children's development is further verified in interventions designed to enhance a sense of parental efficacy. Mothers with difficult children, whose sense of parenting efficacy is raised, interact more positively with their children, experience lower familial stress and reductions in child behavior problems than mothers who did not have the benefit of the efficacy-enhancing program (Gross, Fogg, & Tucker, 1995; Sofronoff & Farbotko, 2002).

A strong sense of parenting efficacy also serves as an enabling and protective factor that reduces vulnerability to emotional distress and depression, which can weaken maternal attachment and impede the quality of parenting (Cutrona & Troutman, 1986; Elder, 1995; Olioiff & Aboud, 1991; Silver, Bauman, & Ireys, 1995; Teti & Gelfand, 1991).

A strong sense of parental efficacy yields dividends not only in emotional well-being and quality of caretaking but in shaping children's

developmental trajectories. Parents who believe in their efficacy to contribute to their children's development act on that belief in ways that cultivate their children's potential (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001). They build their children's sense of intellectual efficacy and aspirations which, in turn, contributes to their social relations, emotional well-being, academic development, and career choice and development (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996, 2001). Moreover, self-efficacious parents are strong advocates for their children in interactions with social institutions that can have an important impact on their children during the formative period of their lives (Bandura, 1997).

Transactions within the parent-child dyad involve a bi-directionality of influence. In this reciprocal interplay, children are contributors to their development not just objects of unidirectional parental influence (Bandura, 1997; Kuczynski, 2003; Maccoby, 2003). There have been some preliminary efforts to examine prospectively the extent to which children's efficacy beliefs affect the outcomes of this dyadic subsystem (Caprara, Regalia, & Bandura, 2002; Caprara, Pastorelli, Regalia, Scabini, & Bandura, 2005). The stronger the children's beliefs in their efficacy to manage their parental relations regarding peer and family matters, the better their developmental outcomes. We shall examine later how adolescents' self-efficacy affects transactions with their parents.

The efficacy to manage the spousal relationship is another important dyad in the interlocking family system. Perceived spousal efficacy centers on the partners' perceived capability to communicate openly and confide in each other, provide mutual support to resolve marital relationship problems, and work through disagreements over child rearing and management of their finances. Spouses who approach challenges in their relationship beset with doubts about their ability to manage them are likely to favor avoidant rather than problem-solving strategies when they encounter difficulties. Lack of enabling and fulfilling reciprocity and unresolved marital discords can detract from the quality of family functioning and satisfaction with family life. There is some longitudinal evidence from families with dual careers that wives' perceived self-efficacy to enlist spousal aid in childcare improves their health and emotional life (Ozer, 1995). But otherwise, the spousal dyadic aspect of family efficacy has rarely been explored.

The family operates as a multilevel social system with interlocking relationships rather than simply as a collection of members. Both the parent-child and spousal subsystems are embedded in the network of interdependencies that constitute a family. In these multiple interlocking relationships, the roles of parent, spouse, and offspring carry different functional demands, developmental opportunities, constraints, and reciprocal obligations. There is a dynamic interplay among the dyadic relationships. For

example, how well the spouses get along with each other can affect how they treat their children (Cox & Paley, 2003; Sameroff, 1995). Conversely, how well the parents get along with their children can strain or strengthen the marital relationship.

The perceived collective efficacy of a family is not simply the sum of the members' beliefs in their individual efficacies. Rather, it is a shared belief in their family's capability to work together to manage and improve their lives. It is an emergent group belief because it incorporates the interactive dynamics of the family system operating collectively. The collective whole can be greater or lesser than the efficacy parts depending on whether the family transactions are mutually supportive and enabling or wrangling and debilitating.

Analyses of the interplay of perceived dyadic efficacy and collective efficacy within the family underscore the centrality of collective family efficacy in quality of family functioning and satisfaction with family life (Bandura, Caprara, Regalia, Scabini, & Barbaranelli, 2004). Perceived efficacy at the personal level contributes to a sense of collective family efficacy. Thus, spousal partners' efficacy to manage their marital relationship, parents' efficacy to guide their adolescents, and adolescents' efficacy to manage their relationship with their parents contribute to belief in collective family efficacy. Perceived collective family efficacy, in turn, fosters perceived efficacy to manage adolescent, parental, and spousal relationships.

Dyadic parent-child, spousal, and filial self-efficacy operates within the family almost entirely through collective family efficacy. For adolescents and parents alike, a high sense of collective family efficacy is accompanied by open family communication and enabling monitoring of adolescents' activities outside the home. Collective family efficacy contributes to parents' and adolescents' satisfaction with their family life both directly and through its impact on quality of family functioning.

## **SELF-EFFICACY IN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Educational systems have undergone fundamental changes during historical periods of cultural and technological change. Educational systems were originally designed to teach low-level skills in agricultural societies. When industrialization supplanted agriculture as the major economic enterprise, the educational system was adapted for the needs of heavy industry and manufacturing. Most of the occupational pursuits required rote performance without many cognitive skills. Increasing complexities in technologies, social systems, and the international economy present different realities demanding new types of competencies. These evolving

new realities ushered in by the transition to the information era are placing a premium on the role of personal efficacy in educational self-development.

There are three main pathways through which efficacy beliefs play a key role in cognitive development and accomplishment: students' beliefs in their efficacy to regulate their learning activities and to master academic subjects, teachers' beliefs in the personal efficacy to motivate and promote learning in their students, and the faculties' collective sense of efficacy that their schools can accomplish significant academic progress.

Considerable progress has been achieved in documenting the positive role of self-efficacy beliefs in students' academic interest, motivation, management of academic stressors, and growth of cognitive competencies (Bandura, 1997; Pajares & Schunk, 2001). Students can now exercise substantial control over their own learning. In the past, their educational development depended on the quality of the schools in which they were enrolled. Students now have the best libraries, museums, and multimedia instruction at their fingertips through the global Internet. They can educate themselves independently of time and place. This shift in locus of initiative involves a major reorientation in students' conception of education. They are agents of their own learning, not just recipients of information.

Adolescents need to commit themselves to goals that give them purpose and a sense of accomplishment. Without personal commitment to something worth doing, they are unmotivated, bored, or cynical. They become dependent on extrinsic sources of stimulation. A vision of a desired future helps to organize their lives, provides meaning to their activities, motivates them, and enables them to tolerate the hassles of getting there.

A major goal of formal education is to equip students with the intellectual tools, self-beliefs, and self-regulatory capabilities to educate themselves throughout their lifetime. The rapid pace of technological change and accelerated growth of knowledge are placing a premium on capability for self-directed learning. Metacognitive theorists view self-regulated learning largely in terms of the cognitive aspects. Training in metacognitive skills involves selecting appropriate strategies, testing one's comprehension and state of knowledge, correcting one's deficiencies, and recognizing the utility of cognitive strategies.

Zimmerman (1990) has been the leading proponent of an expanded model of academic self-regulation. Viewed within the framework of social cognitive theory, students must develop skills to regulate the motivational, emotional, and social determinants of their intellectual functioning, as well as the cognitive aspects. This requires bringing self-influence to bear on every aspect of their learning experiences. Efficacious self-reg-

ulators gain knowledge, skills, and intrinsic interests in intellectual matters. Weak self-regulators achieve limited self-development.

It is not enough to have self-management skills. They will contribute little if students cannot get themselves to apply those skills persistently in the face of difficulties, stressors, and competing attractions. Firm belief in one's self-management efficacy provides the staying power. The stronger the students' perceived efficacy to manage their own learning, the higher their aspirations and accomplishments (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994; Zimmerman, Bandura & Martinez-Pons, 1992).

We are entering a new era in which the construction of knowledge will rely increasingly on electronic inquiry. At present, much information is available solely in electronic form. Before long, most information will be available only in this form. Those who lack Internet literacy will be cut off from critical information needed to manage their daily lives. Constructing knowledge through Internet inquiry involves complex self-management. Knowing how to access, process, and evaluate the glut of information is vital for knowledge construction and cognitive functioning. People who doubt their efficacy to conduct productive inquiries and to manage the electronic technology quickly become overwhelmed by the informational overload. In research on self-instruction through the Internet, students with high self-efficacy for self-regulated learning make the best use of Internet-based instruction (Joo, Bong, & Choi, 2000). Social cognitive theory provides guides for building the personal efficacy and cognitive skills needed to use the Internet productively and creatively (Debowski, Wood, & Bandura, 2001).

The task of creating productive learning environments rests heavily on the talents and efficacy of teachers. Teachers' beliefs in their instructional efficacy partly determine how they structure academic activities in their classrooms. This affects students' academic development and judgment of their intellectual capabilities. Teachers with high self-efficacy create mastery experiences for their students. Those beset by self-doubts construct classroom environments that are likely to undermine students' judgments of their abilities and their cognitive development (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990). Ashton and Webb (1996) showed that students learn much more from teachers who feel efficacious to manage educational demands than from those beset with self-doubts.

Adolescents must manage a difficult educational transition to middle-level schools. This involves a major environmental change that taxes personal efficacy. Adolescents move from a personalized school environment of familiar peers to an impersonal, departmentalized one with curricular tracking into college preparatory, general, or vocational paths. Under these new social structural arrangements, they have to reestablish their sense of efficacy, social connectedness, and status within an enlarged het-

erogeneous network of new peers and with multiple teachers in rotating class sessions. During this adaptational period, young adolescents sense some loss of personal control, become less confident in themselves, are more sensitive to social evaluation, and suffer some decline in self-motivation (Eccles & Midgley, 1989).

But these initial adverse effects are neither universal nor enduring for every adolescent. Like other new demands and challenges, school transitions can be detrimental or beneficial to the growth of personal efficacy. For example, adolescents who have a high sense of efficacy weather inefficacious teachers in the move to junior high school, whereas inefficacious students become even more self-doubting of their capabilities (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989).

The school operates as a multilevel social system with interlocking relationships. Teachers' shared beliefs in their collective power to motivate and educate students create school cultures conducive to educational development. Perceived efficacy explains differences in school achievement after controlling for student characteristics, enrollment stability, teachers' experience, and prior school achievement (Bandura, 1997).

### **SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS AS SHAPERS OF CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND TRAJECTORIES**

A major part of people's daily life is spent in occupational activities. These pursuits do more than simply provide income for one's livelihood. Occupations structure a large part of people's everyday reality and serve as a major source of personal identity and self-evaluation. As an interdependent activity, occupational pursuits also structure a good part of people's daily social relations. Moreover, experiences in the work life have considerable repercussions on family life and psychosocial well-being.

The choices made during formative periods of development shape the course of lives. Such choices determine which aspects of their potentialities people cultivate and which they leave undeveloped. The self-development during formative periods forecloses some types of options and makes others realizable. Among the choices that affect life paths, those that center on career choice and development are of special import for the reasons given. Although occupationally relevant choices play a key role in setting the course of lifestyle trajectories with diverse impact across the life span, this area of personal development has received surprisingly little attention in developmental psychology.

Research with young adults confirms that beliefs of personal efficacy play a key role in occupational development and pursuits (Bandura, 1997; Betz & Hackett, 1986; Hackett, 1995; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). The

higher the students' perceived efficacy to fulfill educational requirements and occupational roles, the wider the career options they seriously consider pursuing, the greater the interest they have in them, the better they prepare themselves educationally for different occupational careers, and the greater their staying power in challenging career pursuits. People simply eliminate from consideration occupations they believe to be beyond their capabilities, however attractive the occupations may be. Efficacy beliefs predict occupational choices and level of mastery of educational requirements for those pursuits when variations in actual ability, prior level of academic achievement, scholastic aptitude, and vocational interests are controlled (Brown, Lent, & Larkin, 1989; Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1984, 1986, 1987; Lent, Lopez, & Bieschke, 1993).

The task of choosing what lifework to pursue looms large in later adolescence. The preparatory choices in this realm play a key role in shaping the pathways that adolescents follow into adulthood and the course their lives will take. Research conducted within the framework of social cognitive theory is adding to our understanding of how efficacy beliefs operate in concert with socioeconomic and familial influences in shaping occupational aspirations and considerations of career pursuits (Bandura, Barbaranelli, et al., 2001).

Familial socioeconomic status is linked to adolescents occupational trajectories only indirectly by raising parental educational aspirations and belief in their efficacy to promote their children's academic development. The more strongly parents believe that they can play a part in their children's scholastic development, the higher the educational aspirations they hold for them. Aspiring parents act in ways that build their children's academic, social, and self-regulatory efficacy, raise their aspirations, and promote their scholastic achievements.

The patterning of children's perceived academic, social, and self-regulatory efficacy influences the types of occupational activities for which they judge themselves to be efficacious both directly and through its impact on academic aspirations. Perceived occupational self-efficacy gives direction to the kinds of career pursuits children seriously consider, or disfavor, for their life's work.

There are gender differences in perceived occupational efficacy, career choice, and preparatory development. The differences usually follow the stereotypic courses, with boys judging themselves more efficacious for careers in science and technology and girls reporting a higher sense of efficacy for social, educational, and health services. These differences in perceived occupational self-efficacy and choice are all the more telling because girls perform academically as well as do boys. Girls are catching up with boys in coursework in math and science in high school, but girls are still shunning careers in scientific and technical fields (Betz, 1994;

Lewin, 1998). Such findings suggest that the foreclosure of career options may rest more heavily on perceived inefficacy and societal impediments than on background preparation. There are a number of societal practices that undermine women's sense of efficacy in quantitative academic domains critical to career choice and development (Bandura, 1997; Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Hackett & Betz, 1981). The gender-linked biases operate in familial, educational, mass media, organizational, and societal systems.

Given that children's career trajectories become crystallized early in the developmental process, efforts to reduce biases that constrict women's career development require early intervention. Modeling supplemented with guided mastery experiences provides an especially effective vehicle for building resilient self-efficacy. In efforts to reduce gender disparities arising from constraining self-beliefs, this approach instills a strong sense of efficacy and skill in domains of educational and occupational activities in which many women are beset with self-doubt (Betz & Schifano, 2000; Gist, Schwoerer, & Rosen, 1989; Schunk & Lilly, 1984).

In acknowledging the influential role of perceived self-efficacy in gender differences in career aspirations and pursuits, one should not lose sight of the fact that inequitable educational practices, cultural constraints, disparate incentive systems, and truncated opportunity structures are important contributors to women's career development. It should also be noted that there is substantial diversity within sexes. Neither boys nor girls are a uniform group. Therefore, modal gender characteristics in perceived self-efficacy should not be imputed to all members within each sex group. Indeed, women who take a more egalitarian view toward the roles of women display a higher sense of efficacy for traditionally male occupations and pursue such careers more often (Hackett, 1985). They construct different identities and futures for themselves.

Preparing for a productive occupational career poses a major transitional challenge in late adolescence. The youth who pursue careers via higher education follow a structured pathway. They are counseled, informed about college entry requirements, adequately prepared in the requisite academic subjects, and financially supported in one way or another during their schooling. They have the benefit of advanced academic preparation, which not only expands career options but provides them access to opportunities through informal social networks and established institutional linkages.

The transition from school to occupational career is a much more difficult problem for the non-college-bound youth, especially in the U.S. educational system. Schools offer these young people little occupational counseling or help in vocational placement. Many are inadequately prepared in the basic skills required for the technologies of the modern

workplace. Some prefer a period of freedom to explore things before settling on a particular vocational pursuit. The vast majority, however, find themselves in a marginal work status by exclusion from the primary labor market rather than by choice.

The problem does not reside solely in the deficiencies of youth. Organizational hiring practices and the lack of functional linkages between schools and the workplace create institutional impediments to employability. Employers come to regard recent school graduates as too immature and unreliable to invest the time and effort to develop their vocational competencies. They prefer older applicants who have already passed through the presumed probationary period of instability and are ready to settle down to a stable vocational career. So after they leave school, many youth find themselves in a moratorium status, drifting between short-term jobs that require few skills and offer little future (Osterman, 1980).

Successful school performance reflects a constellation of personal competencies, including motivational and self-management capabilities as well as cognitive skills. Hence, academic achievement is a good predictor of vocational productivity at the outset and in the long term, but employers do not use this information in their hiring decisions (Bishop, 1989). Because of the long delay between leaving school and being seriously considered for permanent employment, employers ignore the academic predictors of vocational success. Doing well in high school does not bring a better job and higher pay. These hiring practices remove the functional value of academic performance for noncollege-bound youth.

Other societies create more formal social mechanisms for getting non-college-bound youth started early on valued occupational careers. These systems provide them with incentives to develop their intellectual competencies. Many of these educational systems provide high-level occupational routes through apprenticeship systems (Hamilton, 1987). Industry and schools share responsibility for occupational development and link educational programs to occupational career lines by combining academic instruction with intensive apprenticeships at work sites that lead to skilled employment (Hamilton, 1987). Academic achievement is rewarded with preferred apprenticeships. These intensive apprenticeships are held in high status and serve as good means for career advancement.

In other systems, schools and employers form close partnerships, with a mutual commitment of schools to educate their students well and businesses to provide occupational career paths for them upon graduation (Rosenbaum & Kariya, 1989). The close partnership not only provides transition routes but also restores the functional value of educational development for non-college youth. Just as selective colleges foster mas-

tery of academic competencies through their admission standards, business hiring standards do so by rewarding educational attainments with better occupational options.

### **ROLE OF SELF-EFFICACY IN HEALTH PROMOTION**

The quality of health is heavily influenced by lifestyle habits. This enables individuals to exercise some control over their vitality and health. By managing their health habits, individuals can live healthier and reduce the risk of disease. To stay healthy they should exercise, reduce dietary fat, refrain from smoking, control substance abuse, and develop effective ways of managing stressors. Self-management is good medicine. If the huge health benefits of these few habits were put into a pill, it would be declared a scientific milestone in the field of medicine.

Many of the habits that build the foundation for a healthful life or jeopardize it are formed during childhood and adolescence. For example, unless youngsters take up the smoking habit in their teens, they rarely become smokers in adulthood. Adolescence is a time of experimentation with activities that can compromise the adolescent's future health. It is easier to prevent detrimental health habits than to try to change them after they become deeply entrenched as part of a lifestyle. However, adolescent development in the health domain is concerned not only with risk management, but with promotion of a healthful lifestyle.

Despite the heavy focus on the medical aspects of the adverse physical effects of unhealthful habits, we are witnessing a shift from the disease model to a health model. It is just as meaningful to speak of levels of vitality and healthfulness as of degrees of impairment and debility. People's beliefs that they can motivate themselves and regulate their health habits affect every phase of personal change—initiation, adoption, and maintenance (Bandura, 1997, 2004). Efficacy beliefs influence whether individuals consider changing detrimental health habits. They see little point in even trying if they believe they do not have what it takes to succeed. Among those who change detrimental health habits on their own, the successful ones have stronger perceived self-efficacy at the outset than do non-changers and subsequent relapsers (Carey & Carey, 1993). For those who try to do so, their sense of efficacy provides the staying power in the face of difficulties and setbacks during the adoption of health promoting behaviors.

Effective self-regulation is not achieved through an act of will. It requires development of self-regulatory skills. To build people's sense of efficacy, they must learn how to monitor their health behavior and the social and cognitive conditions under which they engage in it, set attain-

able sub-goals to motivate and guide their efforts, draw from an array of coping strategies rather than rely on a single technique, enlist self-motivating incentives and social supports to sustain the effort needed to succeed, and apply multiple self-influence consistently and persistently (Perri, 1985).

It is one thing to get people to adopt beneficial health habits. It is another thing to get them to stick to them. Maintenance of habit change relies heavily on self-regulatory capabilities and the functional value of the behavior. Development of self-management requires instilling a resilient sense of efficacy as well as imparting skills. Experiences in exercising control over troublesome situations serve as efficacy builders (Bandura, 1997; Marlatt, Baer, & Quigley, 1995). To strengthen resilience, people need to develop coping strategies not only to manage common precipitants of breakdown but to reinstate control after setbacks. This involves training in how to manage failure.

Health habits are rooted in familial practices. But schools have an important role to play in promoting the health of a nation. This is the only place where all children can be easily reached. It is a natural setting for promoting healthful eating and exercise habits, discouraging smoking and other types of substance abuse plied by peers, and building generic self-management skills.

An effective preventative program includes four major components (Bandura, 2004). The first component is informational. It informs children of the health risks and benefits of different lifestyle habits. The second component develops the social and self-management skills for translating informed concerns into effective preventative practices. The third component builds a resilient sense of efficacy to support the exercise of control in the face of difficulties and setbacks that inevitably arise. The final component enlists and creates social supports for desired personal changes. Educational efforts to promote the health of youths usually produce weak results. They provide factual information about health. But they usually do little to equip children with the skills and efficacy beliefs that enable them to manage the emotional and social pressures to adopt detrimental health habits.

Managing health habits involves managing social relationships, not just targeting a specific health behavior for change. Health promotion programs that include the essential elements of the self-management mastery model prevent or reduce injurious health habits. Health knowledge can be conveyed readily, but changes in values, self-efficacy, and health habits require greater effort. The more behavioral mastery experiences provided, the greater the beneficial effect (Murray, Pirie, Luepker, & Pallonen, 1989). The more intensive the program, and the better the

implementation, the stronger the impact (Connell, Turner, & Mason, 1985).

Comprehensive approaches that integrate guided mastery health programs with family and community efforts are more successful in promoting health and in preventing detrimental habits than are programs in which the schools try to do it alone (Perry, Kelder, Murray, & Klepp, 1992). Alcohol, drug abuse, and other health-related habits can also be changed by self-management programs (Botvin & Dusenbury, 1992; Gilchrist, Schinke, Trimble, & Cvetkovich, 1987; Killen et al., 1989).

Schools are inadequately equipped with the resources, training, and incentives to undertake health promotion and early modification of habits that jeopardize health. As in other social systems, teachers focus on areas in which they are evaluated. They are not graded for health promotion. When preventive programs are grudgingly allowed in schools, they try to do too much, with too little, in too short a time, with fitful quality of implementations to achieve much. Such efforts often do more to discredit psychosocial approaches through deficient implementation than to advance the health of youths.

Health promotion must be structured as a part of a societal commitment that makes the health of its youth a matter of high priority. A serious commitment must provide the personnel, incentives, resources, and the operational control needed to do the job well. The programs should be *in* the school, but not *of* the school. New school-based models of health promotion should operate together with the home, the community, and the society at large.

Schools' health-related practices need changing as well. Schools that are provided with a brief health promotion curriculum and encouraged to lower the fat content of their lunch offerings and enhance their physical activity offerings produce lasting improvements in children's eating and exercise habits (Luepker et al., 1996).

Psychosocial programs for health promotion will be increasingly implemented via interactive internet-based systems. They provide a convenient, individualized means for informing, enabling, motivating, and guiding individuals in their efforts to make lifestyle changes. The personalized feedback can be adjusted to participants' self-efficacy level, the unique impediments in their lives, and the progress they are making. Adolescents at risk for health problems typically refuse preventative or remedial health services. But they will pursue online individualized guidance. For example, adolescents at high risk of eating disorders resist seeking help. But they use interactive Internet-delivered guidance because it is readily accessible, convenient, and provides a feeling of anonymity (Taylor, Winzelberg, & Celio, 2001). Adolescents reduce dissatisfaction

with their weight and body shape, and they alter dysfunctional attitudes and disordered eating behavior by this means.

The quality of health of a nation's youth is a social matter, not just a personal one. It requires changing the practices of social systems that impair health rather than just changing the habits of individuals. It is the height of irony to strive to promote healthful habits in school children while schools promote in their lunch program fast foods, house vending machines that dispense soft drinks and candy, and advertise brand-name fast foods in return for substantial payments to schools by fast food corporations. Through efficacious collective action, parents in some school districts have banned these practices. Given the soaring rates of child and adolescent obesity, using schools to promote unhealthy diets should be banned legislatively nationwide.

### **SELF-EFFICACY IN AFFECT REGULATION**

The recent years have witnessed a growing interest in the quality and function of people's emotional lives. To the extent that affect was addressed, it was usually treated as an effect of situational incitements rather than as determinants of psychosocial functioning. Affect has important intrapersonal, communicative, and behavioral functional value (Bandura, 1986; Caprara, 2002; Larsen, 2000). Affect is often the basis of social ties and their durability that influences the course of lives (Bandura, 1986). Emotional competence, as reflected in the ability to discern emotions, to understand the social consequences of one's emotionally expressive behavior, and to manage one's emotional states, is essential for successful interpersonal transactions in everyday life (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Saarni, 1999). Moreover, positive affect enhances cognitive functioning, helps buffer the perturbing effects of aversive experiences, and facilitates adaptive coping (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Fredrickson, 1998). Failures in affect regulation give rise to emotional and psychosocial dysfunctions (Gross & Munoz, 1995; Larsen, 2000).

Affective states are often depicted as operating directly on psychosocial functioning. Positive affect does good things. Negative affect does bad things. Actually, adaptive functioning requires discriminative regulation of affect. People would get into deep trouble if they vented their wrath every time they felt angry. Their lives would be severely constricted if fear automatically triggered immobility and avoidant behavior, because most important pursuits involve risks and fear-arousing threats. Nor can they go around expressing affection, liking, and joyfulness indiscriminately. The impact of affect on behavior operates largely through self-regulatory mechanisms. Thus, negative affect precipitates problem behavior in those

of low self-regulatory efficacy but infrequently in those of high self-efficacy.

Adolescence is a time of involvement in intimate relationships, formation of emotionally-charged partnerships, and accompanying emotional ups and downs. Learning how to manage emotionally invested relationships becomes a matter of considerable importance. It is one thing to possess self-regulatory skills but another to be able to adhere to them in taxing and perturbing situations. A resilient sense of efficacy is needed to overrule emotional and psychosocial subverters of self-regulative efforts. Adolescents' sense of efficacy to manage their positive and negative emotional life contributes to their perceived self-efficacy to take charge of their academic life, to ward off peer pressures for transgressive behavior, and to feel empathy for the experiences of others (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Gerbino, & Pastorelli, 2003). These forms of personal efficacy foster pro-socialness, deter engagement in antisocial activities and substance abuse, and enable adolescents to manage negative life events without suffering lingering bouts of despondency.

### **MANAGEMENT OF SEXUALITY**

With achievement of reproductive maturity, which is occurring earlier than it did in the past, adolescents must learn how to manage their sexuality long before they are ready to take on the functions of parenthood. While the mass media serve up a heavy dose of sprightly sexual activity, mainly by unmarried partners in uncommitted relationships, societal practices largely foster sexual ignorance and unpreparedness (Brown, Childers, & Waszak, 1990). Unlike most other activities, sexual unpreparedness does not dissuade sexual ventures. Teenagers engage in a high rate of sexual activity and are initiating it at a younger age (Brooks-Gunn & Furstenberg, 1989). Early sexual activity is more prevalent among adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who have low educational aspirations.

Our society has always had difficulty providing comprehensive sex education and contraceptive services for its youth. Nor is much sexual guidance provided in the home (Koch, 1991). Because many parents do a poor job of it, most youngsters pick up their sex information and a good deal of misinformation late in their development primarily from peers and, to a lesser extent, from the media and from the adverse consequences of uninformed sexual experimentation. Moreover, socially oriented efforts at sex education are often thwarted by sectors of the society that lobby actively for maintaining a veil of silence regarding protective sexual practices in the belief that such information will promote indis-

criminate sexuality. They vigorously oppose sex education programs in the schools that talk about contraceptive methods. Even adults who view sexual development more open-mindedly are uneasy talking frankly about sexual matters with their children and evade the subject as much as possible. They have learned to talk a good line, but they convey anxious attitudes about sexual relations. Many impart sexual information to their children only after they suspect their children have already learned “too much” from other sources (Bandura & Walters, 1959).

Because of anxious evasion and moral opposition, efforts at sex education are usually couched in desexualized generalities about reproduction processes that leave much ignorance in their wake. The net result is that teenagers in our society are more sexually ignorant and are getting pregnant at higher rates than in other societies that address the informational, attitudinal, and interpersonal aspects of sexual development openly and provide ready access to contraceptive services.

Most efforts to prevent the adverse consequences of early sexual activity center on educating teenagers about sexual matters and contraceptive use, encouraging them to postpone sexual intercourse, and providing the sexually active ones with contraceptive services. It is widely assumed that if teenagers are adequately informed about sexuality they will take appropriate self-protective action. Heightened awareness and knowledge of risks are important preconditions for self-directed change. Unfortunately, information alone does not necessarily exert much influence on sexual behavior. Translating sexual knowledge into effective self-management of sexuality requires social and self-regulative skills and personal efficacy to exercise control over sexual situations. As Gagnon and Simon (1973) have correctly observed, managing sexuality involves managing interpersonal relationships.

Sexual risk reduction calls for enhancing efficacy rather than simply targeting a specific behavior for change (Bandura, 1994). The major challenge is not teaching teenagers sex guidelines, which is easily achievable, but equipping them with skills that enable them to put the guidelines into practice consistently in the face of counteracting social pressures. Difficulties arise because knowledge and intentions often conflict with interpersonal pressures and sentiments. In these interpersonal predicaments, the sway of allurements, heightened sexual arousal, desire for social acceptance, coercive pressures, situational constraints, fear of rejection, and personal embarrassment can override the influence of the best informed judgment. The weaker the perceived self-efficacy to exercise personal control, the more such social and emotional influences can increase the likelihood of early or risky sexual behavior.

In managing sexuality, people have to exercise influence over themselves as well as over others. This requires self-regulative skills in guiding

and motivating one's behavior. Self-regulation operates through internal standards, evaluative reactions to one's conduct, use of motivating self-incentives, and other forms of cognitive self-guidance. Self-regulative skills thus form an integral part of sexual self-management. They partly determine the social situations into which people get themselves, how well they navigate through them, and how effectively they can resist social inducements to risky sexual behavior. It is easier to wield control over preliminary choice behavior that may lead to difficult social predicaments than to try to extricate oneself from such situations while enmeshed in them. This is because the beginning phase involves mainly anticipatory motivators that are amenable to cognitive control. The entanglement phase includes stronger social inducements to engage in unprotected sexual behavior, which are less easily manageable.

The influential role played by efficacy beliefs in the management of sexual activities is documented in studies of contraceptive use by teenage women at high risk for unwanted pregnancy because they often engage in unprotected intercourse (Kasen, Vaughan, & Walter, 1992; Longmore, Manning, Giordino, & Rudolph, 2003). Such research shows that perceived efficacy to manage sexual relationships is associated with more effective use of contraceptives. The predictive relationship remains when controls are applied for demographic factors, knowledge, and sexual experience. Favorable attitudes toward contraceptives increases intentions to use them, but efficacy beliefs determine whether those intentions are put into practice (Basen-Engquist & Parcel, 1992). Even women who are sexually experienced, knowledgeable about contraception, and highly motivated to prevent pregnancy because it would jeopardize career plans fail to use contraceptives consistently and effectively if they lack a sense of personal efficacy (Heinrich, 1993). Drugs and alcohol lower perceived efficacy to adhere to safer sex practices, which increases the likelihood of unprotected sex (Kasen et al., 1992). Experiences of forced unwanted intercourse, which are not uncommon, also lower women's sense of efficacy to exercise control over contraceptive practices (Heinrich, 1993).

A low sense of self-regulatory efficacy in the presence of social pressures promoting risky sexual practices spells trouble. Indeed, the psychosocial profile of teenagers who engage in unprotected intercourse includes a low sense of efficacy to exercise self-protective control in sexual involvements, association with peers who sanction intercourse and are risky in their own sexual behavior, and misconceptions about the prevalence of unprotected intercourse among students their age (Walter et al., 1992). This combination of psychosocial influences overrides beliefs about personal susceptibility to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and about their severity. Perceived efficacy and peer influence similarly pre-

dict whether or not teenagers intend to become sexually active in the next year, have multiple partners, and use condoms (Walter et al., 1993). Values about sexual involvement at their age also affect behavioral intentions. Whether sexual values and standards determine peer affiliations or affiliations shape sexual standards remains to be determined. There is every indication that these types of influences operate bidirectionally (Bandura & Walters, 1959).

Gilchrist and Schinke (1983) applied the main features of the generic self-regulative model of personal change to teach teenagers how to exercise self-protective control over sexual situations. They received essential factual information about high-risk sexual behavior and self-protective measures. Through modeling, they were taught how to communicate frankly about sexual matters and contraceptives, how to deal with conflicts regarding sexual activities, and how to resist unwanted sexual advances. They practiced applying these social skills by role-playing in simulated situations and received enabling feedback. The self-regulative program significantly enhanced perceived efficacy and skill in managing sexuality. Botvin and his associates provide a comprehensive school-based program that teaches generic self-regulative skills for managing sexual activities and social pressures for alcohol and drug use (Botvin & Dusenbury, 1992). These personal and social life skills include, in addition to strategies for resisting coercions for detrimental conduct, skills in problem solving, decision making, self-guidance, and stress management. Educational aspirations delay initiation into sexual activity. Therefore, efforts to reduce early childbearing should also be directed at promoting educational self-development and aspiration.

Many adolescents engage in unprotected sex with multiple partners, which puts them at risk of STDs, including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. Change programs incorporating elements of the self-regulative model produce significant reductions in risky sexual behavior in male and female adolescents alike (Jemmott, Jemmott, & Fong, 1992; Jemmott, Jemmott, Spears, Hewitt, & Cruz-Collins, 1992). Those who had the benefit of the program were more knowledgeable about infective risks and more likely to use contraceptives to protect themselves against STDs and unwanted pregnancies than were those who received no instructive guidance or were only given detailed information on the causes, transmission, and prevention of STDs. The findings of these studies indicate that simply imparting sexual information without developing the self-regulative skills and sense of efficacy needed to exercise personal control over sexual relationships has little impact on patterns of sexual behavior.

## MANAGEMENT OF HIGH-RISK ACTIVITIES

With growing independence during the passage out of childhood status, some experimentation with risky activities is not all that uncommon (Jessor, 1986). These activities include alcohol and marijuana use, smoking, tooling around in automobiles, and early sexual activity. Adolescents expand and strengthen their sense of efficacy by learning how to deal successfully with potentially troublesome situations in which they are unpracticed, as well as with advantageous life events. The strengthening of self-efficacy is best achieved through guided mastery experiences that provide the knowledge and skills needed to exercise adequate control over situations that place one at risk (Bandura, 1986). Development of resilient self-efficacy requires some experience in mastering difficulties through perseverant effort. Success in managing problem situations instills a strong belief in one's capabilities that provides staying power in the face of difficulties. Adolescents who have been sheltered and left ill-prepared in coping skills are vulnerable to distress and behavioral problems when they encounter difficult interpersonal predicaments that are not completely avoidable.

Most adolescents who experiment with hazardous behaviors quit them after a while, but some become deeply and chronically engaged in them. Activities rarely occur in isolation. Rather, they are clustered by social and normative influences. Sets of behaviors that are blended by social custom create separate clusters of activities, such as drinking goes with partying. Incompatible demands such as heavy partying detract from serious studying. Distinctive patterns of activities are also structured by socioeconomic status, sex, and age-graded practices.

Whatever the sources of the activity patterning may be, frequent engagement in some problem behaviors leads to involvement in other ones that form a high-risk lifestyle. Such behavior usually includes a constellation of activities such as heavy drinking, drug use, transgressive conduct, early sexual activity, and disengagement from academic pursuits (Donovan & Jessor, 1985; Elliott, 1993). Such a lifestyle often has reverberating consequences that jeopardize physical health and self-development. Some of the detrimental effects produce irretrievable losses of life options.

The development and exercise of self-regulatory efficacy is rooted in familial practices. As children increase in maturity and development, family management practices change in form and locus of guidance (Bandura, 1997). In childhood, the interactions are centered heavily within the family. This enables parents to influence directly the course of their children's development. As previously noted, in earlier phases of child development, parents contribute to acquisition of self-regulatory

efficacy (Bandura et al., 1996). As adolescents move increasingly into the larger social world outside the home, parents cannot be present to guide their behavior. They rely on their children's personal standards and self-regulatory capabilities to serve as guides and deterrents in nonfamilial contexts. To provide further guidance and support to adolescents, parents need to know what activities these young people are engaging in and their choice of associates outside the home. Parents have to depend largely on the adolescents themselves to tell them what they are doing when they are on their own. Adolescents, therefore, play a major agentic role in this distal guidance process.

Adolescents' perceived efficacy to resist peer pressure to engage in troublesome activities counteracts involvement in delinquent conduct and substance abuse (Caprara et al., 1998, 2002). It does so both directly and by fostering open communication with parents. By acting on beliefs that they can manage peer pressure, adolescents reduce the likelihood of engaging in substance abuse and antisocial activities. Moreover, adolescents who feel efficacious to withstand peer pressure discuss with their parents the predicaments they face. Open familial communication enables parents to provide guidance and social support, and it identifies potential problem situations that may warrant some monitoring. Supportive and enabling parental communication and monitoring, in turn, operate as social safeguards against detrimental involvement in risky activities. Adolescents who have low efficacy to resist peer pressure for risky activities do not talk with their parents about what they are doing outside the home. This shuts out a source of assistance on how to manage an expanding social world centered heavily around peers, some of whom get themselves into highly risky situations.

In much of the theorizing about adolescents, the peer group is portrayed as a ruling force in their lives. Peers are an influential socializing agency, but as shown in the child-parent linkage in the management of high-risk activities, peer affiliation does not disembodify adolescents from their families. Moreover, adolescents function agentially rather than just reactively in their transactions with peers.

Social cognitive theory specifies a number of factors that determine the depth of involvement in high-risk activities and the ease of disengagement from them (Bandura, 1997). As noted above, among these factors is the amount of social guidance and development of self-regulatory capabilities to manage potentially risky situations and to extricate oneself from detrimental ones. A secure sense of self-regulatory efficacy and supportive familial communication enable adolescents to elude hazardous and detrimental pathways. Other factors include the intensity of early involvement and the reversibility of effects. Heavy early use of habit-forming substances can create dependencies and lifelong personal vulnerabilities that

make it hard to give them up. Experimentations that have benign effects are a different matter from those that place one at danger of injurious consequences or produce irreversible outcomes that shape life courses. For example, drunken driving that leaves one a paraplegic is a tragic event that has lifelong consequences. Good guidance can turn beginning involvement in potentially troublesome activities into opportunities to develop self-regulatory skills to avoid future problems.

The impact of engagement in risky activities on association networks is another predictor. Experimentations within prosocial peer networks carry much less risk than do those that inaugurate one into peer networks deeply enmeshed in a deviant lifestyle. Adolescents vary widely in their perceptions of the extent of peer involvement in problem behavior. Perceived normativeness of risky behavior comes into play. Adolescents who have an exaggerated view of peer involvement are more likely to continue risky activities than are those who believe that such involvement is less widespread. The final consideration is the degree of intrusion of risky activities into prosocial development. The more the problem behavior competes with and impairs prosocial development, the more it jeopardizes successful trajectories. Competitive intrusion on intellectual development is of special importance because intellectual development provides a major means for successful pursuit of prosocial lifestyles.

Detrimental behavior is better deterred by fostering satisfying prosocial options than by efforts to curtail detrimental ones that provide some rewards but at cumulative personal and social costs. Other forms of self-efficacy come into play in enablement for prosocial lifestyles sufficiently attractive to supplant detrimental ones. Thus, for example, a high sense of academic self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, and empathic efficacy are accompanied by low involvement in transgressive activities and substance abuse (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, & Regalia, 2001; Bandura et al., 2003).

Thus, whether adolescents forsake risky activities or become chronically enmeshed in them is determined, in large part, by the interplay of personal competencies, self-regulatory capabilities, and the nature of the prevailing social influences in their lives. Those who adopt the hazardous pathway generally place low value on academic self-development and are heavily influenced by peers who model and approve engagement in problem behaviors (Jessor, 1986). Both academic self-development and management of peer pressures for risky activities rest partly on a firm sense of self-regulatory efficacy. Thus, adolescents who are insecure in their efficacy are less able to avoid or curtail involvement in drugs, unprotected sexual activity, and delinquent conduct that jeopardize beneficial life

courses than are those who have a strong sense of self-regulatory efficacy (Allen, Leadbeater, & Aber, 1990).

Substance abuse weakens perceived efficacy to resist interpersonal pressures that lead to drug use, thus creating a self-debilitating cycle (Pentz, 1985). Impoverished, hazardous environments present harsh realities with minimal resources, models, and social supports for culturally valued pursuits. But they provide extensive modeling, incentives, social supports, and opportunity structures for antisocial pursuits. Such environments severely tax the coping efficacy of youth embedded in them to make it through adolescence in ways that do not irreversibly foreclose many beneficial life paths. Education provides the best escape from poverty, crime, and substance abuse. Adolescents living under these bleak circumstances need enablement programs that cultivate competencies that help to structure their lives and give meaning and purpose to them.

For adolescents who are drug users or at risk for taking up the habit, Gilchrist and Schinke (1985) developed a self-regulatory program that has been successful in preventing and reducing drug abuse by adolescents. This type of program informs adolescents about drug effects, provides them with interpersonal skills for managing personal and social pressures to use drugs, lowers drug use, and fosters a self-conception as a nonuser (Gilchrist et al., 1987). These findings are all the more interesting because they were achieved with ethnic and minority youth who have to contend with repeated inducements to use alcohol and drugs. Regarding oneself as a nonuser can produce important lifestyle changes by restructuring peer relations and the kinds of activities in which one gets involved (Stall & Biernacki, 1986).

Most of our theories greatly over-predict the incidence of psychosocial pathology under adversity. This is because they favor a *reactive risk* model rather than a *proactive mastery* model. For example, families in our inner cities are living under dismal conditions of poverty, physical decay, social disorganization, and inadequate human services. These environments provide few prosocial opportunities but many antisocial ones. Our theories would lead one to expect that most of the children living in these impoverished, risky environments would be heavily involved in crime, addicted to drugs, or too psychically impaired for a normal life. Adversity does not preordain pathology. Although some youths in high-risk environments are defeated by their pernicious circumstances, remarkably, most manage to make it through the developmental hazards. In adulthood, they support themselves through legitimate jobs, form partnerships, and stay clear of criminal activities.

Families achieve these results through self-sacrifice and perseverant effort that promote their children's development and protect them from

dangerous neighborhood activities (Furstenberg, Eccles, Elder, Cook, & Sameroff, 1999). They carve out functional sub-communities through active involvement in church and other social organizations. These affiliations link their children to positive models, constructive activities, supportive social networks and values and social norms that parents hold dear. The social ties compensate for meager neighborhood resources. By exercising their sense of efficacy, the parents do not let their dismal environment defeat them. That most adolescents in hazardous environments manage to overcome their adverse circumstances without serious involvement in self-ruinous pursuits is testimony to their resilience and to the efficacy of their caretakers. But it places a heavy burden on personal efficacy to socially structure beneficial life paths under such conditions.

Such findings dispute the gloomy over-predictions by theories that are more preoccupied with how people are defeated by inimical life circumstances than with how they transcend them. Focusing solely on life risks fails to explain success under adversity. This is because enablement factors, which equip people with the skills and resilient self-beliefs to exert control over their lives, can override the negative effects of risk factors. When enabling factors are considered, as in resilience, they are depicted in static, epidemiological terms as protective factors.

Social cognitive theory construes the positive contributors to adaptation within an agentic perspective as *enablement* factors rather than as *protective* or sheltering factors. Protectiveness shields individuals from harsh realities or may weaken their impact. Enablement equips them with the personal resources to select and structure their environments in ways that set a successful course for their lives. This is the difference between proactive recruitment of sources of positive guidance and support and reactive adaptation to life circumstances. An agentic view of resilience also differs from the dualistic diathesis-stress model in which external stressors act upon personal vulnerabilities. Individuals play a proactive role in their adaptation rather than simply undergo happenings in which environments act upon their personal endowments.

The success with which the risks and challenges of adolescence are managed depends, in no small measure, on the strength of personal efficacy built up through prior mastery experiences. Youngsters who enter adolescence with a sense of efficacy manage the transitional stressors in ways that sustain or increase their sense of personal competence (Nottelmann, 1987). Those beset by a disabling sense of inefficacy transport their vulnerability to stress and dysfunction to the new environmental demands and to the pervasive biopsychosocial changes they find themselves undergoing.

## **POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL COMMITMENT**

The quality of life in a society rests partly on its political culture and institutional practices. Because of increasing complexity in the economic, technological, and social realities of life, governmental agencies perform many functions that were formerly carried out by familial and other social systems. Therefore, if people are to have some command of their lives, they must exercise influence over the political process. The politically uninvolved become accomplices to their own marginalization by relinquishing control to those who are more than happy to use the governmental system as an agency to advance their parochial interests.

There are two aspects to the exercise of control that are especially relevant to social change through political effort (Bandura, 1997; Gurin & Brim, 1984). The first is a sense of political efficacy that one can have a hand in effecting social change through political activity. The second is the changeableness of the sociopolitical system and its responsiveness to public interest and action. Those who wield power and influence build their privileges into legislative statutes, processes, and institutional structures (Bandura, 1997; Gardner, 1972). They do not relinquish privileges in acts of charity. Effecting social change requires perseverant, collective action in common cause. In the words of John Gardner, social change is not for the short winded.

The joint influence of collective political efficacy and trust in the sociopolitical system predicts the form and level of engagement in political activity (Wolfsfeld, 1986). People who believe they can achieve desired changes through their collective voice and view their governmental systems as trustworthy participate actively in conventional forms of political activities. Those who believe they can accomplish social changes by perseverant collective action but view the governing system and officeholders as untrustworthy favor more confrontive and coercive tactics. The politically apathetic have little faith that they can influence governmental functioning through collective initiatives and are disaffected from the political system.

The development of beliefs about efficacy to influence the political system and the responsiveness, character, and trustworthiness of governmental institutions and officeholders starts early in life. Children neither have much political knowledge nor participate in political activities. Some of their beliefs about the realities of political life are acquired through vicarious rather than direct experience. Children observe the animated political debates by adults around them and in the mass media about the ability to influence the political system and the character and trustworthiness of elected officials. In the vicarious source of political efficacy, the successes and failures of others instill beliefs in the utility and disutility of

collective action (Muller, 1972). Children's beliefs about their efficacy to influence governmental practices may also be partially generalized from their experiences in trying to influence adults in educational and other institutional settings with which they must deal. Institutional practices that imbue children with a sense of efficacy that they can play a part in influencing their situations are more likely to instill a belief that political systems are also responsive and influenceable than are practices that breed a sense of futility that one can do much to affect authorities.

From elementary to high school, children's beliefs in their efficacy for political action increases, but their cynicism about government and those who run it also increases. The findings generally show that African American youths have a lower sense of political efficacy and higher political cynicism than do White youths (Lyons, 1970; Rodgers, 1974). But this reflects mainly differences in socioeconomic status. Youths of low socioeconomic status feel politically inefficacious and disaffected from the political system regardless of race. The racial differences emerge at the high socioeconomic level where African American youths express lower political efficacy and greater cynicism than do their White counterparts. This is especially true for perceived efficacy to affect the political process.

Group averages must be interpreted with caution, however, because they mask substantial diversity within ethnic and racial groupings. Thus, for high achievers, racial differences disappear in perceived efficacy for political action but remain in political cynicism. The more minority youths learn about the political system academically, the more cynical they become about it. Knowing how the system is supposed to work in the interests of the public only reinforces dissatisfaction with how it actually functions. Nor do the machinations of political life aired daily on the broadcast news media inspire faith in the integrity of governmental operations. Although heavy use of the news media raises personal political efficacy, it breeds disaffection with the political system (Newhagen, 1994a).

Social impediments and socialization practices may also be important contributors to differences in perceived political efficacy. No such differences are observed in childhood, but with increasing age, females feel less politically efficacious than do males (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954; Easton & Dennis, 1967). Studies of currently held efficacy beliefs are needed to determine whether the increased participation of women in political and legislative activities is reducing the gender gap in perceived efficacy to influence the political system. However, recent assessments reveal that the gender gap in perceived political efficacy is still with us (Fernández-Ballesteros, Díez-Nicolás, Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Bandura, 2002). The gender variability in political efficacy is, in many respects, more informative than faceless group averages. The suffragists were unshakable in their efficacy and unfazed by public ridicule and vigorous

attacks on their efforts to secure voting rights for women. The members of the League of Women Voters, of which there are large numbers nationwide, are exceedingly well informed, highly self-efficacious, and politically active. Increasing numbers of women are becoming legislators, political leaders, and policymakers. In the words of the popular ballad, the times they are a'changing.

The evolving advances in Internet technology enable people to bring their voices to bear on social and political matters of concern in ways they could not do before. The Internet is swift, wide-reaching, and free of institutional controls. It provides an easily accessible forum unimpeded by gatekeepers who command power over the broadcast media. The Internet is not only a ready means for mobilizing grassroots activity to promote desired changes in social practices and policies. It can connect disparate groups to one another in pursuit of common cause. By coordinating and mobilizing decentralized self-organizing groups, participants can meld local networks into widespread collective action.

Political contests are shifting to the cyber-world. The unfettered, pluralistic nature of the Internet is also changing the locus of power of the news media. The cyber-world contains a multiplicity of voices. Online journalistic enterprises, serving diverse ideologies and vested interests, may eventually supplant old-line broadcast networks as the main purveyors of social and political information. Adolescents in this electronic era can now be active players in the sociopolitical arena, rather than just observers of its machinations. The Internet permits ready civic engagement by adolescents in the political process.

The Internet technology distributes the capacity to communicate throughout society and across national borders. But it does not determine the quality of online communities and what gets communicated. Moreover, easy access to communication technologies does not necessarily enlist active participation unless individuals believe that they can achieve desired results by this means. Strong personal and collective efficacy determines whether people make their voices heard in cyber-world politicking and whether they play an active part in bringing about meaningful changes in their lives (Newhagen, 1994a, 1994b). Differential use of this political vehicle may further widen the disparity in perceived political efficacy across gender, race, and ethnicity.

### **SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY IN CULTURAL CONTEXT**

A contentious dualism pervades the field of cultural psychology pitting autonomy against interdependence, individualism against collectivism, and human agency against social structure reified as an entity disembod-

ied from the behavior of individuals. It is widely claimed that Western theories lack generalizability to non-Western cultures. The blend of individual, proxy, and collective agency varies cross-culturally. But one needs all forms of agency to make it through the day, wherever one lives.

Most of our cultural psychology is based on territorial culturalism. Nations are used as proxies for psychosocial orientations. For example, residents of Japan get categorized as collectivists and those in the United States as individualists. Cultures are dynamic and internally diverse systems not static monoliths. There is substantial diversity among societies placed in the same category. For example, collectivistic systems founded on Confucianism, Buddhism, and Marxism favor a communal ethic. But they differ in values, meanings, and the customs they promote (Kim, Triandis, Kâitçibasi, Choi, & Yoon, 1994). Nor are so-called individualistic cultures a uniform lot. Americans, Italians, Germans, French, and the British differ in their brands of individualism. There is also diversity across regions within the same country. The Northeast brand of individualism is quite different from the Midwestern and Western versions, which differ from that of the Deep South (Vandello & Cohen, 1999).

There are even greater individual differences among members within cultures (Matsumoto, Kudoh, & Takeuchi, 1996). For example, there are generational and socioeconomic differences in communality in collectivistic cultures. The younger, higher educated, and more affluent members are adopting individualistic orientations. Analyses across activity domains and classes of social relationships reveal that people behave communally in some aspects of their lives and individualistically in many other aspects. They express their cultural orientations conditionally rather than invariantly depending on incentive conditions (Yamagishi, 1988). Thus, members of a collectivistically-oriented society are active contributors to collective effort with in-group members, but slacken their effort in groups composed of out-group members. But when negative sanctions against free riders are instituted they become as communal with outsiders as do people in individualistic cultures.

Freeman and Bordia (2001) further confirm that people vary in individualistic and collectivistic social orientations depending on whether the reference group is familial, peer, academic, or national. Cultural trait measures cast in terms of faceless others and disembodied from domains of activity, social contexts, and incentive conditions mask this diversity upon which human adaptation is conditional. Intra-cultural and inter-domain variability and changeability of cultural orientations as a function of incentive conditions underscores the conceptual and empirical problems of using nations as proxies for culture and then ascribing global traits to the nations and all its members as though they all believed and behaved alike (Gjerde & Onishi, 2000). Moreover, much of the cross-cul-

tural research relies on bicultural contrasts. Members of a single collectivist culture are typically compared to those of a single individualistic one. Given the notable diversity, the dichotomizing approach can spawn a lot of misleading generalizations.

Not only are cultures not monolithic entities, but they are no longer insular. Global connectivity is shrinking cross-cultural uniqueness. Transnational interdependencies and global market forces are restructuring national economies and shaping the political and social life of societies. Advanced telecommunications technologies are disseminating ideas, values, and styles of behavior transnationally at an unprecedented rate. The symbolic environment, feeding off communication satellites, is altering national cultures and producing intercultural commonalities in some lifestyles. The growing role of electronic acculturation will foster a more extensive globalization of culture. People worldwide are becoming increasingly enmeshed in a cyber-world that transcends time, distance, place, and national borders. In addition, mass migrations of people and high global mobility of entertainers, athletes, journalists, academics, and employees of multinational corporations are changing cultural landscapes. This intermixing creates new hybrid cultural forms, blending elements from different ethnicities. Growing ethnic diversity within societies accords functional value to bicultural efficacy to navigate the demands of both one's ethnic subculture and that of the larger society.

These social forces are homogenizing some aspects of life, polarizing other aspects, and fostering a lot of cultural hybridization. The new realities call for broadening the scope of cross-cultural research beyond the focus on the social forces operating within given societies. The lives of contemporary adolescents in this boundless cyber-world are markedly different from the more insular experiences of the adolescents of yesteryear. Recall the earlier discussion of the mobile communication subculture of present-day adolescents.

One must distinguish between inherent capacities and how culture shapes these potentialities into diverse forms. For example, observational learning figures prominently in social cognitive theory. Humans have evolved an advanced capacity for observational learning. It is essential for their self-development and functioning regardless of the culture in which they reside. Indeed, in many cultures, the word for "*learning*" is the word for "*show*" (Reichard, 1938). Modeling is a universalized human capacity. But what is modeled, how modeling influences are socially structured, and the purposes they serve varies in different cultural milieus (Bandura & Walters, 1963).

A growing body of research similarly shows that a resilient sense of efficacy has generalized functional value regardless of whether one resides in an individualistically-oriented culture or a collectivistically-oriented one

(Earley, 1993, 1994; Gibson, 1995). Being immobilized by self-doubt and perceived futility of effort has little evolutionary value. But how efficacy beliefs are developed and structured, the ways in which they are exercised, and the purposes to which they are put vary cross-culturally. In short, there is a commonality in basic agentic capacities and mechanisms of operation, but diversity in the culturing of these inherent capacities.

Research testifies to the cross-cultural generalizability of self-efficacy theory. The factor structure of adolescents' self-efficacy beliefs is essentially the same in different cultural systems (Pastorelli et al., 2001). Not only is the structure of self-efficacy beliefs comparable cross-culturally, but so are their functional properties. Regardless of whether the cultures are American, Italian, Korean, or Chinese, the stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the performance attainments (Bandura et al., 1996; Bong, 2001; Joo et al., 2000). The cross-cultural comparability of function is evident as well in the impact of efficacy beliefs on perceived occupational efficacy and career choice and development (Bandura, Barbarinelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001; Lent, Brown, Nota, & Soresi, 1987; Lent et al., 2001).

Even the mechanisms through which self-efficacy beliefs affect performance are replicated cross-culturally. For example, social support has been shown to enhance psychosocial functioning. However, mediational analysis across diverse spheres of functioning reveal that it does so only indirectly to the extent that it raises perceived self-efficacy to manage environmental demands (Bandura, 2002). Park and her associates (Park et al., 2000) examined the causal structure involving different sources of social support, perceived academic self-efficacy, life satisfaction, and academic achievement in Korean children at different age levels. In accord with the functional relations reported in studies in the American and Chinese milieu, the impact of social support on academic achievement is entirely mediated through perceived self-efficacy. Social support raises perceived efficacy, which, in turn, raises academic achievement and satisfaction with one's home and school life. Similarly, the impact of social support on anxiety and depression in Chinese students and on Italian students' career preferences is entirely mediated through perceived self-efficacy (Cheung & Sun, 2000; Lent et al., 2003).

### **SELF-EFFICACY IN SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY**

It should be noted that the efficacy belief system operates as a component within the broader conceptual framework of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 2001). Personal and collective efficacy beliefs work in concert with other determinants in the theory to govern human thought,

affect, motivation, and action. These various determinants, which fall beyond the scope of this volume, are reviewed in some detail elsewhere (Bandura, 1986). However, the efficacy belief system occupies a pivotal role in causal structures because it provides the foundation for many of the other classes of determinants in this agentic theoretical perspective.

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