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ABSTRACT

A conceptual model for understanding youth development is provided and the processes that enhance the adolescent experience and promote successful transition from childhood to adulthood are identified. Intended as a guide for professionals constructing and implementing policies and programs, the model is based on the proposition that development occurs through reciprocal and dynamic interactions that take place between individuals and various aspects of their environment. Pathways to adulthood take many forms, and several specific types of interactions promote this development. This report identifies aspects of the social context that have been found to promote or serve as barriers to adolescents' opportunities to engage in these types of interactions. Biophysical aspects of the individual, aspects of society, the community, the family, and peer relationships are included. Interventions designed to assist youth in making successful transitions to adulthood will need to provide adolescents with opportunities to engage in interactions that foster development of a sense of competency, connectedness, control, and identity. The research also suggests that interventions must address children, families, and communities as a unit if they are to be effective for large numbers of children and families. "Constructing the Youth Development Model," which provides information on the procedures used in the report and discusses major theoretical approaches and research issues, is appended. (Contains 122 references.) (EMK)

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Family and Youth Services Bureau

UNDERSTANDING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT:

PROMOTING POSITIVE PATHWAYS OF GROWTH

Prepared for the
Family and Youth Services Bureau
by CSR, Incorporated

January 1997

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FOREWORD

For more than two decades, the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) has been promoting the strengths of an approach known as positive youth development. That approach suggests that each community must create a vision of what it wants for *all* young people. Only then can those communities create an environment in which young people can achieve their greatest potential, through supports, services, *and* opportunities.

Key to that process is an understanding of adolescence and of what young people need during this stage of life. Many of those needs have been identified by the youth service professionals in FYSB's network during the past 20 years; they also have been noted by key researchers in the adolescent development field.

Understanding Youth Development: Promoting Positive Pathways of Growth is a review of the research literature on adolescent development conducted by an advisory team of specialists in the field. On the basis of that review, the advisory team produced a conceptual framework for understanding youth development. That framework forms the core of *Understanding Youth Development*, which explores the developmental process, developmental pathways, desired adulthood outcomes, and critical ingredients necessary for positive adolescent development. The framework also examines the individual and contextual factors that influence adolescent developmental pathways and provides a brief overview of the strategies that might help communities support young people transitioning from adolescence to adulthood.

Understanding Youth Development is a companion piece to the FYSB-produced *Reconnecting Youth & Community: A Youth Development Approach*, which focuses on a community empowerment-youth development process for rebuilding this Nation's communities. *Understanding Youth Development* provides the theoretical underpinning so necessary to implementing the youth development approach: an understanding of adolescence.

Together these two documents offer a conceptual framework for examining adolescent development and the strategies for enhancing your community's efforts to assist young people in choosing positive pathways to adulthood.

Terry R. Lewis
Associate Commissioner
Family and Youth Services Bureau

ABOUT THE FAMILY AND YOUTH SERVICES BUREAU

The mission of the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) is to provide national leadership on youth issues and to assist individuals and organizations in providing effective, comprehensive services for youth in at-risk situations and their families. The goals of FYSB programs are to provide positive alternatives for youth, ensure their safety, and maximize their potential to take advantage of available opportunities.

FYSB, a Bureau within the Administration on Children, Youth and Families; Administration for Children and Families; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, encourages communities to support young people through a youth development approach. The youth development approach suggests that helping all young people achieve their full potential is the best way to prevent them from becoming involved in risky behavior. Youth development strategies focus on giving young people the chance to build skills, exercise leadership, form relationships with caring adults, and help their communities. Further, the youth development approach acknowledges both that youth are resources in rebuilding communities and that helping young people requires strengthening families and communities.

FYSB administers three grant programs that support locally based services to runaway and homeless youth. The Basic Center Program funds local agencies to provide emergency shelter, food, clothing, outreach services, and crisis intervention for runaway and homeless youth. The shelters also offer services to help reunite youth with their families, whenever possible. The Transitional Living Program for

Homeless Youth (TLP) assists homeless youth in developing skills and resources to promote independence and prevent future dependency on social services. Housing, services, and counseling are provided for up to 18 months for youth age 16-21 who are unable to return to their homes. The Street Outreach Program enables FYSB to provide additional resources to its Basic Center and TLP grantees to enhance their street outreach to young people who have been subjected to or are at risk of sexual abuse or exploitation.

A fourth FYSB program, the Community Schools Youth Services and Supervision Grant Program, funds community-based, nonprofit organizations to provide academic, tutorial, entrepreneurship, or work force preparation activities during nonschool hours for youth living in areas with a high incidence of poverty and juvenile delinquency.

FYSB also funds research and demonstration projects to advance our knowledge of runaway and homeless youth issues; provides information though its National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth; supports the National Runaway Switchboard, a confidential, 24-hour, toll-free hotline for runaway youth; and funds training and technical assistance through a regional system of providers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Family and Youth Services Bureau would like to acknowledge the contributions of the Advisory Panel formed to support the development of *Understanding Youth Development: Promoting Positive Pathways of Growth*: Drs. Robert B. Cairns, Harold D. Grotevant, Fayneese Miller, and James Youniss.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a conceptual model for understanding youth development and identifies the processes that enhance the adolescent experience and promote a successful transition from childhood to adulthood. It is intended as a guide for professionals in constructing and implementing policies and programs designed to assist children and their families in navigating the adolescent era along positive developmental pathways.

The model is based on the proposition that development occurs through reciprocal and dynamic interactions that take place between individuals and various aspects of their environment. Neither person variables nor environmental variables are the primary basis or cause of an individual's functioning or development. Instead, the person and the environment simultaneously influence one another.

Pathways to adulthood may take many forms, and particular experiences or events may be viewed as turning points for individuals during which new directions may be taken. Research findings indicate that positive developmental pathways are fostered when adolescents have developed the following:

- A sense of industry and competency;
- A feeling of connectedness to others and to society;
- A belief in their control over their fate in life; and
- A stable identity.

Adolescents who have developed these characteristics appear to be more likely than others to engage in

prosocial behaviors, exhibit positive school performances, and be members of nondeviant peer groups. These characteristics also have been found to moderate community factors that often serve as barriers to positive developmental pathways, such as social disorganization, a lack of quality institutions and support systems, and prejudice and discrimination.

Competency, connectedness, control, and identity are outcomes of the developmental process as well as affecting future development. They develop through individuals' interactions in their communities, families, schools, and peer relationships. The following kinds of interactions appear to promote development of these characteristics:

- Interactions in which children engage in productive activities and win recognition for their productivity;
- Interactions in which parents and other adults control and monitor adolescents' behaviors in a consistent and caring manner while allowing them psychological and emotional independence;
- Interactions in which parents and other adults provide emotional support, encouragement, and practical advice to adolescents; and
- Interactions in which adolescents are accepted as individuals with unique experiences based on their temperament; gender; biosocial development; and family, cultural, and societal factors.

This report identifies aspects of the social context that have been found to promote or serve as barriers to adolescents' opportunities to engage in these types of interactions. These aspects include the following:

- *Biophysical aspects of the individual.*--Biophysical characteristics that have been found to influence developmental pathways during adolescence include temperament, gender, cognitive development, and the age of onset of puberty. The influence of these factors on development depends to a large extent on how they are reacted to by others in the social context. Individuals bring these aspects of self to the interactions in which they are engaged, and the reaction of the social context to these aspects determines the quality and nature of the interactions.
- *Aspects of the society.*--Society may be understood as the economic and institutional structures, values, and mores that constitute a national identity. Some of the aspects of society that influence the development of a sense of competency, connectedness, control, and identity are current economic and employment conditions, discrimination and prejudice, and educational institutions. Societal factors not only influence adolescent development directly but also indirectly through their effects on communities and families. The societal factors of prejudice and discrimination often present barriers to positive developmental pathways for minority and/or economically disadvantaged youth. For these youth, community and family contexts are particularly important for moderating the potentially negative influences of societal factors.
- *Aspects of the community.*--The community context (neighborhoods or towns) incorporates where individuals spend their time and with whom they spend it. The aspects of the community context that have been studied with respect to their effects on adolescent development include community culture, availability of sources of support to parents and youth, and availability of quality community institutional or organizational resources for children and youth. As with societal factors, community factors have both direct and indirect influences on developmental pathways during adolescence. Formal and informal broad-based community institutions and organizations, in particular, influence adolescent development directly by teaching and encouraging prosocial behaviors and indirectly by supporting parents in their parenting efforts.
- *Aspects of the family.*--The following aspects of the family context have received considerable research attention with respect to their influences on developmental pathways: the quality of the parent-child relationship, parenting styles or practices, family structure, and family dysfunction. In general, family practices that serve to monitor and control adolescents' behaviors in a caring and consistent manner, provide support and encouragement to adolescents, and allow them

psychological and emotional independence appear to be most effective in fostering the development of a sense of competency, connectedness, control over one's fate in life, and identity.

- *Aspects of peer relationships.*--Research findings do not support the popular notion that adolescent problem behaviors are the result of peer pressure. In fact, current research suggests that peers do not direct adolescents to new behaviors as much as they reinforce existing dispositions that helped direct the adolescent to a particular peer group in the first place. Close friendships with peers during adolescence have been found to promote positive growth because they foster the development of conceptions of fairness, mutual respect, empathy, and intimacy. Through these conceptions, youth are able to develop a sense of connectedness to others and a stable sense of identity.

The information in this report suggests that interventions designed to assist youth in making successful transitions to adulthood will need to provide adolescents, either directly or through working with parents and community resources, with opportunities to engage in interactions that foster the development of a sense of competency, connectedness, control, and identity. The research also suggests that interventions must address children, families, and communities as a unit if they are to be effective for large numbers of children and families.

UNDERSTANDING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: PROMOTING POSITIVE PATHWAYS OF GROWTH

In contemporary American society, the transition from childhood to adult status is delayed until well after individuals have attained biological maturity. This transition period, commonly called the adolescent or youth era, is currently perceived as extending from approximately ages 11 to 21 and incorporating specific developmental eras often referred to as "early adolescence" (approximately ages 11 to 14), "midadolescence" (about ages 15 to 17), and "late adolescence" (approximately ages 18 to 21) (Baumrind, 1987). Although these eras are assumed to be characterized by levels of developmental progress toward adulthood, the transition from childhood to adulthood may be understood best as a process during which individuals experience a wide range of events, and opportunities for growth and development arise at all ages.

The adolescent era has been the subject of extensive interest and investigation by social scientists, public policymakers, human service providers, law enforcement officials, the media, and the general public since the early 20th century. Today much of this attention reflects a generally negative perception of adolescents. They are viewed as major players in the multiple problems confronting American society, including substance abuse, unmarried parenthood, crime, and violence.

Although these problems are often presented as causal explanations for the failure of some of our Nation's youth to become productive and successful members of adult society, they do not exist in a vacuum; substance abuse, unmarried parenthood, crime, and violence result from complex interactions between individuals and their physical and social environment (Hill and Fortenberry, 1992). The reality is that the vast majority of America's adolescents, including many of those who experience these problems at some time during adolescence, make a successful transition from childhood to adulthood. However, they do not accomplish this without assistance from families, societal institutions, communities, and friends. These aspects of the environment provide adolescents with the guidance, structure, experiences, and encouragement necessary to foster positive outcomes during adolescence and adulthood. Therefore, it may be the absence of support from families, societal institutions, communities, and friends--rather than any given problem behavior--that explains the failure of some adolescents to achieve successful adulthood.

This report is designed to further an understanding of the processes and influences that both enhance the adolescent experience and promote a successful transition from childhood to adulthood. The report is intended as a guide for professionals in constructing and implementing policies and programs that assist children and their families in navigating the adolescent era along positive developmental pathways. The appendix to this report describes the process by which the report was constructed and discusses issues relevant to adolescent development that are not directly addressed in the report.

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Exhibit 1 presents a conceptual model for understanding youth development. The model reflects perspectives on developmental processes and influences, indicators of positive developmental pathways and of risk, desired outcomes in adulthood, and the influences of interventions.

The following sections discuss various features of the model. These include the developmental process, developmental pathways during adolescence, desired outcomes in adulthood, and critical features of positive adolescent development.

Developmental Process

The conceptual model presented in this report is based on the proposition that development occurs through the reciprocal and dynamic interactions that take place between the individual (i.e., psychological, biological, intellectual, personality, and temperamental characteristics) and various contextual arenas (i.e., other persons, groups, culture, community, and society) (Cairns and Cairns, 1994). As shown in the conceptual model (see **Exhibit 1**), the developing individual is embedded in the environmental contexts of society, community, family, and peers and is linked to these contexts with reciprocal arrows, demonstrating their simultaneous influences on one another. This concept of the developmental process reflects current conceptions of development proposed by developmental science (Cairns and Cairns, 1994), developmental contextualism or dynamic interactionism (Lerner, 1992, 1995), and developmental co-constructionism (Piaget, 1965, 1971; Tudge, Putnam, and Valsiner, 1996).

The developmental process may be understood as guided by the following tenets:

- Individuals, in interactions with their environment, construct meaning from these interactions in such a way that internal and external aspects are enmeshed (Tudge et al., 1996).
- Neither person variables nor environmental variables are the primary basis or cause of an individual's functioning or development. Instead, the person and the environment simultaneously influence one another (Lerner, 1992).
- Because individuals have different histories--sets of experiences in varying contexts with various people over time--they will not experience context in the same manner and are unlikely to construct the same meaning from interactions within similar contexts (Tudge et al., 1996). For example, a particular life experience may only be considered a stressful event for an individual if it is perceived by that individual as stressful.

The context in which individual development takes place incorporates historical time and place as well as society, community, family, and peers. Research in life course theory has demonstrated that developmental pathways are not only influenced by historical events, but also by the age of individuals when particular historical events occur (Elder, 1995).

Individual development must also be understood in the context of intergenerational influences.

Developmental pathways followed by one generation have critical implications for those followed by subsequent generations (Cairns and Cairns, 1994; Elder, 1995). For example, because substance abuse during pregnancy has been found to adversely affect children's biophysical and psychological development, substance abuse by pregnant women will have implications not only for the development of their unborn children but also for the developmental pathways followed by their children's children.

Although the contextual characteristics of time and intergenerational effects are not incorporated in the model, they comprise the broader context for all human growth and development. The interrelationships shown in the model and discussed in the report should be understood as taking place in a particular time, within the context of an ever-changing society, and as being effected by past generations as well as affecting future generations.

Developmental Pathways

The concept of developmental pathways is used in this report to emphasize the following assumptions regarding adolescent development:

- The transition from childhood to adulthood is a process, not an event.
- This process incorporates the individual's developmental history prior to adolescence as well as current experiences.
- The process is not predetermined by any given characteristics of the individual or of the environment that may be found at its beginning.
- Pathways to adulthood may take many forms. Particular experiences or events may be viewed as turning points for individuals during which new directions may be taken (Cairns and Cairns, 1994).

For the vast majority of individuals in contemporary American society, the pathway from childhood to adulthood appears to be characterized by a period of temporary maladaptive functioning at some time during adolescence, particularly with respect to engaging in antisocial or potentially life-threatening behaviors (cf. Arnett, 1992; Moffit, 1993). At present, there is no generally accepted explanation for this phenomenon. Moffit (1993) suggests that because males and females are not accorded adult status by society until many years after physical maturation, they may view antisocial behaviors as a means for attaining that status. Arnett (1992) postulates that the neurological, hormonal, and cognitive characteristics of adolescence foster both sensation-seeking behaviors and a reduced perception of potential negative consequences of actions, resulting in a temporary increase in risk taking behaviors.

Regardless of the causal explanations, a certain amount of experimentation with risky behaviors has been described as an essential component of a healthful adolescent experience and even as contributing to optimum development (Baumrind, 1987). Often these behaviors reflect the normal process of separating from parents and establishing an identity. For parents, teachers, social workers, and other adults whose task it is to assist adolescents in making successful transitions to adulthood, the key issue is to differentiate antisocial behaviors that are only temporary and reflect experimentation from those that may result in a pattern of maladaptive functioning continuing into adulthood.

Often this differentiation is based on adults' observations of behaviors that serve as indicators of an individual's developmental progress or need for assistance. Although these behaviors are themselves developmental outcomes and thus contribute to the context for future development, they are presented as indicators in the model to emphasize their importance in signaling the direction of an adolescent's developmental pathway. The model shows the behaviors that are most frequently cited in the literature as indicators of positive developmental pathways and those suggesting that youth may need assistance in attaining desired outcomes in adulthood.

Exhibiting positive behavioral indicators does not preclude also exhibiting indicators that assistance may be needed. For example, youth may exhibit positive peer relationships but poor school performance. They may have good relationships with parents and yet exhibit poor school performances or become parents themselves during their teenage years. In addition, the salience of a behavior as an indicator of a positive developmental pathway may vary across communities, cultures, and gender (Burton, Allison, and Obeidallah, 1995; Stack and Burton, 1993). Finally, because indicators that assistance may be needed often co-occur among some youth (Cairns and Cairns, 1994), it is critical for parents and other adults in the community to address these problem behaviors in their early stages in order to redirect youth toward more positive developmental pathways.

Desired Outcomes in Adulthood

The desired outcomes in adulthood presented in the conceptual model reflect conceptions of successful adulthood that are generally held in American society (Connell and Walker, 1994). These include the following:

- *Self-sufficiency.*--Supporting oneself and one's children financially;
- *Positive and responsible family and social relationships.*--Treating family and community members with respect (not engaging in abusive, violent, criminal, or other antisocial behaviors) and contributing to the maintenance of cohesiveness in the family; and
- *Good citizenship.*--Participating in the community and society through voting, involvement in religious or community service activities, and/or contributing to community cohesion.

Similar to behavioral indicators, the salience of these outcomes as representations of successful adulthood may vary across community contexts. In some communities, for example, the outcome of positive and responsible family and social relationships may be more significant indicators of successful adulthood than self-sufficiency (Burton et al., 1995; Spencer, Dobbs, and Swanson, 1988). In other communities, self-sufficiency may be viewed as a more salient indicator of successful adulthood than good citizenship.

Critical Features of Positive Adolescent Development

A consistent theme in the research literature on adolescent development is that positive growth and development are fostered when adolescents have developed a sense of industry and competency, a feeling of connectedness to others and to society, a belief in their control over their fate in life (even if there are many things over which they actually have little control), and a stable identity.

Sense of Industry and Competency

A sense of industry and competency refers to individuals' belief in their own abilities. According to research findings, interactions that appear to nurture the development of a sense of competency are those in which children are engaged in productive activities and win recognition for their productivity. Erikson (1963, 1968) postulated that during the elementary school years, children begin to win recognition by becoming productive persons in the school environment. Through this recognition, they develop a sense of industry and competency. This fosters the development of a stable identity during adolescence and the perception of the self as a potentially productive member of society.

Although Erikson attributed development of a sense of industry and competency to the child's experiences in school, several studies suggest that other contexts foster it as well. For example, a sense of industry and competency can be developed through experiences in the home or community. In fact, African-American children who were perceived by teachers as generally incompetent in the school environment were found to be highly competent at home, with their peers, and at church (Holliday, 1989).

Participation in sports, extracurricular activities involving the arts or hobbies, community service, religious organizations, part-time jobs (particularly apprenticeships), and clubs or community organizations also has been found to provide children and youth with the opportunity to win recognition for their productivity and thus to develop a sense of competency (Earls, Cairns, and Mercy, 1993; Hamilton and Powers, 1990; Hanks and Eckland, 1978; Larson, 1994; Yates and Youniss, 1995). In addition, there does not appear to be an age limit to the beneficial outcomes of these types of activities. In one study, young adults at a military base reported that the military experience (during peacetime) provided them with the opportunity to win recognition through their own productivity and thus supported development of a sense of competency that they had not experienced previously (Youniss, McCarthy, and Meacham, 1982).

Sense of Control Over One's Fate in Life

Adolescents who have a sense of control over their fate in life believe that they can affect their futures. This belief appears to be nurtured when children and adolescents are engaged in interactions in which they can successfully predict the outcomes of their actions (Patterson and Dishion, 1985; Sampson, 1992). When parents or other adults consistently respond to prosocial behaviors with positive sanctions and misbehaviors with negative sanctions, children learn that their behaviors are related to particular responses. Similarly, when teachers or other adults in the community respond to adolescents' actual behaviors--rather than to their preconceived ideas regarding adolescent behaviors--then adolescents learn that they will be treated fairly based on their own actions (Spencer, Kim, and Marshall, 1987).

Some studies have found that having a sense of control over one's fate in life provides individuals with a basis for coping effectively with factors over which they in fact have little control, such as poverty and discrimination (Connell and Walker, 1994; Werner and Smith, 1992). This may be true because having a sense of control also fosters a sense of hope within individuals that they can change their lives through their own actions.

Connectedness to Others

Several studies have found that a strong predictor of positive developmental pathways during adolescence is the adolescents' sense that they are connected to other persons, their community, and the society (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1994; Hirschi, 1969; Sampson and Laub, 1994). For example, adolescents who have a high sense of connectedness to their parents, particularly their mothers, tend to be less likely than other youth to engage in antisocial behaviors (Hirschi, 1969). Those who have a greater sense of connectedness to school tend to be more likely than other youth to perform well academically and to stay in school (Connell, Spencer, and Aber, 1994).

Interactions that appear to promote development of a sense of connectedness to other persons are those in which adults provide social and emotional support to adolescents while permitting them psychological and emotional independence (Barber, in press; Barber, Olsen, and Shagle, 1995: Youniss and Smollar, 1985). Interactions in which adults attempt to control adolescents' behaviors through monitoring their activities also appear to promote the development of a sense of connectedness because they signal to adolescents that adults in the family or community care about them and are willing to become involved in their lives (Patterson and Dishion, 1985; Sampson and Laub, 1994). In addition, peer interactions based on mutual respect and reciprocity foster development of a sense of connectedness because it is through these interactions that individuals develop empathy and intimacy.

Sense of Identity

Development of a stable identity has been found to be associated with positive interpersonal relationships, psychological and behavioral stability, and productive adulthood (Grotevant, 1996). During the identity development process, adolescents' sense of competency, connectedness, and control is brought to bear on the task of unifying their sense of self into a stable and consistent identity and integrating this self-concept into their understanding of society, so as to feel a part of the larger culture (Erikson, 1968; Grotevant, 1996; Yates and Youniss, 1995).

Identity development is fostered when adolescents are provided with the opportunity to become involved in community service (Yates and Youniss, 1995); when they receive support for their future goals from family members, teachers, and friends (Cooper, Jackson, Azmitia, Lopez, and Dunbar, 1996); and when they have opportunities to express and develop their own points of view in their families (Grotevant and Cooper, 1985). These experiences appear to moderate community factors such as social disorganization and a lack of quality institutions and support systems as well as societal factors such as prejudice and discrimination that have been found to serve as barriers to developing a stable identity, particularly among minority youth (Spencer and Markstrom-Adams, 1990).

INDIVIDUAL AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENTAL PATHWAYS

The discussions of the kinds of interactions that promote development of competency, connectedness, control, and identity indicate that these characteristics are themselves outcomes of the developmental process as well as being factors in adolescents' future development. Therefore, the development of these characteristics is the result of the interactions between individuals and their social contexts. This section of the report discusses some of the characteristics of individuals and the social context that promote or serve as barriers to positive developmental pathways.

Biophysical Characteristics of Individuals

Individuals bring to their social interactions multiple characteristics based on their genetic inheritance and prenatal environments (i.e., biological, neurological, and physiological characteristics). These characteristics do not determine specific developmental pathways. Rather, they are aspects of persons that have a potential to affect the nature of their interactions with the environment.

Although numerous biophysical characteristics have been studied as potential influences on developmental pathways, those that are particularly salient for the majority of adolescents are temperament, the experience of puberty, gender, and cognitive development.

Temperament

Temperament describes the mood, activity levels, and tendency toward excitability that characterize individuals from early infancy. Some infants may be termed "easy babies"; they are generally pleasant in nature, easy to soothe, easy to read with respect to cues, and socially responsive. Other, "more difficult babies" may be often irritable and difficult to soothe and may exhibit high activity levels.

It is not clear why infants' temperaments differ, but it has been found that temperamental characteristics exhibited in infancy often appear to persist throughout childhood and to be associated with differential outcomes during adolescence. Research has found that being an "easy baby" is associated with positive developmental outcomes in adolescence (Cairns and Cairns, 1994; Werner and Smith, 1992), while being a "more difficult baby" is associated with antisocial behavior in early childhood (Sampson and Laub, 1994)--which, in turn, has been found to be a strong predictor of life-course persistent antisocial behavior (Moffit, 1993; Reid and Patterson, 1991; Sampson and Laub, 1994).

Recent research suggests that temperamental characteristics in infancy tend to persist throughout childhood because they affect the quality of reciprocal interactions that children experience (Cairns and Cairns, 1994; Sampson and Laub, 1994; Werner and Smith, 1992). For example, parents may experience few problems bonding and applying sanctions in a positive way with infants who generally are pleasant in nature, but they may find it challenging both to bond with infants who are "more difficult" and to apply sanctions in a consistent and loving way (Sampson and Laub, 1994). Researchers also have found that children who are irritable and excitable are more likely than more even-tempered or cheerful children to be rejected by peers, which further increases the likelihood of antisocial behavior during childhood and adolescence (Caspi, Lynam, Moffitt, and Silva, 1993; Scholte, 1992).

The potential challenges in bonding with "more difficult babies" and applying sanctions in a loving and consistent manner suggest that temperament may affect children's opportunities to experience interactions that nurture the development of a sense of connectedness to others and control over their lives (Cairns and Cairns, 1994; Werner and Smith, 1992). Parents of infants who exhibit high irritability and activity levels may need guidance and support in their interactions with these children to ensure that they develop a sense that they are cared about and that the outcomes of their behaviors are consistent and predictable.

The Experience of Puberty

Puberty is not only universally experienced by adolescents but almost always affects the nature of adolescents' reciprocal interactions. In societies in which puberty marks entry into adult status, changes in the quality of social interactions are dramatic. In contemporary American society, puberty is just one of many events that occur in the transition from childhood to adulthood. As a result, changes in expectations and in the quality of interactions are less dramatic, although they are still apparent.

Because entering puberty is believed to affect the quality of the reciprocal interactions experienced by individuals, extensive research has been conducted on how the age of onset of puberty impacts developmental outcomes. The current consensus of this research is that the age at which individuals begin puberty has minimal influences on developmental outcomes. In general, early puberty for boys and on-time puberty for girls have been associated with slightly easier adjustment, whereas very late puberty for boys and very early puberty for girls have been associated with slight increases in adjustment problems (Brooks-Gunn and Reiter, 1990; Lerner, 1992, 1985).

Other researchers have found that puberty's influence on developmental pathways depends primarily on the perceptions and expectations of the social context (Brooks-Gunn and Reiter, 1990; Clausen, 1975; Lerner, 1992; Magnusson, 1988; McGhee, 1984; Stattin and Magnusson, 1990). When pubertal changes are responded to positively within adolescents' social contexts, particularly by families and members of the community, the event appears to be experienced without significant adjustment problems, regardless of the age of onset.

Gender

Gender has considerable implications for the nature of reciprocal interactions that individuals experience in their social context. Males and females, from infancy to old age, experience similar environmental contexts in different ways. Contextual characteristics that have been found to act as stressors, risk factors, protective factors, or primary influences on positive development for girls have not been found to serve the same function for boys, and vice versa (Cairns and Cairns, 1994; Werner and Smith, 1992). Relationships with peers and family members also vary considerably as a function of the gender of both children and parents (Youniss and Smollar, 1985).

Similarly, the actions of various aspects of the social contexts (i.e., society, community, family, and peers) toward children and adolescents often are guided by gender. Even the characteristics of competency, connectedness, and control can be gender related, with competency and control viewed as important attributes for male development and connectedness as important for female development.

Despite potential differences in the content of social interactions experienced by males and females, the form of these interactions must be similar if children are to develop along positive pathways. For example, although developing a sense of competency for males and females may require engaging in different types of productive activities, both males and females need to win recognition for their productivity in order to develop a strong sense of competency.

Cognitive Development

A striking transition that occurs during adolescence is the shift in cognitive development from concrete to formal-logical thought (Furth, 1969; Piaget, 1965). With formal-logical thought, the individual moves from thinking about real or known objects to "thinking about thinking." This enables an individual to construct various logical possibilities (e.g., "what if...") or formulate cause-and-effect hypotheses (e.g., "if...then...") about possible relationships in the physical or social world.

Formal-logical thought is important not only in the development of problemsolving and negotiation skills and the ability to perform in academic settings requiring abstract thought (Barone, Aguirre-Deandreis, and Trickett, 1991; Youniss and Smollar, 1985), but also for development of a sense of competency, connectedness, control, and identity. Full development of these psychosocial characteristics is predicated on individuals' abilities to reflect on their interactions with others and construct meaning from these interactions based on logical possibilities.

Overall, the shift to formal-logical cognitive abilities during adolescence has implications for almost all areas of functioning, ranging from performances on academic tests to relationships with mothers and fathers. Although it generally is agreed that this shift in thought processes is universally experienced at some time during the adolescent era, the direction in which formal-logical thinking will develop in children is primarily shaped by the society and culture in which they live (Grotevant, 1996). When a society or culture provides adolescents with experiences that expose them to ideas and ways of thinking that require formal-logical thought, then adolescents will have more opportunities to develop these processes.

Societal Context

Society may be understood as the economic and institutional structures, values, and mores that constitute a national identity. Aspects of society that have implications for development of a sense of competency, connectedness, control over one's fate in life, and identity include current economic and employment conditions, discrimination and prejudice, and educational institutions.

Economic and Employment Conditions

An important arena in which adolescents are able to develop a sense of competency, control, connectedness, and identity is the world of work. When adolescents perceive their futures in terms of jobs or careers that will allow them to have positive work experiences and become economically self-sufficient, they are more likely to feel a sense of connectedness to society and control over their fate in life. However, recent economic conditions in America suggest that up to one-third of today's youth will face serious obstacles in obtaining employment and are at risk of never achieving economic self-sufficiency (Smith, Moorehouse, and Trist, 1988). Even when employed, it is unlikely that many youth will earn adequate

incomes as young adults. Between 1973 and 1986, for example, the average earnings of young men between ages 20 and 24 declined by an average of 25 percent, and for African-American high school dropouts, earnings declined by 60 percent (William T. Grant Foundation, 1988).

The negative impact of current labor market conditions is greatest for youth who do not continue their education past high school or who drop out of school (William T. Grant Foundation, 1988). The difficulties these youth encounter in finding jobs and earning adequate wages have been attributed to a general decline of available factory jobs with union-scale wages and benefits and to a shrinking market for unskilled and semiskilled labor (Hamilton and Powers, 1990).

Assisting youth in developing a sense of competency, connectedness, control, and identity is difficult when labor market conditions are unfavorable. Some studies suggest that holding a part-time job during high school can foster a sense of competency if the job is challenging and gives youth an opportunity to use cognitive skills, receive support from adults, take initiative, and receive feedback and recognition for their performance (Hamilton and Powers, 1990; MacAllum and Ma, 1995). However, the positive impacts of these experiences will not last if adequate employment after graduating from high school is not available.

Wilson (1996) identified the disappearance of work in many economically disadvantaged minority communities as a problem that has reached "catastrophic proportions." One of his recommendations--which he attributes to the ideas of Micky Kaus, a journalist with *The New Republic*--is to reintroduce a form of the Works Progress Administration initiated in 1935 by President Roosevelt. Another suggestion is to create for-profit job information and placement centers to recruit or accept inner-city workers, help make them "job ready," and place them in jobs.

Poor societal economic conditions and declining labor markets also affect the development of a sense of competency, connectedness to society, control over one's fate, and identity through their effects on family functioning (Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz, and Simons, 1994). A reduction in a family's financial resources has been found to be associated with increases in abusive family processes, parental depression and stress, and disruptions in caregiving, all of which have negative implications for adolescent development (Brody, Stoneman, Flor, McCrary, Hastings, and Conyers, 1994; Conger, Conger, Elder, and Lorenz, 1993; Conger, Elder, Lorenz, Simons, and Whitbeck, 1992; Elder, 1995). Similarly, living in poverty for extended periods of time has been found to have potentially adverse effects on adolescent development through its impact on the ability of parents to monitor and discipline their children effectively (McLoyd, 1990; Sampson and Laub, 1994).

Families who experience extended unemployment or loss of financial resources will need guidance and support in maintaining positive family relationships despite stressors created by living in poverty or a reduction in family resources. For example, research has found that when communities provide parents with support in their parenting efforts through both informal and formal (i.e., institutional) networks, the potentially negative impact of poverty on adolescent development is buffered (McLoyd, 1990; Sampson and Laub, 1994).

Discrimination and Prejudice

Experiencing prejudice and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, social class, and/or sexual orientation also influences development of a sense of competency, control, connectedness to societal institutions, and identity (Garcia Coll et al., in press; Spencer et al., 1987). The presence of prejudice and discrimination in American society means that some youth must cope with expressions of group rejection, in addition to the more generic insecurities and identity pursuits inherent in the adolescent era (Spencer, Swanson, and Cunningham, 1991). Youth who encounter discrimination and prejudice report experiencing frustration,

confusion, and bewilderment, which lead to feelings of anger, distrust, lack of connectedness with the larger society, and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness (Chestang, 1972). The negative effects of discrimination may be moderated to some extent by positive experiences in the family and the community, particularly support from nonparental adults in the community and involvement in youth organizations, hobbies, and community service activities.

One contextual arena that has the potential to moderate the effects of discrimination and prejudice is the community school. A study of the experiences of Barakumin children from Japan who emigrated to the United States provides a clear example of this (Spencer et al., 1987). The Barakumin are a castelike minority. Although they were officially emancipated from their "pariah" status more than 100 years ago, there has been no actual change in the way they are perceived and treated by members of the dominant group. Like America's minority children, African-Americans and Hispanics, Baraku children in Japan exhibit poorer school performances, lower scores on tests of intelligence and academic competence, and lowered competency in comparison to their non-Baraku Japanese peers. However, Baraku children who have emigrated to the United States, where they are not perceived as different from other Japanese children, perform at least as well with respect to these indices as other Japanese children in America and significantly better than their counterparts in Japan. This change in performance was attributed to the emergence of hope in a situation in which children are treated fairly and perceive the expectations of the American school system as fair (Ito, 1967). The findings of this study suggest that schools can function as protective factors for children and youth who experience prejudice and discrimination if administrators and teachers maintain high expectations for youth regardless of their race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

Educational Institutions

As noted above, adolescents' school experiences can have both positive and negative influences on the development of a sense of competency, connectedness to society, control, and identity. One feature of America's school system that appears to have a particularly negative influence on adolescent development is its structure.

Throughout most American communities, the public school system is structured so that children move from elementary school (i.e., kindergarten through fifth or sixth grade) to middle or junior high school (i.e., sixth or seventh through eighth or ninth grade) and then to high school. Several studies have found that the transitions from school to school often have adverse affects on developmental pathways. For example, the transition to middle or junior high school from elementary school was found to be associated with decreases in academic motivation, grade point averages, and self-esteem as well as increases in negative attitudes toward school (Barone et al., 1991; Lord, Eccles, and McCarthy, 1994; Reyes, Gillock, and Kobus, 1994; Seidman, Allen, Aber, Mitchell, and Feinman, 1994; Wigfield and Eccles, 1994). The transition to high school was found to be associated with further decreases in academic motivation and increases in negative attitudes toward school. However, when students make the transition to high school from schools with kindergarten through eighth grade there do not appear to be similar detrimental effects (Eccles et al., 1993; Lord et al., 1994).

The adverse effects of transitioning from elementary to junior high school have been attributed to a "mismatch" between the developmental needs of early adolescents and the new school environment (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995; Eccles et al., 1993). At the onset of adolescence, children's needs for adult support and guidance and academic challenges increase. However, with the transition to middle or junior high school, children usually experience decreased opportunities to develop close relationships with teachers, larger classrooms, less challenging work, increased demands on performance (e.g., making good grades), and less personal support from school personnel.

Assisting adolescents in making successful transitions at each school level requires consideration of their developmental and educational needs. Research has found that when middle school environments are structured to provide more personal student-teacher interactions, less emphasis on competition, more challenging work, and more small group and individual instruction, the association between the transition to middle school and increases in negative behaviors and attitudes is moderated (Eccles et al., 1993; Lord et al., 1994).

Community Context

The community context (i.e., neighborhoods or towns) incorporates where individuals spend their time and with whom they spend it (Connell and Walker, 1994). As a result, this context has considerable influence on the types and quality of interactions children will experience in their social world and their subsequent development of a sense of competency, connectedness, control over their fate in life, and identity. Specific aspects of the community that appear to affect adolescent development are the community culture, the presence of sources of support for parents and youth within the community, and the availability of quality youth-serving institutional or organizational resources.

Community Culture

Community culture refers to the values and guiding tenets underlying the beliefs and behaviors of a particular group within society. In communities in which the culture is consistent with that of the larger society, adolescents will experience interactions that support the development of both a sense of connectedness to society and a belief in their competency to function within that society. However, when a community culture differs in significant ways from that of the larger society, youth often are required to become "bicultural" in the sense of being capable of demonstrating competence in both the larger society and their own communities (Chestang, 1972; Mithun, 1983; Spencer et al., 1991; Winfield, 1995).

Community schools may be an important resource for assisting children with the task of developing a sense of competency in their communities and in the larger society because the schools are linked to both of these contexts. To be effective as a resource, school administrators and teachers must acknowledge the influences of community culture and the importance of maintaining it as part of the adolescents' sense of competency, connectedness, and identity. In some communities this may require that schools transform their routine educational approaches and develop those that are more culturally responsive in order to enhance the academic outcomes and competency of the youth they serve (Spencer et al., 1991).

In addition, schools in some communities will need to recognize that the youth they serve may not experience adolescence in the same manner as youth in other communities (Burton et al., 1995; Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Mithun, 1983). For example, some researchers have suggested that in disadvantaged African-American and other minority communities, adolescence may not be a clear developmental stage (Burton et al., 1995; McHale, 1995). Although these youth may be viewed as adolescents by the society, within their communities they often have already assumed the roles and status of adults (Burton et al., 1995; McHale, 1995). This is because many youth in these communities grow up in "age-condensed" families (families in which parents are only 14 to 16 years older than their children), shoulder heavy family responsibilities such as child care and contributing to family finances, compete with older residents for available employment opportunities, and experience early parenthood. Adolescents who experience these events in their lives tend to view themselves as adults and to perceive the schools as treating them like children (Burton et al., 1995; Connell et al., 1994).

Availability of Sources of Support in the Community

When communities provide high-levels of support for parents (both formal and informal), the ability of

parents to effectively monitor and control their children's behaviors is enhanced (Sampson and Groves, 1989). The presence of community support factors has been found to buffer the negative effects of other community dimensions, particularly poverty, on youth's developmental pathways (Sampson, 1992; Sampson and Groves, 1989; Spencer et al., 1991). Support for parents is highest in communities in which there are dense friendship networks among adults; articulation and support for common values about child and youth development; monitoring and supervision of youth, especially by nonparental adults; and mutual accountability among adults on behalf of youth (i.e., that all adults in the community are responsible for the well being of its youth) (Sampson and Groves, 1989).

The availability of prosocial support for adolescents from nonparental adults in the community also has been found to be a critical factor in distinguishing community ecologies that promote positive developmental pathways from those that do not (Werner and Smith, 1992). However, the salience of this type of support for individual adolescents appears to vary by gender and ethnicity. In one study, formal sources of support--defined as support from teachers, clergy, counselors, coaches, and others--was perceived as more helpful in their lives by African-Americans than by Hispanics. Furthermore, African-American and Caucasian males rated formal supports as being more helpful than did females, but the reverse was true for Hispanics. Overall, Hispanic males in this study did not view any type of social support as particularly helpful in their lives. (Cauce, Felner, and Primavera, 1982).

Availability of Quality Youth-Serving Institutions and Organizations

High-quality, youth-serving organizations are those in which activities are deliberately structured to provide a set of operational procedures, values, and mores that teach and encourage prosocial behavior (Larson, 1994). These organizations include extracurricular, school-based organizations as well as broad-based community organizations such as Boys and Girls clubs, 4-H clubs, church groups, YMCAs (Young Men's Christian Associations), and sports leagues.

The availability of these organizations in a community provides support to parents by engaging youth in structured activities that endorse parental values (Connell and Walker, 1994; Larson, 1994). They also provide support to youth by creating points of contact between adolescents and other adults in the community who may serve as sources of encouragement and advice. This promotes the social integration of youth with their community (Larson, 1994). Studies have found that involvement during high school in organizations related to hobbies and interests is associated with diminished delinquent behavior during adolescence for both girls and boys (Larson, 1994), and predicts continued involvement in similar organizations in adulthood (Hanks and Eckland, 1978; DeMartini, 1983). In addition, involvement in these groups and organizations provides adolescents with the opportunity to engage in productive activities and win recognition for their productivity, thus fostering the development of a sense of industry and competency.

The presence of high-quality, youth-serving organizations in a community also means that children will have access to attractive, organized, and positive activities during their out-of-school hours. This is important because the combination of high levels of youth idleness and lack of shared positive activities with adults in urban communities has been found to be directly related to higher levels of youth crime (Connell and Walker, 1994).

In some communities, the churches and church-sponsored youth organizations often are the primary organizations serving youth. In these communities, the church acts in an instrumental as well as a spiritual role to provide youth with alternative coping mechanisms and experiences that foster the development of connectedness to community and society, competency, and identity (Winfield, 1995).

In general, parents and children in suburban communities may have greater access to high-quality

institutions (e.g., schools) and organizations than do parents and children in urban communities, particularly inner-city communities in large metropolitan areas. This may be one reason for the finding of one study that a family's move from an urban to a suburban community had far-reaching consequences for developmental pathways during adolescence (Rosenbaum, Rubinowitz, and Kulieke, 1986). This study found that when some African-American families were placed in private housing in the suburbs and others in private housing in the city, the outcomes for the suburban children were more positive than those for city children, despite similar family and economic factors. Suburban youth were more likely to enroll in an academic track in high school; were less likely to drop out, even though their grades were similar to those of the "city children;" and were more likely to enroll in college and to enroll in a 4-year college. They also were much more likely to be employed, and to be employed in jobs with high wages and good benefits (Rosenbaum et al., 1986). Another study found that African-American youth residing in suburban communities not only performed satisfactorily but they manifested an own-group identity as well. However, the study also found that this experience varied across gender and age. Adolescent African-American girls appeared to have more problems adjusting to predominantly Caucasian environments than did African-American boys, and older suburban African-American boys tended to feel less positive about their suburban communities than younger boys (Spencer et al., 1991).

Family Context

The family context is often perceived as having the strongest influence on adolescent development. Aspects of the family context that have received considerable research attention are the quality of parent-child relationships, parenting styles or practices, family structure, and family dysfunction.

Parent-Child Relationships

A major developmental process that takes place during adolescence has been called adolescent individuation (Cooper, Grotevant, and Condon, 1983; Youniss and Smollar, 1985). This term describes the process whereby adolescents strive to develop a sense of self that is separate from parents while at the same time remaining connected to parents as sources of emotional support, empathy, and practical advice. The theory of adolescent individuation proposes that complete autonomy from parents is undesirable to adolescents because it severs parental bonds and threatens development of a sense of connectedness to others. Enmeshment with parents is equally undesirable because it prevents the development of a sense of competency and control over one's fate in life.

Successful individuation involves transforming the parent-child relationship so that a balance is achieved between the two movements. Parents must continue to exert behavioral control over adolescents but allow them freedom to experience themselves as separate from parents. Parents also must maintain attachments to adolescents through emotional support and practical advice but avoid dictating their adolescent's emotions or attitudes and demanding their psychological conformity (Barber et al., 1995; Youniss and Smollar, 1985).

The importance of maintaining connectedness with children during the individuation process is supported by research findings indicating that the strength of the bond between parents and children determines the likelihood of adolescents' engaging in antisocial behaviors. The weaker the bond, the more likely youth are to engage in delinquent behaviors and substance abuse and to be members of deviant peer groups (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1994; Hirschi, 1969). Stronger bonds between parents and children are associated with children refraining from delinquency, joining nondeviant peer groups, and achieving higher levels of school performances (Barnes, Farrell, and Cairns, 1986; Clark, 1991; Garmezy, 1985; Musick, Stott, Spencer, Goldman, and Cohler, 1987; Rankin and Wells, 1990; Sampson and Laub, 1994). In addition, greater attachment to both parents has been found to be associated with lower levels of depression and social anxiety for both male and female adolescents (Papini, Roggman, and Anderson,

1991).

Parenting Styles or Practices

Research on effective parenting practices also has produced findings that support the basic premises of adolescent individuation. Studies have found that the incidence of antisocial or delinquent behavior is related to the amount of behavioral control, specifically parental monitoring and discipline, that parents exercise over their children (Barber et al. 1995; Patterson, 1992; Patterson, DeBarsyshe, and Ramsey, 1989; Patterson and Dishion, 1985). Parental monitoring involves surveillance or supervision of a child. Parental discipline involves the application, in a consistent and caring manner, of negative sanctions for misbehaviors and positive sanctions for prosocial behaviors. In general, a high or moderate level of direct behavioral control exercised by parents has been found to be negatively related to delinquency, drug use, deviant acts, and school misconduct, even after other factors such as the adolescent's age, race, gender, and family socioeconomic status are taken into account (Barnes and Farrell, 1992; Baumrind, 1987; Patterson and Dishion, 1985; Rankin and Wells, 1990). However, the effectiveness of differing levels of parental control has been found to vary depending on the adolescent's gender, age, and community context (Heath, 1988; Rankin and Wells, 1990).

Behavioral control appears to be most effective in deterring antisocial behaviors when there is a bond between parent and child (Sampson and Laub, 1994). Loving parent-child relationships are not sufficient to ensure positive developmental pathways without discipline and supervision. Similarly, discipline and supervision are not sufficient without the existence of a bond between the adult and child.

Parental monitoring, although it may be a source of family conflict, promotes the development of a sense of connectedness to parents because it signals to adolescents that parents are engaged and care about them. Parental discipline that involves the application of negative sanctions for misbehavior and positive sanctions for prosocial behaviors in a consistent manner, fosters a sense of control over one's fate in life because it engages adolescents in interactions that link their behaviors to predictable outcomes. When negative sanctions are applied in an inconsistent manner and are not related to specific behaviors, adolescents may develop a sense of hopelessness rather than control.

Also consistent with the concept of adolescent individuation is the finding that in contrast to behavioral control, parents' use of psychological control with adolescents has negative implications for developmental pathways (Barber, in press). High levels of psychological control, characterized by family interactions that inhibit or intrude on youth's psychological development, have been found to be associated with both internalizing (depression and anxiety) and externalizing (antisocial) behavior problems during adolescence. The fact that this association was not found for elementary school-aged children, suggests that the opportunity to develop a sense of self that is separate from parents is particularly critical during adolescence (Barber, in press; Barber et al., 1995).

The importance of effective parenting practices for adolescent development is clearly demonstrated in a study of two families residing in the same community in an urban American city (Miller, in press). The community has a high rate of crime, poverty, and unemployment. In one family, the children are progressing along positive pathways, while in the other family, one child is involved in crime and violence. In the family in which children are progressing positively, the family is headed by two parents who were described as "trying to be consistent in the way in which they respond to the needs and behaviors of their sons" and providing a "stable family structure that consists of rules and norms for behavior." Furthermore, "the parents are involved in their children's school, church, and community life" and "attempt to provide their sons with activities that keep them at home."

The second family is headed by a single mother who is unemployed and a drug addict. The mother is

described as "being inconsistent in her parenting style" and "permissive." The fathers of the two boys in this family "are not major factors in the lives of the boys, although they are known to the boys and do send them occasional presents." In contrast to the first family, this family "presents its children with few consistent attachments, guidelines, social supports, or role models for the construction of a positive self identity." The comparisons between these families suggest that parenting practices and parent-child relationships can buffer many of the potentially negative influences of growing up in chaotic communities.

Family Structure

Although the influences of family structure, particularly single-parent or divorced families, on adolescent development have received extensive attention from researchers, politicians, and the media, recent research findings demonstrate that it is family process rather than structure that influences adolescent developmental pathways. If positive parent-child relationships, including relationships with noncustodial parents, are maintained after divorce or separation, and if single parents manage to exert appropriate levels of behavioral control, the association between divorce or single parenting and adolescent behavior problems all but disappears (Barber, 1994; Barber and Lyons, 1994; Fergusson, Horwood, and Lynskey, 1994; Forehand, 1992; Hetherington, Cox, and Cox, 1982).

Frequently a divorce or separation, particularly in its early stages, can create stressors that make it difficult for parents to maintain positive parenting practices. For this reason, parents often need assistance and support in their parenting efforts shortly after a separation or divorce or during other times of stress. However, intact families also often need this type of assistance and support during times of stress.

Recent research suggests that the practices that characterize effective parenting may differ in various types of family structures, although this has not been explored extensively (Smetana, Yau, Restrepo, and Braeges, 1991). For example, in one study, parental permissiveness was positively related to adolescent self-esteem in remarried families but not in intact, two-parent families (Barber and Lyons, 1994). In a study of African-American families, kinship support from outside the household was positively related to effective parenting and adolescent adjustment in one-parent, but not two-parent, homes (Taylor, Casten, and Flickinger, 1993). The gender and ages of children at the time of parental separation also seem to be salient factors in influencing behavioral outcomes (Fergusson et al., 1994; Hetherington et al., 1982).

Dysfunctional Families

High levels of family dysfunction are found in families in which there is physical or emotional abuse between partners; parental mental illness or abuse of alcohol or other drugs; physical or sexual abuse of children; or neglect of children's physical, emotional, and medical needs. Interactions within these families do not provide opportunities for children to develop a sense of connectedness to others or control over their fate in life. Furthermore, some evidence exists that children who experience these events often tend to repeat them with their own children.

Children from severely dysfunctional families are disproportionately represented among runaway youth, particularly those who frequently run away and remain away from home for long periods of time (Simons and Whitbeck, 1991); homeless youth (Mundy, Robertson, Robertson, and Greenblatt, 1990); youth with severe substance abuse problems (Beman, 1995); and youth who exhibit high levels of depression and anxiety, often requiring hospitalization (Chandy, Harris, Blum, and Resnick, 1994). Although little research has been conducted on the factors that moderate the effects of growing up in severely dysfunctional families, the presence of community organizations that promote prosocial development and expose youth to potential sources of support from nonparental adults in the community may assist these youth along positive developmental pathways (Farber and Egeland, 1987). However, the effects of severe family dysfunction on development may require more extensive assistance through long-term and

intensive interventions.

Peer Context

Adolescence is marked by a dramatic increase in the importance of peers. Research in this area has focused primarily on the effects of peer group affiliation and peer friendships on adolescent development.

Peer Group Affiliation

In contemporary American society, there is a strong public perception that adolescent problem behaviors, particularly those involving substance abuse, delinquency, and sexual acting out, are the result of peer pressure. Individual adolescents are perceived as passively capitulating to other adolescents who demand that they engage in deviant behaviors.

In the past, this perception was fostered by research findings indicating that affiliation with deviant peers is a powerful predictor of an individual's participation in deviant activities. However, recent research on both adolescent peer group affiliation and close friendships demonstrates that peers do not direct adolescents to new behaviors as much as they reinforce existing dispositions--dispositions that helped direct the adolescent to a particular peer group in the first place (Brown, Mounts, Lamborn, and Steinberg, 1993; Magnusson, 1988; Oetting and Beauvais, 1987; Steinberg, Darling, and Fletcher, 1995).

These existing dispositions toward deviant behavior are thought to derive from aspects of the parent-child relationship during childhood (Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Gest, and Gariepy, 1988; Snyder, Dishion, and Patterson, 1986). Parental detachment from children, for example, has been found to promote antisocial behaviors, and youngsters with such behaviors seem to band together in antisocial cliques even prior to adolescence (Cairns et al., 1988).

Some recent research suggests that peer group affiliation may follow a different form for some adolescents in urban school environments. In schools within this environment, a problem-behavior peer group may represent the schools' dominant and most popular group. Association with such peers may be a survival strategy since the alternative is not having friends or being a marginal member of the school culture. The challenge for youth is to avoid engaging in problem behaviors without avoiding association with peers (Mason, Cauce, Gonzales, and Hiraga, 1994). When youth are confronted with this challenge, a strong positive relationship between adolescents and at least one parent results in behavior more in accord with the parents' values than with peer group values (Mason et al., 1994).

Peer Friendships

Peer friendships, like peer groups, often are held responsible for adolescents' problem behaviors. However, the development of positive and enduring friendships also has been identified as an important factor in promoting positive development among youth in high-risk environments (Cairns and Cairns, 1994; Werner and Smith, 1992).

One perspective on peer friendships proposes that peer relationships provide children with the opportunity to practice reciprocity in relationships based on equality (Youniss, 1980; Youniss and Smollar, 1985). This fosters the development of conceptions of fairness, mutual respect, and acceptance. By adolescence, close friendships are important resources for emotional support, advice, and sharing of good and bad events, and they promote development of empathy, intimacy, and understanding of self and others (Corsaro and Eder, 1990; Youniss and Smollar, 1985).

The reciprocal and "democratic" nature of peer friendships during adolescence suggests that close friends

do not apply pressure on one another to behave in particular ways. Instead, the participants in a close friendship are active agents in shaping the norms of that relationship and in choosing the behaviors in which the friends will engage (Oetting and Beauvais, 1987). As a result, some maladaptive behaviors may become the "norm" in a particular peer friendship and may be very difficult to change without breaking up the friendship or intervening with all of its members.

UNDERSTANDING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERVENTIONS

Interventions are defined here as activities, services, or public policies designed to assist youth in making a successful transition to adulthood. These interventions may target youth directly or may focus on their parents, other significant adults, and/or community organizations and institutions. For some adolescents, interventions may support or maintain them along already positive developmental pathways. For others, interventions may be needed to redirect them to positive pathways.

Because development occurs through reciprocal interactions between individuals and their social context, interventions must focus on providing adolescents with opportunities to experience the kinds of interactions that promote positive developmental outcomes. Those that have been identified in the research literature as most productive of positive outcomes include the following:

- Interactions that engage children and adolescents in productive activities and provide them with recognition for their productivity.
- Interactions that involve adult monitoring and supervision of adolescents' behaviors and activities.
- Interactions in which adults, consistently and in a caring manner, provide approval for prosocial behaviors and negative sanctions for antisocial behaviors.
- Interactions with adults and peers that involve giving and receiving emotional support, encouragement, and practical advice.
- Interactions between adolescents and adults that are predicated on acceptance of the adolescent as an individual with a unique history of experiences based on temperamental, gender-related, societal, cultural, and family factors.

These interactions foster the development of a sense of industry and competency; connectedness to other persons and through them to community and society; control over one's fate in life; and identity. The presence of these psychosocial characteristics in an individual has been found to be associated with positive school performances, prosocial behaviors during adolescence, membership in nondeviant peer groups, and positive relationships with parents and peers.

In providing opportunities for youth to engage in these types of interactions, it is important to understand that although the form of developmentally productive interactions may be generalizable across adolescents, the content may need to be individualized. Individuals bring to their social interactions unique histories, and therefore they will not construct the same meaning from similar experiences. Studies have shown, for example, that males and females respond differently to interactions in which adults provide support or encouragement to them. Furthermore, their perceptions of the value of that support often vary depending on characteristics such as gender, age, status, and ethnicity.

In designing interventions to promote positive youth development, it also is important to recognize that even in the most ideal family and interpersonal situations, the experiences of poverty, prejudice, and discrimination are likely to have negative effects on developmental pathways. Eliminating poverty, prejudice, and discrimination requires social and institutional changes that are beyond the scope of social service programs or family services agencies. However, having a sense of competency, connectedness, control, and identity has been found to buffer many of the negative effects of these experiences. As a result, providing economically or socially disadvantaged youth with opportunities to engage in

interactions that foster the development of these characteristics may allow them to cope more effectively with social problems over which they in fact have little control.

Interventions that promote positive pathways of growth for adolescents should not be restricted to adolescents and their families. Aspects of the community such as schools, youth organizations, and other potential sources of support for parents and adolescents also should be targeted for policy or programmatic interventions. For example, research suggests that schools have the potential to buffer the negative effects of growing up in poverty or experiencing discrimination, prejudice, or an unstable family environment. However, they will not be able to serve this function unless they are responsive to the developmental needs of children of all ages and to the cultural features of the particular community they serve. At present, many community schools are structured on the basis of political or economic conditions rather than children's developmental needs. Furthermore, their educational approaches reflect universally proscribed educational objectives rather than responding to community or cultural differences.

Finally, interventions must address the problems of youth, families, and communities as a whole. Although it may be possible to redirect developmental pathways for a few individual adolescents through targeting interventions to them and their parents, far larger numbers will be reached through interventions that encompass all levels of a community and are available to families with children of all ages.

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APPENDIX A:
CONSTRUCTING THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MODEL

This appendix provides information on the procedures used to construct the report on understanding youth development. It also discusses some of the major theoretical approaches and research issues not incorporated in the model.

CONSTRUCTING THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND REPORT

The conceptual model and report were constructed using the following process:

- Review of the literature on youth development and developmental theory and selection of theoretical perspectives to be incorporated in the model;
- Preparation of a Selected Theories Report identifying and justifying the theoretical approaches selected for the model;
- Submission of the Selected Theories Report to an expert panel for review and comment;
- Telephone discussions with expert panel members regarding the selected theoriesreport;
- Development of a draft report outline and conceptual model for review by expert advisors;
- Panel meeting with expert advisors to discuss the outline and model;
- Development of a draft report and model for understanding youth development; and
- Preparation of a final report and model for understanding youth development.

The primary goal of this process was to construct a conceptual model incorporating current theories and research findings concerning the kinds of experiences that promote adolescent development along positive developmental pathways. This information is intended to serve as a guide for program developers, policymakers, and service providers in designing interventions to assist youth in making successful transitions from childhood to adulthood.

The literature review and discussions with expert advisors were guided by two basic perspectives on development. One, development always occurs in a context, and the context for developing individuals includes the larger society and community as well as family and peers. Second, development occurs through reciprocal interactions between an individual and various aspects of the social context, and change is a function of the meaning that individuals construct from these interactions, not of particular characteristics of the context or the person.

Based on these perspectives, the focus of the report was to identify the types of person-context interactions that appear to promote or obstruct positive development. Discussions with expert advisors were directed at identifying relevant theoretical approaches and research efforts related to the developmental process. Theories and research findings that addressed the issue of the developmental process rather than pertaining solely to outcomes were selected for inclusion in the framework.

ADDITIONAL THEORETICAL APPROACHES

As a result of this focus, many theoretical approaches and research issues were not directly addressed in the report, although the general tenets of these approaches and issues often are addressed indirectly. Because these theories and issues are important in the field of developmental research, the following sections provide discussions of some of them, accompanied by explanations for their absence in the report.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory

Uri Bronfenbrenner (1986) has proposed a theory of development that is consistent with the conceptual model, although the model does not use Bronfenbrenner's terminology or classification system. Bronfenbrenner views individuals as developing within a set of embedded contexts. In his theory, a "microsystem" represents the community context with which a child has direct contact. A child's microsystem includes family, friends, teachers, coaches, and other persons important to the child. The term "mesosystem" refers to the aspects of the community context that have an indirect impact on the child through their effects on key microsystems. Examples of mesosystem factors include the parents' workplace, parents' friends, and teachers' colleagues and supervisors. The "exosystem" is composed of the institutions and organizations in the community that are relevant to child development, such as child care or educational institutions. Finally, the "macrosystem" comprises the mores, beliefs, and values of a society that influence child and family life. For Bronfenbrenner, these systems have interrelated and interactive effects on a child's development because they determine the nature of the child's experiences in the world.

The conceptual model for understanding youth development addresses the levels noted in Bronfenbrenner's system, with the exception of the mesosystem. The exclusion of this contextual aspect was based on a lack of sufficient research indicating the relationship between aspects of this context and youth development. The microsystem context is broken down in the model into community, family, and peer factors because research on these factors indicates that each has a unique impact on developmental pathways.

The conceptual model does not depict contextual systems as embedded within each other, going from the larger macrosystem to the individual, but instead portrays the individual as embedded within various contexts to indicate that each may have an influence on development independent of the other. However, the model does connect various aspects of the social context with one another using reciprocal arrows to indicate that each also may influence the others.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory provides a perspective of how behavior is acquired, maintained, and modified by individuals in society, regardless of their age or developmental status. Bandura (1982, 1986), a prominent social learning theorist, has proposed that behavior is shaped primarily through modeling, or observing behaviors, and reinforcement, or experiencing positive consequences to behaviors. Cognitive processes exist that mediate behavior change, including a sense of self-efficacy, which is developed through experiences of mastery of skills or tasks.

Acquiring and improving skills occurs when an individual is exposed to performance opportunities, observes others successfully performing the desired behavior, is provided with self-instruction experiences, or is exposed to verbal persuasion. Modeling can produce novel responses by providing cues for new behaviors, can inhibit or encourage existing behavioral patterns, or can facilitate performance of previously learned behaviors. Modeling also affects the acquisition of both social and antisocial behaviors.

Aspects of social learning theory are consistent with the youth development framework. The notion of self-efficacy, for example, is somewhat consistent with the idea of the development of a sense of industry or competency. However, in the conceptual model, a sense of industry and competency is viewed as less task specific than self-efficacy and as a more generalizable characteristic of an individual. The social learning concept of reinforcement is a part of the model's emphasis on the importance of winning recognition for accomplishments and residing in family environments in which prosocial behaviors are rewarded and antisocial behaviors are controlled through negative sanctions.

The general approach of social learning theory, however, was not adopted for the framework because it emphasizes external factors as the primary developmental influences. This is not consistent with the guiding perspective of the model that development occurs through reciprocal interactions between an individual and his or her environment and that development is a function of the individual's active participation in the world, rather than the result of external socializing events.

Psychoanalytic Theory

Although all psychoanalytic theories have their origins in Freudian theory, they do not represent a single theoretical approach. Instead, the major psychoanalytic theorists of the current century developed varying conceptions of the influences on human development and its course throughout the lifespan. These theorists include Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, Peter Blos, Anna Freud, Harry Stack Sullivan, Eric Fromm, and Erik Erikson.

According to most psychoanalytic theories, the latency stage of development, which begins as the child enters school, is characterized by the accomplishment of several developmental tasks; primary tasks include increased control over instinctual (i.e., biologically determined) impulses and increased independence from parents. In psychoanalytic theories, increased control is facilitated by the development of a conscience based on the internalization of, and the identification with, parental authority. With it, the child's respect for law and order assumes a dominant place. As a result of achieving greater independence from parents, the child is less likely to be frustrated by the parent, and this produces greater emotional stability.

Unlike most developmental theories, psychoanalytic theory views adolescence as a time of regression rather than progression, at least at its onset. From the perspective of many psychoanalytic theories, the biological changes that occur with puberty bring about a regression from the emotional stability of the middle childhood period. The adolescent begins to show signs of experiencing stress and of giving up some of the accomplishments in education and social conformity that were achieved during the latency period. As a result, the adolescent manifests not only regressive tendencies but also a variety of defensive

maneuvers to ward off the regressive pull.

Eric Fromm's perspective on adolescence has some unique features that have implications for understanding youth development. Fromm (1941) describes youth as being caught between their need for autonomy and their need for continued dependence. To escape this dilemma, they attempt to reduce freedom. They may do this by joining organizations that have specific behavioral expectations and demand conformity to those expectations; such organizations might include fraternities, gangs, religious sects, or the military. Youth also may attempt to reduce their freedom by engaging in actions that result in constraints or restrictions on their behaviors, such as marriage or parenthood.

Some aspects of psychoanalytic theory have been incorporated into the youth development model. For one, Erikson's (1963, 1968) propositions regarding the development of a sense of industry or competency and a stable identity are key features to understanding youth development and therefore feature prominently in the model. Fromm's (1941) description of the need for adolescents to experience both autonomy and a sense of connectedness with significant others in their lives is consistent with the concept of individuation in the conceptual model. A key difference is that for most psychoanalytic theories, development is based in biological change. While biological factors are accorded a role in influencing development in the model, they are understood as being part of what an individual brings to his or her interactions with the environment, rather than as causative factors in themselves.

Stressful Life Events

One approach to understanding developmental pathways is to attempt to link these pathways to the individual's experience of stressful life events. The general perspective of this approach is that the greater the number and intensity of stressful life events individuals experience, the more likely they are to need assistance in making successful transitions to adulthood. This particular approach was not included in the model, primarily because research on this issue often does not take into account the individual's perceptions of a particular life event as either stressful or nonstressful. As a result, the findings sometimes are confusing and conflicting. However, the general notion that life events--both positive and stressful--have a significant influence on developmental pathways is an inherent part of the model for understanding youth development.

Self-Esteem

A perspective prevalent in the mass media and in the public mind is that low self-esteem underlies most of the problem behaviors exhibited by children and youth and that high self-esteem is necessary for positive growth. Some researchers, however, have found that low self-esteem makes no contribution to future antisocial behavior and that increasing self-esteem does not result in a reduction in antisocial behavior (Bank and Patterson, 1994).

The concept of self-esteem was not incorporated into the model because it is a broad concept that often is not well defined or understood and is measured in very different ways. Instead, the model focuses on the concepts of a sense of competency, identity, connectedness to others, and control over one's fate in life, all of which may be important components of an individual's sense of self-worth.

Intelligence Test Scores

The conceptual model did not address the issue of intelligence as measured by scores on an intelligence test. One reason is that it is not always clear what is being measured by tests of intelligence or what the implications are of scores on those tests (i.e., IQ scores) for general functioning. In addition, the literature does not describe the process through which a higher IQ score serves to promote positive development.

Although the general public has the perception that higher intelligence is associated with more positive developmental pathways, the relationship between IQ scores and positive and negative developmental pathways has not been clearly established. One study found, for example, that not only do childhood IQ scores not correlate with adult aggression but childhood aggression correlates with lower IQ scores in adulthood (Huesman, Eron, and Yarmel, 1987; Patterson, 1990).

Moral Development

The issue of moral development also was not directly incorporated into the model for understanding youth development. However, the issue of connectedness to others may be understood as part of moral development, in the sense that the greater the attachment to other persons, the less likely children are to engage in antisocial behaviors. In addition, youth are more susceptible to negative peer influences when the social bonds of attachment and commitment to prosocial others are weakened (Hawkins and Lishner, 1985).

Much of the recent research on moral development focuses on moral judgment based on a theoretical approach proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg (1969), who identified six sequential stages in the development of moral judgment. However, the research does not clarify how these stages are related to development along positive pathways toward adulthood or depict the relationship of the stages to moral action. In one study of an intervention designed to increase the moral judgment stage level of delinquent and predelinquent children, minimal stage changes and no behavior changes were found.

The theoretical approaches and research areas that were not directly addressed in the youth development model and report have relevance for understanding various aspects of behaviors or functioning during adolescence. Their exclusion from the report is the result of decisions made regarding the theoretical assumptions underlying the youth development model and are not based on the value of the contributions these perspectives have provided to understanding youth development.

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