

Adjustment of Adolescents

Cross-cultural similarities and
differences

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Background and Overview

One of the major challenges facing those living in technologically advanced societies is the need to adjust to various, and sometimes conflicting, social systems such as the family, friendship networks, work or school groups, and various traditional groups including the church which are oriented toward preserving cultural norms. At adolescence, the conflict among the demands of several groups is likely to be particularly acute, as increasingly autonomous children struggle to gain freedom from parents, to meet teachers' demands for academic performance, to make and maintain friendships, and to find a place for themselves in society. For the most part, the family and the school are allied in their expectation of increasing social maturity through internalizing adult values. In contrast, the adolescent peer group may exert pressures antagonistic to these adult institutions, perhaps because children want more control over their own lives and judge the peer group to be more similar to themselves, and therefore more sympathetic to their interests, than the adult-dominated social order (Bronfenbrenner, 1970; Coleman, 1961).

What effect do these various demands have on the adolescent? Can we predict adolescents' adjustment to their various areas of concern, which in this book include academic matters, interpersonal concerns and family relations? Do different judges (the self, parents, teachers, peers) evaluate the success of adjustment similarly? Are factors contributing to a successful adjustment in one situation, say the family, the same as those in another area? Finally, do these associations of adjustment generalize across cultures? These are the questions addressed in this book. Data have been collected on the adjustment of adolescents in seven different cultures. The general model posits that environmental conditions result in the individual adopting coping styles that subsequently shape his or her adjustment. In this chapter we will discuss the theoretical rationale for the model and the definitions of the environmental conditions, coping styles and adjustment outcomes, along with the previous work on which they are based.

Before we do this, a number of distinctive features about this broad gauge, cross-cultural research warrant discussion. First, this book proposes a psychologically integrated, as opposed to a compartmentalized, approach.

Second, it pursues transcultural stability as the criterion for establishing variables as major predictors of adolescent adjustment. Third, it examines the adjustment of adolescents over different areas of concern, as seen not only through their own eyes, but also through the eyes of their significant others: parents, teachers and peers.

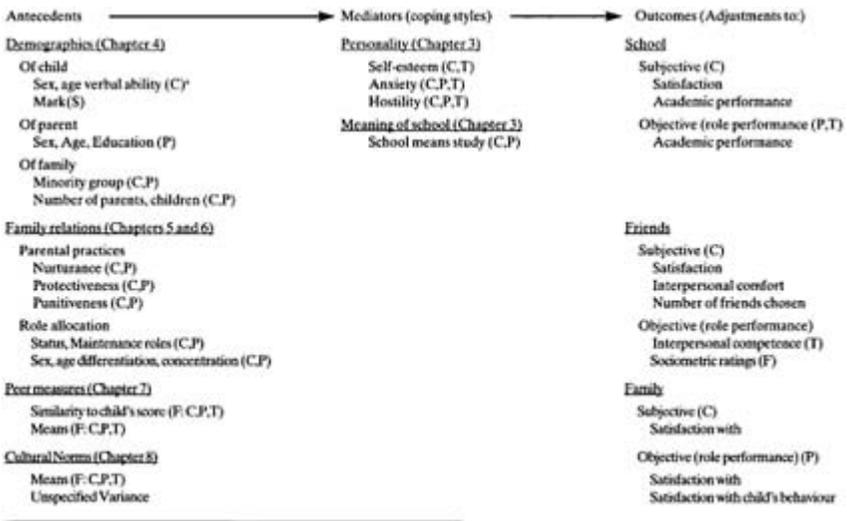
Figure 1.1 outlines our model. It also specifies the chapters in which each particular classification of variables is introduced. We will briefly present the measures we used to represent these concepts, as well as the work of others we used to guide our selection of variables. All descriptive data entered into our models are based on mean within-sample results collected from seven cities representing both Occidental and Oriental cultures, described in full in Chapter 2, and include the data from four perspectives: the child, his/her parent, teacher and classmates. All relational data are based on the total sample when the contribution of specific cultures has been partialled out.

Starting with Chapter 3, we describe the adjustment data, their interrelationships, and their relationship with the coping styles which we predict mediate the effect of the various classes of predictors. Though in this book we are emphasizing the gains that can be made by an integrative approach to data analysis, we introduce each type of data by first establishing the zero-order effects on our outcome adjustment measures and coping variables. This is followed by presenting their unique effects, represented by their *beta* weights in multiple regression analyses containing other significant predictors. Chapter 4 describes the effect of the significant demographic variables on the mediating and dependent variables. This is followed by the family variables, introduced into the model in Chapter 6 after being described in detail in Chapter 5, the peer variables (Chapter 7) and, finally the cultural variables in Chapter 8.

Adjustment Evaluated By Whom: The Source Effect

Success of the adjustment to social systems can be appraised both subjectively and objectively. By subjective adjustment we mean self-judged satisfaction with a particular domain of life; for adolescents, the three main foci for adjustment are defined as school, friends and family. By objective adjustment we mean the adequacy of the role performance in that domain, as judged by role partners. Adjustment to school may be appraised both as subjective satisfaction and, objectively, by others' evaluations of the student's academic performance. Adjustment to friends can be measured as subjective satisfaction with interpersonal relations, and objectively, by acceptance by others and their evaluations of the adolescents' competence in these roles. Finally, adjustment to family can be represented both as satisfaction with other members and as their reciprocated satisfaction with the adolescent.

This study is distinctive in its attempt to map both the subjective and the objective adjustment of adolescents and the degree of similarity in their predictors using data collected from diverse sources; the child, the parent, the



^a Sources: C=Child; P=Parent; T=Teacher; F=Peers

FIGURE 1.1 Adolescent adjustment model: specification and classification of measures.

teacher and classmates. In general, there is a tendency toward convergence between subjective and objective adaptation within any particular domain. People who are performing well are likely to receive favourable feedback from their role partners, which enhances their self-esteem, and hence their satisfaction with the role system. Conversely, satisfaction with one's colleagues in a role system is likely to encourage effort to perform to their satisfaction. A complementary reciprocity is likely to prevail among dissatisfied, inadequately performing members of a group as well. Negatively valued members tend to give up their role obligations, which further increases their alienation from the group.

Adjustment to What: Situational Determinants

The terms adaptation and adjustment imply not only an adapting person, but a set of circumstances which impose demands and requirements. One adapts to school, to a wartime battlefield, to parenthood, to a poker club. To say that one becomes better adjusted risks a confusion between the individual and the situational component. The capacity to adapt to a wide range of situations may, indeed, facilitate success in numerous endeavours, but we find it clearer to conceive such a capacity as an aspect of personality, which provides only one part of the adaptive process. The other part, situational characteristics, is a necessary ingredient as well. It is quite easy to imagine a circumstance—such as oxygenless atmosphere or a totally unpredictable social environment—with which even the most hardy (adaptable) person could not cope. We conceive of

adjustment as the contribution of the individual to adaptation that can be viewed by the self or others in a specific domain of activity.

While acknowledging that success generalizes to new areas of life and failure demoralizes, inhibiting or disorganizing action in other domains as well as the focal one, we assume at the outset a fair degree of domain specificity. In other words, it is quite possible for a person to do well in one area of life and poorly in others. Moreover, this conceptualization allows for the practice of individuals' transferring effort and attention from the less to the more successful domains, thereby expanding their attention to new areas which look promising.

Adjustment Where: Cultural Contributions

Finally, the contribution of the culture in which the adolescent is embedded also plays a part in the child's adjustment, both as viewed by the child and by role partners, such as family members, peers and teachers. By culture we mean the shared meanings among the individual members of the social groups as displayed by their expressed opinions and behaviours. It is now common to measure and compare opinions and behaviours across cultures, but the fact that there are rarely large numbers of cultures sampled limits the inferences that can be drawn from the data. Further limitations result from the use of opportunistic rather than theory-based selection techniques when picking the subjects. Within cultures, the use of equal-probability samples is rare, with university students usually the only population from which subjects are chosen. Differential restrictions between samples (cultures) have consequences for inter-cultural comparisons. One cannot infer an underlying basis for differences between two samples when the differences lie only in responses to specific scales or on the relationship between two variables, as there are too many other differences between the two societies, measured and unmeasured, that could also be the cause. However, if there is a common predictive model found within various cultures and these differences are also mirrored in mean differences between samples, then we are on firmer ground in interpreting cultural differences (see Scott, Scott, Boehnke, Cheng, Leung and Sasaki, 1991).

Here, we will first develop models predicting adjustment which hold within our seven cultures before examining the role cultural differences may play in influencing levels of adjustment. For instance, in our study, the very important relationship between high parental nurturance and high self-esteem scores is found within each sample. This finding also holds when comparing cultures; cultures with high mean parental-nurturance scores also have high self-esteem scores, as reported by the adolescents. This leads us to say that the cultural differences in self-esteem, an important mediator for subjective and objective school and friend adjustment, are based on cultural differences in parental nurturance.

Theoretical Framework: An Integrative Approach

Recently, there has been a trend to simplify research design and topics: to look at a single domain of predictors (e.g. friendship groups) with data collected from a single source (e.g. self-report) from one group of subjects (e.g. university students). Though undoubtedly this is in part a result of a need to refine theory and instruments, it is also driven by the need to publish in order to get promotion or a new grant. Even when databases exist allowing examination of many variables from more than one source, information about non-predicted variables, including those driven by instrument design (scale type and direction), are treated as extraneous noise, contributing to an increased error term, rather than as something which could add to the understanding of the outcome under study. Of course, longitudinal studies, or those requiring data collection from more than one source of subjects and more than one type of sample, require a time perspective beyond the reach of many current researchers.

In his 1936 book *Topological Psychology*, Kurt Lewin presented his formula for predicting behaviour as a function of personality and environment. Along with Cattell (1993) and the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Successful Adolescent Development, as reported by Jessor (1993), in this book we first call for a return to an integrative approach to research, whereby we increase our understanding of the relative influence of various domains of variables on predicting behaviour. Second, we hope this project will rekindle emphasis on the methodological effects of instrument construction, data source, and sample selection on designing studies (see Chen, Lee and Stevenson, 1995). Further, we hope this book will lead to more replication of relationships found within one culture to those in others. Most of the frameworks now driving social psychological research have been developed within the industrial Western culture, primarily the United States. Do these frameworks also predict behaviour in other, non-Capitalistic, non-Judaeo-Christian cultures? Would other variables increase the ability to predict behaviour in Oriental cultures? These are the questions one hopes future researchers will be addressing in greater numbers.

Overall Objectives

This study was designed to test the universality of the effects of the individual's coping behaviour as driven by demographic characteristics and influences from his/her social environment to specific situations. Adjustment is by definition an overt achievement more or less discernible to other people, whereas personality is an inferred construct, even for the behaving individual, and, therefore, is less likely to be similarly appraised by various sources. Following Baron and Kenny (1986), we assume that coping styles, here represented as personality and general orientation, mediate the effects of the four major domains of predictors. By that, we mean that demographic variables, along with family, peer and cultural characteristics, influence the coping styles of the child, which in turn affect her/

his adjustment to specific situations, at school, with friends, and at home with the family.

Our overriding aim was to bring together into one study the predictors of adolescent adjustment identified in restricted research contexts by people working in various areas, in order to test their comparative strength and their combined contributions in understanding adolescent adjustment. Using our typology to structure these predictors (demographic or specific social environment), we have developed a model to drive our analyses which assumes more than one type of data, more than one source of information, more than one situation in which adjustment applies, and more than one sample. Particular attention was paid to measurement effects, by varying the wording of questions and the direction of response as much as possible. Data were solicited from more than one source, so that the conclusions could either be shown to generalize across observers or to be specific to the person doing the observing. Using the same predictors, we were able to compare their generality or specificity across situations. Finally, in gathering information from more than one sample, we could replicate the findings, as well as point to the influence of the largest social environmental network in this study, the general culture or nation on the adaptation process.

Specifically, the five objectives of the project were:

1. To ascertain relations among measures of adolescent adjustment to three domains: school, friends and family; using parent, teacher and peer assessment, in addition to self-report. This assumes that the source of ratings of adjustment to a specific situation will be determined by different predictors, though there will be a positive relationship between adjustment ratings in the same domain. Outcome measures based on different raters have normally been treated as noise or error in measurement of the same underlying latent variable. Here we assume that same domain outcome variables reflect models with different antecedents. For example, though the child's self-reported degree of satisfaction with school is associated with his/her judgement of academic performance, it is a different aspect of the general domain of academic adjustment, as it has some different predictors (see [Chapter 4](#), [Figure 4.1](#)).
2. To test the proposed model which we imposed on our data: that the effects on adjustment in a particular situation (academic, interpersonal or family) are mediated by an overall predisposition to appropriate coping behaviour. This rests on our distinction between a general, overall style of adapting to the various demands of the environment and the relative success or failure of the outcome (adjustment) depending on the relationship between the demands of the situation and the coping styles of the individual.
3. To identify predictors of adjustment from the demographic characteristics of the adolescents.

4. To establish the relative importance of influences from the adolescent's social environment, here represented by variables from the family, their classroom friends and cultural norms.
5. To establish relationships within all seven samples drawn from urban youth in seven industrialized countries, as a means of understanding cross-cultural differences.

The Model

Figure 1.1 also introduces our variables into the model used in our study. These are classified as outcome variables, antecedents, and mediators. Outcomes (column 3) are adjustment to the three foci discussed above: school, friends and family, as judged by the self and others.

Mediating variables (column 2) are the three personality characteristics: self-esteem, anxiety and hostility, plus the child's cognitive appraisal of school means study. A number of different meanings were tapped; those of particular concern here are academic and discipline on the one hand, friendship and recreation on the other. By designating these mediating variables, the implication is that the effects of all antecedent variables operate through the mediators, and these effects will disappear when the mediators are included in the analyses.

Antecedents (column 1) include the demographic variables, and aspects of family relations, characteristics of the children's friends, and cultural norms. In all analyses, we will be looking at the direct and mediated effects of these antecedents, to ascertain the extent to which the proposed model applies: namely, that all antecedents operate through the hypothesized mediators. Our method of analysis, as noted above, is relatively unusual. However, using an approach analogous to ours in another domain, Scherer and colleagues (Scherer, 1988; Scherer, Wallbott and Summerfield, 1986), in their research on facets of emotion, looked for cross-cultural similarities and differences in the response of university students (single source), using a theory-driven model which classified variables as antecedents, experiences, expressions and consequences.

Now to a review of our concepts, accompanied by a brief review of the literature upon which their selection is based. A detailed description of the operational definitions of all variables, along with their source and data descriptions, will be deferred until they are introduced into the model. Starting with the third column, we will first look at the variables selected to measure the adjustment outcomes.

Outcome Variables of Adjustment

Academic adjustment

Academic adjustment can be subdivided into many components: satisfaction with school, attendance and persistence, competence in teachers' eyes, achievement measures, liking by teachers, teacher-judged adjustment to school, and reaction to authority, to name just a few. Previous research shows a general tendency for various measures of academic adjustment to be positively intercorrelated. For instance, high scholastic performance is linked to socially appropriate behaviour as reported by teachers of Quebec high-school students (Loranger, Verret and Arsenault, 1986), and teachers' ratings of children's school adjustment were found by Takac and Benyamini (1989) to be substantially correlated with school-appropriate behaviour. Teachers appear especially sensitive to students' behaviour as an indicator of their adjustment.

Teachers in grades 7–12 of a North Carolina high school judged students with acting-out problems to be more in need of special attention than students who were shy, anxious, or withdrawn (Wall and Pryzwansky, 1985), whereas no such distinction was made by mental-health professionals. Obedient middle-school children in India were better adjusted, according to teachers' ratings, than disobedient children (also assessed from teachers' ratings, Mehta, 1983). Among 14- and 15-year-olds, but not among 12-year-olds in Poland, teacher-judged emotional and social maturity were associated with (teacher-rated) positive attitudes toward authority (Cierkowski, 1975).

There are some exceptions, nevertheless, to this tendency toward generality of adjustment level. No differences were found in teacher-rated adjustment of high and low achieving students of science, agricultural science, and agricultural engineering schools in an Indian university (Kumawat, 1985), while a study of 80 Indian high-school students aged 13–14 (Bharadwaj, 1985) found no correlation between personal adjustment and their scientific achievement.

For our study, we choose academic performance as judged by the teacher, parent and the child him/herself, in addition to the child's general satisfaction with school. We left school marks as an independent predictor, rather than an outcome component, as it, along with a measure of verbal ability, also represents the antecedent intelligence, a predictor of achievement.

Interpersonal adjustment

Social adjustment has been broadly defined in terms of subjective measures (satisfaction with one's friends) and objective measures (acceptance by one's peers). There is some evidence that the social and academic adjustment of students are positively related. For instance, reading and mathematics achievement scores were positively correlated with students' levels of social initiation, cooperation and peer reinforcement (Clark, Gresham and Elliott, 1985). On the other hand,

among Israeli children 10 to 12 years of age, school adjustment, as rated by teachers, was generally independent of peer adjustment (Takac and Benyamini, 1989).

As with academic adjustment, interpersonal adjustment was also divided into sub-categories. These are self-reported satisfaction with friends, interpersonal competence as viewed by self and teachers, and popularity with others as reported by classmates and self.

Family adjustment

Family adjustment has been assessed as children's satisfaction with their families and the degree of friendly contact maintained with parents (Olson, McCubbin, Barnes, Larson, Muxen and Wilson, 1983; Scott and Scott, 1989). These measures have ordinarily been found to correlate positively with each other, as one would expect from subjective measures of family relations. In addition, family adjustment measures have been found to be associated with school adjustment, not surprising as both situations emphasize conformity to the adult world. The association with peer adjustment is less clear, and, perhaps, reflects the divergent demands of the role of family and peer group member (Scott and Scott, 1989).

So, even family adjustment has its sub-parts. In addition to satisfaction with family through the student's eyes, parental satisfaction with family and parental judgment of child's behaviour, were selected. [Chapter 3](#) will describe the resulting twelve adjustment measures and their interrelationship.

Mediating Variables

We are hypothesizing that social and demographic variables have only an indirect effect on the child's adjustment. That is, when the effects of the intervening variables are included in the same model, the direct relationship between antecedents and outcomes will disappear. If children's academic performance depends on their sex, then the psychologist looks for personality concomitants of sex that can explain the association. If the child's interpersonal relations with peers depend on the family constellation, the relationship would be clarified by describing the mechanisms by which the family influence the child's coping styles (i.e. parental nurturance leading to greater self-esteem) and thereby, his/her interpersonal competence.

Adjustment associated with personality

Berry and Kim (1988) define mental health as "effective functioning in daily life and the ability to deal with new situations" (p. 119). It is within this framework that we define personality as a coping style implemented when dealing with external demands, in our case school, friends, or family (see Berry, 1980, who

uses this in interpreting migrant adaptation). In our model, measures of “general personal adjustment,” including overall life satisfaction, teacher-judged emotional maturity, and objective tests of neuroticism and related traits, are defined as personality measures reflecting coping styles, not measures of adjustment, as no situational locus of adaptation is specified.

There is considerable evidence for positive correlations among these kinds of personality traits and specific adjustment measures for students of whatever age, including high-school students, the subjects of this study. For instance, high anxiety was associated with poor school performance, poor attendance and conflict with teachers and friends among high-school students in Poland (Cierkowski, 1975). Use of the university counselling centre, assumed to be an objective measure of low school adjustment, was associated with level of neuroticism, anxiety, life satisfaction, and self-esteem (Estes, 1973; McClure, Mitchell and Greschuck, 1982), and, at a Canadian university, students were found to display more personal problems and lower self-esteem than non-users (Poirier, Tetreau and Strobel, 1979). Personal adjustment among college students (low levels of anxiety, depression and alcohol use) was associated with high quality of peer relations and communication with their roommates (Waldo, 1984).

One of the most important adaptive coping styles is the personality trait, self-esteem, with its effect on academic achievement widely established in different cultures. Abadzi (1984), using a modified Coopersmith (1967) model of self-esteem antecedents on fourth-grade students, found a correlation of .34 between self-esteem and academic achievement. Longitudinal data in Norway highlight the correlation between academic achievement and self-esteem in elementary school classes (Skaalvik and Hagtvet, 1990). Youngblood (1976), with 907 Filipino high school students, and Bahr and Martin (1983) also showed that self-esteem had a strong association with academic achievement and family solidarity (similar to our family satisfaction).

A persuasive study by McClure (1974) attempted to predict adjustment problems among 697 students in an American college from a battery of tests subjected to multiple-discriminant analysis. Three canonical variates were identified, associated with the personality characteristics of neuroticism, introversion and hostility. Scores on these components predicted counselling-centre attendance and adjustment problems for a second group of 187 first- and second-year students.

Among these intervening personality variables considered in explaining children’s adjustment to specific situations, those selected for this study were the individual characteristics of self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967), anxiety (Taylor, 1953) and hostility (Caine, Foulds and Hope, 1967).

Adjustment associated with orientation

In addition to personality as a measure of adjustment coping styles, the relative salience of the situation to which the individual must adapt was examined. The perception that school means study (in contrast to friends) was included on the basis of previous results showing that children's satisfaction with school was uncorrelated, or even negatively correlated, with their academic performance (see Scott and Scott, 1989, 1991). From this it was suspected that school could have several different meanings to children, academic performance and establishing interpersonal contacts representing two major ones.

Antecedents of Adjustment and Coping Styles

Specific antecedent variables were selected with an aim of covering all domains to which potentially theoretically salient variables belong. The important variables for predicting adjustment can be categorized as belonging to the physical or background variables and those describing the social environment of the child: family, classmates and culture (see column 1 [Figure 1.1](#)). Below we review the literature covering the demographic variables we deemed to be important predictors of adjustment and the coping styles which the adolescent might use in adaptation.

Demographic correlates

Sex

Epstein and McPartland (1977b) found few significant sex differences in adaptation of 4079 middle- and high-school students, when the effects of other variables in their study were partialled out. Only in self-esteem did boys score significantly differently from girls (higher), while females tended to receive higher grades, when the effects of intelligence and other measured variables were partialled out, and males were more likely to be involved in discipline problems. The number of significant interactions of sex with other predictors of academic adjustment was no more than would be expected by chance. These authors concluded, therefore, that the determinants of adjustment were similar for boys and girls. Further, Ohannessian, Lerner, Lerner and von Eye (1994) found no difference in the relationship between reports on family adjustment and several measures of emotional adjustment, including self-worth, which we would equate to our coping style measure of self-esteem.

In a sample of Black undergraduate students from six predominantly White universities, Allen (1988) found males to be more socially involved than females and to have higher occupational aspirations. Berndt, Miller and Park (1989) found that seventh-grade girls tended to like school better than boys and be more involved in it, while boys were more tolerant than girls of classroom

misbehaviour. The first of these findings was echoed in Williamson's (1977) study of senior high-school students in Pennsylvania: Girls tended to be more satisfied with school than boys. Levine (1977) found that both male and female primary-school teachers were likely to rate girls as better adjusted than boys. Both teachers and the pupils themselves rated secondary-school girls in Montreal and Quebec higher in suitable deportment than boys (Loranger, Verret, and Arsenault, 1986).

Wagner and Compas (1990) found girls reporting more negative events than boys in samples taken from junior high schools, senior high schools and colleges; for both high school samples these were reflected in girls indicating more interpersonal stresses than boys. Frankenhauser (1983) reported that demands for achievement were more likely to result in anxiety for males, whereas stresses were more likely to be associated with anxiety in females. Furnham and Gunter (1989) in a study in the UK and Darom and Rich (1988) in a study in Israel found more positive attitudes toward school (equivalent to our orientation concept) for girls than for boys, with Darom and Rich further reporting more negative attitudes towards boys on the part of teachers.

Age

The pattern of adolescent-parent conflict was summarized by Petersen (1988) in her review of adolescent development. These conflicts are associated with other manifestations of maladjustment. In spite of indicators of self-esteem becoming more positive with age of adolescents (Damon and Hart, 1982), behavioural indicators of malaise, such as suicide, also increased for this age group (Petersen and Hamburg, 1986).

Age of child (measured by enrolled grade in school, between sixth and twelfth) was a major negative correlate of three aspects of white children's adjustment to Maryland schools (Epstein and McPartland, 1977b). The older the children, the less their satisfaction with the school, the more disruptive their (self-reported) behaviour, and the lower their marks (report-card grades). Greater disaffection with age may be due in part to the child's increasing desire for autonomy coupled with a sense of decreasing freedom of choice in the school system (Midgley and Feldlaufer, 1987).

Intelligence

Using global measures of adjustment or coping styles, Raphael (1988) found, in an American sample of 90 twelfth-grade girls, that their satisfaction with themselves (a parallel concept to self-esteem) and their circumstances was correlated, to a small degree, with intelligence and, to a considerably higher degree, with conceptual level (CL) assessed with a paragraph-completion test which is purported to assess the complexity of information search and categorization typically displayed by the subject (Hunt, Butler, Noy and Rosser,

1977). Pandey (1977) reports that, among a sample of 200 intermediate-school boys in Uttar Pradesh, India, those who scored higher on two intelligence tests also showed higher than average scores on a social adjustment component, but there were no significant differences on home, health and emotional adjustment.

In a study of 223 below average New Zealand children 14–17 years old, Ryba, Edelman and Chapman (1984) found self-report tests pertaining to the student's ability, self-concept, and social skills showed generally positive intercorrelations, averaging around .25, between ability and social relations measures. In Allen's (1988) study of Black students (see above), high-school grades constituted the largest relative contributor to college academic achievement, represented by a beta-coefficient (standardized regression coefficient) of .24; no other predictor came close to this one in predictive power.

Minority-group status

In the United States, the effect of race on academic adjustment has received particular attention. It has been found, for example, that Black students, who attend predominantly White schools, tend to drop out more readily, to do less well scholastically, and feel incapable of meeting the academic requirements imposed upon them, in comparison with their White or Asian students (Allen, 1988). Furthermore, Oliver, Rodriguez and Mickelson (1985) found that Blacks felt more alienated and did less well academically than their Chicano counterparts.

Family composition

The simplest bases for distinguishing among families have to do with their composition, usually meaning the number of adults and the number and sex of children. Yet these variables have not accounted for much variance in children's personalities or adaptation. Single- and two-parent families do not differ dependably in the academic adjustment of their children, either in college (Lopez, 1987) or in elementary and secondary school (Emery, 1982; Mechanic and Hansell, 1989; Slater and Haber, 1984). In spite of the lack of support, we retained the variables representing the number of people in the family along with the demographic characteristics of the parents, such as their age and education. We have classified them here, rather than under family relations, which we limit to characteristics of the social environment of the family.

Summary

In summary, those demographic variables selected and introduced in [Chapter 4](#) are the sex and age of the child, along with his/her school grades or marks and a verbal ability test score. Demographic characteristics of the responding parent were his/her sex, age and educational level. Finally, composition of the family,

represented by the number of adults and number of children along with minority group membership were categorized as demographic characteristics of the child's family.

Family characteristics

"Family relations" is a general term referring to family members' routine ways of dealing with each other. Sometimes the term "family dynamics" is employed, but neither of these terms specifies the variables any more clearly. There have been few attempts to describe formally these modes of interpersonal conduct so that they can be related systematically to any particular outcome. One may speak of the "quality of family life" without specifying any particular dimension of quality; no doubt there are several. Boehnke (1996) uses the term "family climate," which he defines as "a global construct used to describe the current, but fairly stable properties of a family environment with regard to (a) the ecological context of a family, (b) the structural properties of a family, (c) the quality of relations within the family, (d) the expectations and aspirations of a family, (e) the educational orientation of parents, and (f) the personalities of the family members" (pp. 14–15). Before defining our measures, we will review other definitions of family characteristics along with their findings.

Parental practices presumably exercise potent influences on their children's development. Hypotheses about the effects of the family on the child's ability to adapt have developed out of two main theoretical frameworks. The first, symbolic interactionism (Cheek and Hogan, 1983; Cooley, 1922; Mead, 1934) is based on the notion that self-esteem (then called the self-concept) was the reflection of powerful others, in this case parents. The second is learning theory, as exemplified by Bandura (1977) and Miller and Dollard (1941), which proposes that subordinates, children in our case, learn methods of coping by imitating role models of a powerful other, (e.g. a parent). In both cases, parental practices and family role dispersion would be predicted to have a powerful influence on the ability of children to cope with school, interpersonal relations and the family itself.

Hammen, Burge and Stansbury (1990) propose a model that shows parent—child interaction as a mediator of parents' and children's maladjustment in affecting the child's symptoms. Their clearest relations displayed in the table of intercorrelations among components of the latent variables are between the child's social competence and behaviour problems (self-report), and the mother's depression score. Similar correlations have been reported elsewhere (Rutter, 1990), but the interpersonal mechanisms by which maternal characteristics are transmitted to the child remain unclear. Among the most likely are low responsiveness of the mother to the infant child's behaviour (Goodman and Brumley, 1990). Unfortunately for our purposes, most of these observational studies were directed toward infants rather than adolescents, so one can only infer

that mothering processes found in infancy are continuous through adolescence or that parental effects in infancy are important for the outcomes in adolescence.

Compas, Howell, Phares, Williams and Ledoux (1989) found a complex set of relations between parents' and adolescents' symptoms. Their study of around 200 adolescents and their parents in Vermont, found higher correlations between parents' stresses and symptoms than between parents' and children's scores on these variables, which were nevertheless significant for fathers and children. The authors interpret their data to show that both boys' and girls' behaviour problems were affected by their fathers', but not their mothers', psychological symptoms. However, alternative interpretations—for example, that children's behaviour problems exacerbated fathers' neurotic symptoms—were not precluded. The latter direction of effect is implicit in Silverberg and Steinberg's (1990) study of adolescents' signs of maturity (heterosocial involvement, persuasive reasoning skills and physiological puberty) in relation to their parents' emotional wellbeing. The main finding was that parents involved in their work appeared to be less upset by these adolescent manifestations than were less work-oriented parents. In other words, the effect of family relations on members depends on the extent of their extra-family relations as well. These studies led us to narrow our areas of concern to two family relation categories, parental practices and family roles.

Parental practices

Recently, investigators have been trying to specify just what it is about family relations that may be affected by single parenting or multiple and mixed-sex siblings or psychiatric disability of the parent. A single parent may tend to become either negligent or over-protective. The lone child may suffer either from over- or under-stimulation, and it is these mediating processes that are of interest here. Early research by Sears, Maccoby and Levin (1957) and Coopersmith (1967) emphasized the relationship between parental warmth or nurturance and the child's self-esteem, while the McCord, McCord and Howard (1961) studies detailed the association between the child's hostility and parental punitiveness. Gordon Parker and his colleagues (Parker, 1983, 1989; Parker and Barnett, 1988) have focused on two properties, called "care" and "overprotection", using Parker's Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI; Parker, Tupling and Brown, 1979). The first of these includes our "nurturance" variable, and we have used items from their scale. Likewise, items from overprotection have been included in our parental protectionism scale. No specific circumstance of adaptation is implied by Parker; rather the dependent variables have mostly been various forms of psychiatric illness, such as schizophrenia and depression, which, within our schema, might be regarded as more akin to personality characteristics than to adaptive outcomes in a particular environment.

McCrae and Costa (1988a, 1988b) found substantial agreement between the ratings of mother and the ratings of father on "parenting." They also found nurturance to have a direct effect on subjective satisfaction, but not on

behaviour, and that this effect was not mediated completely through the personality variables, with which it had only modest correlations. Sarason, Sarason and Shearin (1986) found that retrospective reports of parental nurturance and overprotection by university students contributed significantly to predictions of social satisfaction. Steinberg, Elmen and Mounts (1989) found parental warmth and control as contributing to academic achievement.

A limitation of the measures of parental style is that it depends mainly on recall of family relations by the person whose current state (e.g. schizophrenic) is being assessed, rather than on independent appraisal of those relations. Although there was some evidence of agreement between siblings or twins in several studies (Parker, 1989) concerning treatment received from their parents (r s ranged between .10 and .71 for various samples), there is still insufficient work to show that parental style, *independently assessed*, predicts personality or adaptive outcomes ascertained from the focal subject or some other distinct source (Mackinnon, Henderson and Andrews, 1991).

Youngblood (1976) used a family authority scale to distinguish “firm but loving” families and found that it, along with high socioeconomic status and self-esteem, predicted scholastic achievement among Filipino high school students. Epstein and McPartland (1977a) have focused on a different pair of family characteristics, “status” and “process.” The first of these refers to a jumble of family size, parents’ education and material possessions, while the latter consists of two components, student participation in family decision-making and level of regulation imposed on the student. Measures for these properties are obtained from the student only, and are therefore subject to the same kinds of biases as are Parker’s. In addition, their measures of adjustment refer to academic success, school coping skills (which we classify as outcome measures, namely school satisfaction and satisfactory behaviour), and aspirations for further education.

In Epstein and McPartland’s (1977a, 1977b) study of 4079 middle- and high-school White students in Maryland, USA, family status was substantially related only to academic aspirations and standardized achievement scores. Students’ participation in family decision-making was positively related to their school satisfaction and deportment, as well as to several of their personality variables (our classification): self-reliance, self-esteem, (low) anxiety, (low) hostility, and sense of efficacy. Finally, family regulation of the child was related (negatively) to school satisfaction and deportment. Amato (1990) used multi-dimensional scaling to analyse children’s perceptions of family and proposed support and control as the two most important dimensions.

Our summary of the literature led us to concentrate on the variables representing parental nurturance, protectiveness or control and punitiveness, which will be detailed in [Chapter 5](#).

Family roles

Though there is little emphasis in the literature on the effect of the roles played by specific family members on adolescent adjustment, it seemed theoretically important given the aim of investigating the way in which families affect children's behaviour. Most research on allocation of family roles pertains to the division of labour between parents. Decades ago, thinking about this matter was strongly influenced by Parsons and Bales' (1955) theory of a sex division between instrumental and expressive roles, the former (income provision and decision-making) being predominantly masculine and the latter (contribution to members' emotional wellbeing) being predominantly feminine. More recent efforts (e.g. Crosby, 1987) have assumed a negotiation of task allocations between spouses, but empirical studies still report females performing the bulk of tasks concerned with childcare and household maintenance (Allan, 1985; Broman, 1988; Haas, 1981; Hardesty and Bokemeier, 1989).

The relation between family size and participation by the husband is apparently negative, contrary to expectations (Haas, 1981; Hardesty and Bokemeier, 1989)—a relationship that is attributed by Rexroat and Shehan (1987) to the husband's preoccupation with employment during the middle years of marriage. Finally, participation of children in the performance of family duties may result from an absence of adults, from poverty, or from a deliberate attempt by parents to teach responsibility and sharing. Unfortunately, there are few substantial findings concerning these determinants and consequences of children's participation in family activities. McPartland and Epstein (1975) found students who were involved in family decision-making were more apt to be self-reliant and more satisfied with school. Griswold (1980) reported a small but significant correlation between family activities (especially going to the library) and maths, vocabulary and reading achievement in all races.

Our measures of family roles, specifically the sex and generation of the maintenance and status role performer and sex and age differentiation and concentration of family roles in general, irrespective of content will be introduced, along with parental practices, in [Chapter 6](#) after a detailed description in [Chapter 5](#).

Peer relations

In considering the relevance of friends for the focal subject's adjustment, one faces a dilemma of causal explanation. Do friends' attitudes and behaviour affect the focal subject, or does the focal subject select friends with beliefs and actions similar to the self? As our study was not longitudinal, there is no way to answer this question with our data. Other studies, however, strongly suggest the primacy of selection, rather than the influences of interactive processes, in bringing about self—friend similarity. In Newcomb's 1961 longitudinal study of friendship patterns in living accommodations for university students, similarity in pretest

values of friendship pairs obtained from nominations later in the period studied were greater than the similarity for pretest values based on pairs defined from friendship nominations obtained early in the acquaintance process, when they presumably knew less about each other's values. Epstein's (1989) data show that current friends of ninth-graders were more similar to the focal subjects on several academic and non-academic measures than their friends had been in sixth and seventh grade. Scott (1965) found very little evidence of distinctive influence on university students' values from co-residents in group living houses, but rather significant selection effects: New students tended to join groups whose members had values similar to their own. We will, therefore, assume, for this study that any similarities between focal subjects and their friends are due to selection rather than to influence processes, and reflect the saliency of that variable.

Epstein (1989) has distinguished three bases for selection of friends by children. They would seem to apply to adults as well. The first basis is simple physical proximity: children are most apt to choose others with whom they are thrown together in the administrative or physical structure of the school. This is paralleled by Festinger, Schachter and Back's (1963) study of university student housing, where friendship patterns in a residential community developed along lines of the dwelling layout, with adjacent neighbours being more likely to choose one another than distant neighbours.

The next developmental basis for friendship acquisition, according to Epstein, is superficial similarity in age, sex and other obvious demographic characteristics. Only after considerable contact do more profound similarities come into play as determinants of friend selection—similarities in interests and attitudes. Kandel and Lesser (1972), for example, found parents and their children to have more similar values than did these adolescents and their friends, and Berndt, Miller and Park (1989) found that their junior high school students reported less influence from their peers than from their parents. Berndt (1989) assessed 297 seventh- and eighth-graders at the beginning and end of the school year. Among friends, there were increases in the similarity of school adjustment scores, both self-report and teacher-assessed, over the year, but not for grades. There the direction of movement was toward higher grades for students nominating friends with high grades, and increases in the school adjustment areas. It therefore seemed important to our study to include both similarity and strength in the variables representing the friends of our adolescents.

Cultural contributions

Cross-cultural research emanated from studies of national character, which were originated by psychological anthropologists (e.g. Kardiner, 1945). The early days saw culture mainly represented by anecdotal character studies based on interviews with selected representatives of the culture or group, such as Thomas and Znaniecki's *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1958), Mead's *Coming*

of *Age in Samoa* (1943), and Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946). In 1938, Murdock established the Human Relations Area Files, in 1953 Whiting and Child's book *Child Training and Personality* was published, and in Segall's (1979) book, we saw the emergence of culture as a variable in research.

More recently, cross-cultural studies of work relations by Hofstede (1980) led to a classification on individual and collective values of various cultures. Triandis *et al.* (in their summaries of many studies in the six-volume *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 1980) report using etic (within-culture) and ecological (between-culture) analyses in comparing samples across cultures. Ideally, one can only interpret the differential contributions of cultures in relationships if the samples are equivalent, there is an appropriate range of representative cultures on the between-cultures variables, the measures are equivalent between cultures, and confounding cross-cultural variables can be partialled out statistically. Shweder (1973) pointed out that there is no empirical relationship between within-culture and mean between-cultural findings. Though, as Leung and Bond (1989) and Hofstede (1980) have pointed out, it is statistically possible to find examples of non-parallel results, only when replication of theoretically sound within-culture relations are found in cross-cultural comparisons are cultural differences interpretable. We will elaborate on our approach to this problem when we develop our model in the next chapter.

Smith and Bond (1993) emphasize the importance of including cultural variables, which they defined as an organized system of sharing meaning, to further enhance interpretation of cross-cultural data. In [Chapter 8](#) we enter into our model the effect of the child's cultural environment. These cultural variables represent the variance unaccounted for by the predictors replicated in all seven samples, and are summarized in two forms: the mean of variables on which the samples differed and the dummy variables representing the samples and which were used to discount the contribution of culture when establishing the models in the earlier stages.

Summary

The model in [Figure 1.1](#) outlines our study of adolescent adjustment as replicated across the seven cultures. It presents demographic and environmental antecedents of three subjective and objective domains of adjustment, whose effects are mediated by the coping styles of these adolescents. This model is based on the work of many scholars from many cultures. By integrating their variables into one study with more than one sample and more than one data source, we point the way to profitable areas of research as social scientists refine universal models to predict individual behaviour and interpret cultural differences. The next chapter describes the samples, data collection and scale construction in more detail.