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UNDERSTANDING EARLY ADOLESCENT SELF AND IDENTITY: AN INTRODUCTION

Thomas M. Brinthaupt & Richard P. Lipka

Early adolescence is a time of change, challenge, and potential. The cognitive, social, and physical changes experienced by early and later adolescents have been well documented (e.g., Graber, Brooks-Gunn, & Petersen, 1996; Johnson, Roberts, & Worell, 1999; Lerner, 1993; Montemayor, Adams, & Gullotta, 1990; Schulenberg, Maggs, & Hurrelmann, 1997). The effects of these changes on self and identity have also been of interest to theorists and researchers (e.g., DuBois & Hirsch, 2000; Harter, 1999; Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1992; Rosenberg, 1979, 1986). However, whereas some have addressed the effects of specific changes on self in early adolescence, there are no previous books that are devoted exclusively to the self- and identity-related issues of this developmental period and that focus on applications and interventions related to these issues.

In this book, we have assembled leading contributors to issues of self and identity pertaining to early adolescence. They provide a broad and interdisciplinary approach to studying the self in early adolescence. Throughout the book, the contributors emphasize the practical implications of their work for understanding early adolescent self and identity and for designing interventions that facilitate early adolescent

development and adjustment. Recent theory and research on adult self and identity (e.g., Baumeister, 1999; Hoyle, Kernis, Leary, & Baldwin, 1999) have focused on topics such as possible selves, self-discrepancies, the stability of self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-related motives, and self-regulation. The contributors to this book utilize several of these topics as they help us to understand early adolescent self and identity.

A Brief Review of Pre-Adolescent Self and Identity Development

Most research on the development of the self has been concerned with the self in infancy, childhood, and adolescence (e.g., Cicchetti & Beeghly, 1990; Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1992). Traditionally, researchers and theorists have assumed that it is during these years when most of the “action” regarding the development of self and identity is occurring. The changes prior to adolescence are dramatic and important, and they set the foundation for later developments. Without the groundwork for self-awareness, self-conscious emotions, and self-evaluation, the concerns of the adolescent and adult self would be nonexistent. As Harter (1999) notes, cognitive and social changes complement and mutually affect each other at all stages of development.

Cognitive Changes

Among the first major developments in infancy and very early childhood is the awareness of the self-as-agent (the “I” or private, subjective sense of self) and the self-as-object (the “me” or public, objective self-as-known). Related to this basic distinction, Lewis (1990) proposed three broad levels of identity development in early life. These include the ability to differentiate self from others, a sense of self-permanence or conservation of self over time and place, and (by 15-18 months of age) the initial aspects of self-awareness or self-consciousness.

From Lewis’ (1990) perspective, the development of social relationships and the experience of particular emotional states arise out of this newly developed sense of self or identity. Beginning at around 2 years of age, the child’s emerging facility with language allows him or her to begin constructing a “verbal self” (e.g., Bates, 1990). It is during this time that the self-as-object emerges more fully. These children also begin to show anxiety over their failures. For the first time, we see children responding to outcomes with specifically self-evaluative emotions, such

as pride, shame, envy, and guilt. The younger child of one and a half years does not experience these emotions.

As the child enters middle childhood, he or she begins to develop the abilities to reason, take the perspective of others, and develop social skills (Harter, 1999). These new abilities have important implications for the self. As we might expect, children in middle childhood must deal with their relatively recent discoveries of a public and a private self, as well as the difference between real and ideal selves. Increasingly, the possibility that the different parts of oneself are not consistent with one another must be addressed.

According to Rosenberg (1986), there are several developmental trends that characterize the shift from middle childhood to adolescence. One change is in the content of the child's self-conceptions over time. Rosenberg describes this transition as the shift from an emphasis on the social exterior to an emphasis on the psychological interior. In particular, the younger child tends to think of the self in terms of overt, external dimensions, such as personal attributes and possessions, features of the bodily or categorical self, and typical and preferred activities. The older child tends to emphasize more internal, covert, psychological dimensions (such as traits and attitudes).

A related developmental shift is from what Rosenberg (1986) calls percept to concept. That is, the self-descriptions and self-perceptions of the child change from the primarily visual and observable to a more abstract and conceptual trait system. In addition, he argues that the developing child shows a self-concept that changes from a simple, global construct to one that is increasingly differentiated. That is, the ways we think of ourselves begin to become more complex and multi-dimensional.

According to Harter (1999), early and middle childhood are characterized by unrealistically positive self-representations and an inability to distinguish between one's real and ideal selves. Research has shown that, during middle to late childhood, children's self-evaluations become much more realistic and accurate (e.g., Harter & Pike, 1984). Interestingly, as children move into later childhood, they also show greater differentiation (and discrepancies) between the real self and the ideal self (see Shirk & Renouf, 1992). As we noted earlier, one of the changes during this period is that the self becomes less global and more differentiated. The self-image disparity findings reflect this increasing differentiation.

As the child approaches early adolescence, he or she begins to show higher-order reasoning about the self and its qualities (Harter, 1999). According to Damon and Hart's (1982) developmental model of self-understanding, by late childhood and early adolescence, the physical aspects of the self become relatively less important than the psychological aspects. In addition, the self is increasingly experienced as a subjective psychological phenomenon. Early adolescents now have a more important inner life and they begin to introspect about it. As Harter (1999) points out, whereas early adolescents are able to consider separate parts of their self and begin a superficial integration of their self-facets, they have yet to organize those facets into a coherent, internally consistent and realistic self-system. This is likely to be a major reason why fluctuations in the level and stability of self-evaluations reach their peak during early adolescence (Demo & Savin-Williams, 1992).

Social Changes

At the same time as these cognitive shifts are occurring, changes in social relations are having strong effects on the lives of children. According to Harter (1999), very young children respond to adult reactions and are primarily concerned with meeting the external standards of others. However, their lack of social comparison skills inhibits their ability to think of themselves in more complex ways. In early to middle childhood, children learn to anticipate others' reactions and internalize behavioral standards. Self- and social-comparison information is more influential, as these children begin to compare their performance to their own past and to other children. However, it is not until late childhood and early adolescence that self and identity most fully reflect the interpersonal domain, including selves that differ depending on the social context (see Harter, 1999). This is a time when children begin to show greater independence from their families and when peer relations increase in importance and intensity, particularly with regard to assessments of personal competence. Within these peer relations, children learn a great deal about social and group conformity, deviancy, and what it means to be included or excluded (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999; Gavin & Furman, 1989).

In a detailed study of peer relations and culture among a group of predominantly white, middle-class U.S. children and pre-adolescents, Adler and Adler (1998) explored the effects of friendship, popularity, and social status on self and identity. As children move from early to

later elementary school, social relations are increasingly characterized by dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. For instance, the most popular cliques were found to have a hierarchical structure, with one or two leaders. These leaders required members to subjugate and stigmatize other children who were not clique members, while at the same time showing their subservience to the leaders and the group. Membership in these popular groups was marked by continual social uncertainty and fragility. Adler and Adler suggest that clique dynamics of inclusion and exclusion are likely to foster unstable self-esteem, especially among popular pre-adolescents.

Adler and Adler (1998) found that, by the fourth or fifth grade, around one third of students belonged to one of the (fairly large) popular cliques. The members of these groups tended to feel best about themselves and were seen most favorably by the other children. Below the popular cliques was a smaller set of students (around 10%) falling into a “wannabe” group, continuously striving for inclusion in the most popular cliques. These wannabes experienced strong status insecurity, low self-esteem, and a lack of identity clarity. Roughly half of the students fell into a middle status level, characterized by smaller, independent friendship circles. These students were subjected to status derogation from the popular cliques, but they also experienced high levels of loyalty, security, and support from their friendships. Finally, 5-10% of students were social isolates, languishing at the bottom of the status hierarchy. These children had the lowest self-esteem and frequently experienced degradation and ostracism from their peers.

Research has also found interesting patterns of cross-gender relations from the early to later elementary years. In their study, Adler and Adler (1998) identified three distinct stages of gender relations. After passing through stages of integration and separation, cross-gender friendships re-emerged in early adolescence and initial romantic relations were cultivated. As Adler and Adler describe, for boys and girls alike, this cross-gender reconnection is characterized by feelings of awkwardness, misunderstanding, and anguish. Behaviorally, these relations are characterized by gossip, speculation, and sexual flirting and exploration.

Physical Changes

Early adolescence is also a time when new physical developments begin to occur (e.g., Gunnar & Collins, 1988). Hormonal changes cause the growth spurts and development of primary and secondary

sexual characteristics associated with puberty. During early adolescence, the body therefore intrudes upon one's sense of self and identity to a greater extent than in earlier years. The physical self becomes an "insistent presence" for the child (see Toombs, 1994).

Researchers have found large individual differences in the timing of puberty (e.g., Ellis & Garber, 1999) and these physical changes affect early adolescent self and identity (Brooks-Gunn & Graber, 1999; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). According to Simmons' (1987) "arena-of-comfort" hypothesis, if physical changes are too sudden, too early, or too extensive compared to one's age cohorts (i.e., outside of the "arena of comfort"), then the transition to adolescence and early adulthood can have negative effects on how one evaluates oneself. Simmons found that the timing of one's transition to puberty (relative to one's peers) has a greater, negative impact on self-esteem than the experience of puberty itself, particularly for girls.

It should be noted that there is a significant lag time between biological and social adulthood, at least in western cultures. This reflects the ambiguous and poorly defined social status of adolescence. In the United States, adults discourage developing adolescents from acting on their new physical and sexual status, even though these changes have important implications for self and identity (Brooks-Gunn & Graber, 1999). This state of affairs explains in part why peers have such an influence on adolescent sexual activity (e.g., Udry, 1990).

It is also well documented that adolescents (of many species) show increases in novelty seeking, sensation seeking, and risk taking behaviors (Arnett, 1992). Spear (2000) argued that several areas of the brain are transformed during the transition to adolescence. For example, changes have been found in neurotransmitter input to the adolescent prefrontal cortex (associated with goal-directed and self-regulatory behavior) as well as to areas of the limbic brain (associated with emotional reactions and responses to stress). She suggests that such changes in neural mechanisms are closely related to typical adolescent behaviors, such as increased drug use and greater negative reactions to stress.

Summary

As the child enters early adolescence, the stability of the self is threatened. There are several reasons why self and identity may become less stable at this time. The "true" attributes of oneself and others become

or remain ambiguous. In addition, early adolescents are likely to receive different pictures of themselves depending on who is providing that picture. For instance, the self-related observations and opinions of one's parents are unlikely to be the same as those of one's peers. At this time, efforts at impression management and self-presentation become more important and focused. To the extent that the child experiments with different roles, this may convey the sense that the self is an amorphous, mutable construct. Of course, all of these changes are occurring at the same time that the child is becoming a young adult, with the bodily and other physical changes that make up puberty.

The early adolescent is subjected to multiple changes and developments, which do not necessarily occur at the same time or complete their trajectories at the same rate. While he or she is equipped with an increasingly complex sense of self or identity, the early adolescent has yet to fully live in these "new clothes." As our brief review shows, this period is characterized by increased self-consciousness, introspection, inner conflict, stress, uncertainty, and disorientation. Taken together, the combination of cognitive, social, and physical changes makes early adolescence a critical time for the consideration of self- and identity-related applications and interventions.

This book illustrates these applications and interventions in four major sections. In the first section, contributors address some of the major conceptual issues for studying the self in early adolescence, including how early adolescent changes relate to self and identity, and why self-esteem must be understood as a multifaceted construct. In the second section, contributors address transitions to new schools and school structures, the self and identity needs of early adolescents, and how these often are in conflict with one another. The third section addresses negative peer relationships and other behavioral problems that commonly affect the early adolescent and some of the ways that these problems can be lessened. Finally, the last section of the book presents case examples of specific self-related applications and interventions as well as a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of self-esteem enhancement interventions.

Conceptual Issues

The contributors to the first part of the book provide some conceptual clarity to the question of what constitutes self and identity in early

adolescence. Two major questions are addressed here. First, what are the major changes that early adolescents undergo and what impact do these changes have on self and identity? Second, what is self-esteem and how do its many facets relate to early adolescent adjustment?

In the first chapter, Finkenauer, Engels, Meeus, and Oosterwegel provide a very useful introduction to the major changes and transitions during early adolescence and how these affect self and identity. Their overview touches on many of the issues and topics that are the focus of the other contributors to this book. Finkenauer and colleagues emphasize how early adolescence is a period of heightened stress vulnerability, and they describe some of the ways that this vulnerability can be reduced. In the first part of their chapter, they distinguish between “self” (the relatively stable knowledge and feelings about oneself as a whole, across time and situation) and “identity” (the specific self-aspects that vary in salience as a function of social and environmental factors). Next, they review some of the major problems, difficulties, and stressors associated with early adolescence. They note that, as a period of sometimes extreme discontinuities, early adolescence is filled with both challenges and opportunities.

Among the significant early adolescent changes they review are biological (pubertal and other physical changes), academic (transitions to new schools and school structures), and social and psychological (especially the increasing importance of social relationships). After describing these changes briefly, Finkenauer and colleagues analyze the extent to which they affect the development of early adolescent self and identity, particularly with regard to possible self-discrepancies (Higgins, 1987). For example, discrepancies between actual and ideal body awareness and physical appearance are strongly linked to negative early adolescent self-esteem. Physical changes also seem to be associated with an intensification of one’s own and others’ gender-related norms and expectations for oneself. The transition to junior high (and possibly middle school) is associated with drops in self-esteem, perceived competence, and academic performance. In addition, researchers have found that this transition is associated with decreased feelings of personal autonomy, less support from teachers, and greater competition and school-related anxiety. Early adolescents also attach a good deal of importance to their social relationships. In particular, status and approval concerns, social rejection, conflicts, unmet expectations, and relationship self-discrepancies can create a variety

of problems for early adolescent self and identity (a situation that will not be helped by an increased emphasis on high stakes testing).

In the final section of their chapter, Finkenauer and colleagues discuss the practical implications that these many changes have on early adolescent self and identity. They focus on the steps that parents (and others who play a significant role in the lives of early adolescents) can take to ease some of the pains experienced by these children. Among their recommendations are for parents to provide early adolescents with more realistic and attainable standards for self and identity, to facilitate their planning and self-regulation, and to empathize better with the inevitable worries and concerns that arise in early adolescence.

In the next chapter, Kernis argues that self-esteem is a multifaceted construct, involving much more than the typical high or low levels of self-esteem considered by researchers and the lay public alike. Defining self-esteem as a person's feelings of self-worth, liking, and acceptance, he reviews three recent areas of research that illustrate the multiple facets of the construct. According to the idea of implicit or nonconscious self-esteem, one's explicit, conscious self-esteem may or not be congruent with one's implicit esteem. As the incongruence between these two levels increases, defensive and self-serving actions become more likely. The notion of contingent self-esteem refers to the extent to which one's feelings of self-worth are tied to the outcomes of everyday activities. Such self-esteem needs continual validation by self and others. Kernis describes research indicating that, as contingency increases, self-esteem levels decrease and anger proneness increases. This research raises questions about how contingent self-facets for early adolescents, especially social acceptance and physical appearance, relate to their feelings of self-worth and to their responses to threats and negative feedback.

Self-esteem stability has received a good deal of recent attention, and Kernis is the major contributor to this literature. Unstable self-esteem refers to relatively high levels of day-to-day fluctuations in one's feelings of self-worth. In his review of this literature, Kernis points out that compared to stable self-esteem, unstable esteem is associated with numerous negative outcomes, including greater overall self-esteem fragility, increased vulnerability to depressive symptoms, lower intrinsic motivation, and poorer adjustment and well-being. Then he describes an intriguing study of parent-early adolescent communication patterns and their relation to self-esteem stability. Self-esteem

instability was more likely to be shown by children who perceived their parents (especially their fathers) as being insulting or critical, using guilt-inducing control tactics, and employing negative problem-solving styles. This relationship raises the questions of whether and how relationships at home and school contribute to the development of unstable self-esteem. This possibility is addressed by those contributors who examine the effects of school structure and school transitions on early adolescent identity development (see the following section). As Kernis notes in closing, there is a real danger that interventions designed to promote positive self-esteem may be inadvertently promoting unstable or contingent self-esteem among early adolescents.

School and the Sense of Self

How much attention should be spent on self and identity concerns in the schools continues to be a controversial question (e.g., Beane, 1994). Despite the controversy, recent work has illustrated the importance of self and identity concerns for teacher development, from initial training to later career issues (Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999). The chapters in this section of the book examine how the school context and the academic environment can help and hurt early adolescent identity formation. The major argument is that efforts and activities of schools must be centered around the identity needs of the early adolescent in order for successful development to be fostered.

In their chapter, Roeser and Lau emphasize the importance of the relationship between early adolescent needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness and the educational environment. How does formal schooling help and hinder academic identity formation? Roeser and Lau review several approaches to human motivation and identity development. Using Eccles and Midgley's (1989) stage-environment fit theory, they illustrate how the lack of fit between early adolescents' needs and their school environments can negatively affect their developing identities. They cite evidence that mismatches between developmental stage and academic environment continue to characterize middle schools.

Theory and research on academic identity development highlight the importance of developing personal goals, acquiring perceptions of self-efficacy, and experiencing positive emotions. Whether these needs are fulfilled or frustrated depends in large part on experiences in the

classroom and in the school setting. Roeser and Lau note that, whereas schools can facilitate identity development by providing structure, supporting autonomy, and creating supportive relationships, many schools continue to fall short in these regards. After reviewing some of the long list of don'ts for schools and educators, Roeser and Lau direct their discussion toward those "best practices" that can promote positive academic identity formation. Among these practices are providing challenging and meaningful work in the curriculum that will allow students to link class content with their emerging needs, encouraging a task-mastery orientation as opposed to an emphasis on relative ability, using cooperative and heterogeneous grouping practices, and creating "schools-within-schools." Using the analogy of the individual and group elements of jazz music, Roeser and Lau argue that the key to successful identity formation is to strike a balance between the individual's needs and the collective goals of the school. In essence, schools need to allow early adolescents to "practice improvising" with their emerging academic identities in a context that offers autonomy and care. As Kernis suggests in his chapter, this approach is likely to be associated with increased self-esteem stability and more positive adjustment among early adolescents.

In their chapter, Clements and Seidman focus on the immediate and longer-term effects of transitions to middle grades schools on early adolescent academic identity. Emphasizing the "possible selves" that are being developed for the first time by early adolescents, they describe some of the lasting negative effects of middle grades schools' organizational and social regularities on academic achievement and attitudes. According to the possible selves idea (see Markus & Nurius, 1986), future-oriented aspects of identity can serve both motivating and evaluative purposes. A person's possible academic self could be negative and undesirable (such as when a student comes to believe that he or she is incapable of doing math or science and therefore that he or she cannot seriously consider related career options) or positive and desirable (such as when one acquires strong efficacy beliefs about one's skills or abilities which allow the consideration of new career and occupational possibilities).

Clements and Seidman review many of the features of middle grades schooling (e.g., larger classes, less autonomy and support, increased performance orientation) that are associated with negative identity development. The key concern for them is how such features constrain

students in the exploration and development of their positive possible academic selves. Can schools promote such positive possible selves in a way that will encourage a lifelong interest in and enthusiasm for learning and thinking? The physical, social, and cognitive changes in the early adolescent often conflict with the structure of middle grades schooling in ways that discourage such interest and enthusiasm. One of the major ways that school structure and teacher interactions undermine interest and enthusiasm is by fostering the unstable or contingent self-esteem described by Kernis. Nevertheless, the results of research on some major middle grades school reform programs give Clements and Seidman some reason to be optimistic that positive developmental outcomes are possible.

Peer Relationships and Behavioral Problems

One of the most important changes in early adolescence is the increasing importance of friendships and peer relationships. For instance, social comparisons are applied to a greater number of the early adolescent's daily activities than in earlier years and peer relationships begin to have both positive and negative effects on self and identity (Adler & Adler, 1998; Harter, 1999; Juhasz, 1992). Being popular with and accepted by one's peers is associated with high self-esteem in both pre-adolescence and adolescence (Adler & Adler, 1998; Parker & Asher, 1987; Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). Peer relations are sources of both teasing and ridicule for children. Demo and Savin-Williams (1992) noted that, whereas teasing by one's friends and peers is an indication of liking and acceptance, ridicule is an indication of dislike, hostility, and rejection by one's peers.

In her chapter, Azmitia addresses the role that friendships, especially conflicts within friendships, play in the examination and evaluation of the early adolescent self. Given that early adolescence is an important time for the development and revision of self-views, peer friendships are likely to have a strong influence on self-esteem and self-definitions. By having early adolescents provide narratives about their friendship conflicts and "infractions," Azmitia illustrates how self-esteem can act as a filter in the interpretation of such episodes. She suggests that one factor contributing to why some boys and girls show drops in self-esteem in early adolescence is how these children work through their friendship problems.

On the one hand, there is a good deal of evidence that early adolescent friendships can facilitate positive self-exploration and self-evaluation. On the other hand, Azmitia points out that these friendships can also contribute to, confirm, or reinforce negative self-views. In fact, early adolescence is likely to be a critical period for both positive and negative influences on the self, given the emotions, ambivalence, and pressures associated with these friendships. Azmitia's narratives suggest that, compared to high self-esteem children, low self-esteem children tend to avoid talking to their friends about their conflicts and infractions, while at the same time ruminating more about these events. Such a pattern may serve to preserve or even intensify one's already fragile and insecure sense of self.

In addition to the conflicts that arise in their friendships, early adolescents must frequently deal with the possibility of victimization or bullying by their peers. In their chapter, Alsaker and Olweus examine the effects of bullying within the broader question of stability and change in global self-esteem. They describe three longitudinal studies dealing with experiences that can negatively affect self-esteem in both the short and long terms. In the first study, they find that global negative self-esteem shows lower stability over long time periods (e.g., 3 years) compared to shorter periods as well as compared to aggression and other social behaviors. Despite this lower stability, overall changes in global self-esteem during early adolescence tend to be small and gradual.

In their Study 2, Alsaker and Olweus directly examine some of the effects of negative peer interactions on early adolescent self-esteem. These include direct (verbal or physical attack) and indirect (social exclusion and isolation) forms of victimization, both directed at the individual and as part of the broader classroom climate. This study also assessed a school-based intervention program against bullying and other antisocial behaviors, which they describe in some detail. Among the findings in this study was that changes in individual victimization were associated with changes in self-esteem over time. In particular, increased victimization led to lower self-esteem, whereas reduced victimization caused increases in esteem. In addition, victimization problems dropped dramatically following the implementation of the anti-bullying intervention program.

In their third study, Alsaker and Olweus search for some of the long-term effects of victimization on subsequent adjustment in young adulthood. Their focus is on a sample of males who were subjected to intense

and repeated harassment and bullying in early and middle adolescence. Encouragingly, they find these victims were no more likely to experience harassment or social isolation in their early twenties than was a non-victimized comparison group of males. However, the victimized young men did report greater levels of depressive symptoms and lower levels of global self-esteem. Thus, there appear to be lasting negative effects of early adolescent victimization on the sense of self. This important research highlights the need for attention to and intervention in bullying and other forms of victimization in the middle grades schools. The anti-bullying intervention program shows much promise in preventing the short-term and long-term effects of these peer behaviors.

Early adolescence is also a significant risk period for alcohol and other drug use (e.g., Newcomb & Bentler, 1986; Spear, 2000). In their chapter, Scheier and Botvin examine the role of competence in preventing and reducing early alcohol use. They propose that competence may be an essential link between early alcohol use and later self-esteem. A good deal of research has shown that high levels of competence (or the personal senses of self-efficacy and mastery) are associated with positive peer relations, personal adjustment, academic performance, and so on (see Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). For purposes of their research, Scheier and Botvin define competence as consisting of high problem-solving efficacy, high (internal) perceived control, and well-defined self-reward systems. Using latent growth curve modeling analysis, they examine both static and dynamic influences on competence, self-esteem, and alcohol use. These include how individual differences in the rate of growth of one construct affect the rate of growth in the other constructs, such as how one's initial level of perceived competence is related to levels of alcohol use. Their major concern is to identify those conditions that enhance competence and lead to a positive sense of self.

Scheier and Botvin's study is a longitudinal analysis of the links between competence, alcohol use, and self-esteem among a large number of students followed from 7th to 10th grade. Reflecting other research, they find that competence tends to decrease over time and alcohol use tends to increase over time for these early adolescents. More importantly, they find that high initial levels of alcohol use were associated with a faster rate of alcohol involvement over time than lower initial levels. In addition, those with high initial levels of competence showed smaller relative drops in competence over time compared to

those with lower levels of initial competence. Analysis of the combination of these two growth processes revealed that lower levels of early competence were associated with a much faster pace of alcohol involvement than were higher levels of initial competence. In general, lower levels of initial competence and self-esteem were associated with increased alcohol use over time. Finally, they find that students who reported greater increases in their alcohol use over time also reported higher self-esteem in the 10th grade, a relationship that may reflect the influence of positive social skills and peer associations. Scheier and Botvin finish their chapter by discussing some of the ways that intervention efforts might be useful for preventing and reducing alcohol use and for increasing competence and self-esteem among early adolescents.

Early Adolescent Interventions

A crucial question for those who work with early adolescents is what can be done to facilitate positive outcomes and prevent negative outcomes (see Harter, 1999, for possible therapeutic interventions related to self and identity). In earlier sections of the book, our contributors suggested several possible foci for interventions. These included identifying individuals with self-esteem instability (Kernis), establishing more accurate fits between students' needs and their school environments (Roeser and Lau), developing positive possible selves (Clements and Seidman), attending to conflicts in friendships (Azmitia), reducing bullying and other antisocial behaviors (Alsaker and Olweus), and preventing alcohol abuse (Scheier and Botvin). The contributors to the final section of the book present detailed examples of specific early adolescent interventions and their effects on early adolescent self and identity.

Dow Velarde, Starling, and Wallerstein describe the Adolescent Social Action Program (ASAP), a structured-curriculum prevention program used for several years in the state of New Mexico. The goal of the program is both to reduce early adolescents' alcohol and drug use and to facilitate their development as social change agents who can make positive contributions to society. The program allows predominantly minority early adolescents to meet drug-related hospital patients and detention center residents and to interview them about the harmful consequences of their drug use. A key component of the approach is that students develop, as a result of their interviews and experiences,

social action projects designed to improve the health conditions of their schools or communities. In other words, the ASAP aims to help at-risk youth develop and clarify their own identities by facilitating the kinds of positive possible selves described by Clements and Seidman.

As Dow Velarde and colleagues note, the ASAP program is designed to reduce early adolescent inner conflicts and insecurities. It carefully and systematically integrates both threat appraisals (through the interactions with patients and detention residents) and coping appraisals (by guiding the students toward self-protective and socially responsible behaviors). In this way, student self-efficacy is increased. Dow Velarde and colleagues provide detailed descriptions of several of the social action projects initiated by ASAP students, pertaining to drug use, teen pregnancy, violence prevention, and so on. Finally, they discuss research on the effectiveness of the ASAP. This research shows that the program has been successful in increasing self-efficacy, decreasing alcohol use, and increasing early adolescents' perceptions of the riskiness and severity of problems due to drug use.

In the next chapter, Deutsch and Hirsch examine how the social climate of youth organizations can promote positive development in early and later adolescence. These organizations can provide young people with emotional support, companionship, and feelings of self-worth. Deutsch and Hirsch describe how inner-city Boys & Girls Clubs can provide these benefits, by serving as a nonfamilial "home-place" that facilitates the development of self and identity. During interviews, many early and later adolescent club members viewed the club as their "home-away-from-home." From these interviews, Deutsch and Hirsch attempt to identify the qualities that led to this perception of attachment and bonding. Among those qualities are that the club fosters a sense of a reliable physical place attachment, the youth come to see the club as supporting their own identity needs and personal values, and it provides the opportunity for the development of self-regulation and identity maintenance.

How do youth transform a club's physical *space* into a *place* that begins to hold personal meaning for them, and ultimately into a *home* that holds deep personal significance for them? Through their interviews with club members, Deutsch and Hirsch note that there are both psychosocial and physical qualities of the clubs that make them feel like a home for these early and later adolescents. A major psychosocial quality of the clubs are the positive and supportive interac-

tions with other members and with the adult staff. In particular, perceiving the club as a home-place seems to be associated with feeling cared for and accepted and believing that the club provides important help and advice. The major physical quality of the clubs is their ability to serve as a safe boundary from the outside world. Across both psychosocial and physical categories, activities that provide social interaction and relationship building were frequently given by members as reasons for why the clubs “feel like home.”

In the next section of their chapter, Deutsch and Hirsch describe two case studies that illustrate nicely the process by which the clubs can become home-places that foster the development of self and identity. In the final section of the chapter, they discuss some of the implications of their research. Clearly, the social climate of the clubs has a strong impact on youth development, above and beyond the specific programs and interventions that are used. In addition, they argue that more attention needs to be given to staff training and retention, since staff play a critical role in creating a positive social climate and developing supportive bonds with young people. Finally, Deutsch and Hirsch note that clubs can allow members the opportunity to take on new roles that reflect and change with their developing identities and needs.

The success of efforts to enhance the self in early adolescence is the focus of the final chapter by DuBois, Burk-Braxton, and Tevendale. They address four fundamental questions. First, to what extent are esteem-enhancement interventions needed? Second, is it even possible to enhance self-esteem and, if so, under what conditions and with what limitations? Third, if self-esteem can be enhanced, to what extent are such enhancements associated with positive outcomes and adjustment? Finally, should time and resources be spent on disseminating esteem-enhancement interventions in the schools and, if so, how?

Regarding the need for esteem-enhancement interventions in early adolescence, DuBois and colleagues note that whereas the majority of children have high self-esteem, there are significant subgroups who develop low self-esteem. One such subgroup reflects some children in early adolescence who show large and lasting drops in self-esteem. In addition, conceiving of self-esteem as a multifaceted construct (as Kernis argues) reveals several self-esteem aspects that can suffer in early adolescence. They point out that significant adjustment problems are associated with drops in overall and other aspects of self-esteem in early adolescence. For example, the excessive use of self-enhancing or

self-protective strategies in self-presentation is associated with several problem behaviors.

In the next section of their chapter, DuBois and colleagues examine the question of whether it is possible to increase self-esteem through intervention programs. Reviews of the effectiveness of the few programs that have been assessed show that moderate increases in self-esteem are produced by general self-esteem interventions. In addition, there is some support for the effectiveness of interventions dealing with specific self-facets (such as academic or physical self-esteem). Among those factors associated with greater intervention success are efforts directed toward youth who are at risk or who have preexisting problems and efforts aimed directly (rather than indirectly) at enhancing self-esteem. Finally, studies of the follow-up effects of interventions, while limited in number and scope, are generally supportive of the possibility that lasting effects can be achieved.

Regarding the effects of esteem-enhancement interventions on other domains of adjustment, DuBois and colleagues report that positive associations have been found. However, whether self-esteem changes are responsible for changes in other areas, or vice versa, has yet to be determined. Given these results, is there sufficient justification for the wide-scale use of esteem-enhancement interventions? DuBois and colleagues describe several important considerations that need to be addressed before the widespread implementation of these interventions can be recommended. Whereas there are many reasons to remain cautious, they express optimism about the potential benefits of these programs and they offer several suggestions for enhancing the success of implementation and dissemination efforts.

In the final part of their chapter, DuBois, Burk-Braxton, and Tevendale present an integrative model for esteem enhancement. This model targets contextual opportunities, the processes of esteem formation and the multifaceted aspects of self-esteem, and how these relate to adjustment. To illustrate their thinking, they demonstrate how this model can be used to design better esteem-enhancement interventions for early adolescents. In the process, they offer a crucial outline for anyone considering either the development of a new or the implementation of an existing self-esteem enhancement intervention.

In summary, what are the major self and identity concerns for early adolescents that researchers and practitioners should be aware of? What are the interventions and applications that will address those concerns,

helping to smooth the transition into early adolescence and into later adolescence and eventually adulthood? This book addresses these questions.

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