

C0020 POSITIVE PATHWAYS TO ADULTHOOD: THE ROLE
OF HOPE IN ADOLESCENTS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF
THEIR FUTURES

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REFERENCES

p0005 *Hope*, as a psychological phenomenon, has been studied within various disciplines since at least the 1950s (Menninger, 1960), as researchers have attempted to describe, predict, and explain the association between human functioning and this seemingly vital—yet often abstract—construct. While hope has been defined within the context of different theories and models over the past half century, recent work places hope largely in clinical and educational contexts as a cognitive, emotional, and motivational psychological asset. For example, research points to the role of hope in coping with stress and regulating emotions (e.g., Irving et al., 2004) and in predicting academic achievement among youth (e.g., Ciarrochi, Heaven, & Davies, 2007). In addition, hope has received a lot of recent attention in the nursing literature in regard with its potential to improve the quality of life among young cancer patients (Hendricks-Ferguson, 2008; Herth, 2001).

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p0010 Despite the various conceptualizations of hope that might exist across fields and research laboratories, a critical, organizing theme is the links between hope and future goal orientation. For developmental scientists,

the associations between hope and the motivational or self-regulatory behaviors, emotions, and cognitions that may help youth achieve their goals are of particular importance. Noting the formative role of goal achievement in different scholars' ideas about hope, Snyder and colleagues (e.g., Rand & Cheavens, 2009; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002) define hope as an individual's self-perceived ability to generate paths toward attaining desired goals. They also regard hope as a means for the person to motivate himself or herself to act to travel along goal-directed pathways. Thus, Snyder's hope theory links hope to intentional self-regulation processes, a focus of concern among scholars interested in the links between intentional self-regulation processes and the positive development of youth (e.g., Schmid et al., 2011).

p0015 In epitomizing the link between action along goal-directed pathways and self-regulation, Snyder's hope theory (see Rand & Cheavens, 2009, Figure 30.1 on p. 326) specifies that a person's learning history includes both "hope thoughts" and beliefs about one's efficacy. Whereas hope thoughts refer to one's understanding of pathways, that is, time-ordered correlated events or causal relations, efficacy beliefs refer to the agency of the individual in establishing and managing pathways. Together, pathways and agency represent an iterative process that involves the role of the self as an efficacious actor within a causal sequence. Snyder specifies as well that hope thoughts are precursors of a set of emotions about valued outcomes and, in turn, of additional thoughts about pathways and agency, that motivate the person to engage in actions that are directed to attaining a goal (Snyder, Rand, et al., 2002).

p0020 Research derived from Snyder's hope theory and using the measure he and colleagues developed to index one's confidence and competence to set and achieve goals (Snyder et al., 1997) has demonstrated covariation between high levels of hope and physical health (e.g., involving knowledge about health-related issues and intentions to follow health-supported regimens), coping with disease and injury, and mental health and adjustment (see Rand & Cheavens, 2009 for a review). These findings suggest that there are impressive links between hope and positive physical and psychological functioning.

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p0025 However, despite a growing interest in hope as a variable of importance in basic and applied research, particularly in terms of its applicability for positive youth development (PYD; Schmid et al., 2011), little empirical or theoretical work has considered the role of hope from a relational, developmental systems perspective (Overton, 2010). Embedding hope in such a theoretical frame would enable scholars to specify the role of this construct in facilitating developmental trajectories involving mutually influential and beneficial exchanges between the developing individual and the multiple,

interconnected levels of the ecology of human development. These levels involve family and peer relations and connections to school, community organizations, faith institutions, and the institutions of civil society.

p0030 Moreover, the role of hope for shaping the developmental processes involved in adolescents' constructions of their futures remains an understudied arena within developmental science. In addition, although Snyder's theory relates hope to goal motivation (Rand & Cheavens, 2009; Snyder, Rand, et al., 2002), Aspinwall and Leaf (2002) note that a critical element missing from Snyder's treatment of hope is an explicit focus on future orientation, that is, the content of one's future goals and beliefs regarding future prospects. Given that, during adolescence, the individual prototypically engages in self-defining (identity) processes oriented to future roles (e.g., Nurmi, 1991), hope, as a facet of intentional self-regulation processes linked to the attainment of sought-after roles, becomes a crucial variable to study in regard with the successful, positive development of youth. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is threefold. First, we will present a developmental systems framework for understanding the links between hope and adaptive developmental outcomes. Second, we will discuss recent research that provides evidence for the links between adolescents' hopeful future expectations and positive outcomes. A final goal for this chapter is to provide researchers with guidelines for taking the next steps in not only assessing hope among diverse youth but also in harnessing that hope for positive constructions of adolescents' future roles.

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I. Hope and Adolescents' Future Orientations

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p0035 Currently, Snyder's conception of hope frames important research about the status of America's youth. For example, using Snyder's hope theory framework, the 2010 *Gallup Student Poll* proposes that hope is "the ideas and energy for the future," a cognitive and motivational construct oriented in a young person's meaningful goals (Lopez, Agrawal, & Calderon, 2010). Findings from the 2010 *Gallup Student Poll*, which surveyed over 240,000 youth in Grades 5 through 12, suggested that hope is positively and significantly correlated with a host of thriving indicators. Most notably, the student poll found that hope was very strongly correlated with measures of self-efficacy, intentional self-regulation, and well-being. Lopez and colleagues found that hope is a malleable construct, supported by key players in the youth context, including parents, school, and the community (Lopez et al., 2010).

p0040 Clearly, the second decade of life has potential to be a wellspring of hope, owing to the physical, physiological, emotional, and cognitive changes that define the adolescent period. According to Erikson (1959), Côté (2009), and others (e.g., Schwartz, Luyckx, & Vignoles, in press), a key task of adolescence is to organize these changes into a new definition of the self, one that will help the young person prepare for a future adaptive role. Cognitive developments prototypical during adolescence help the young person imagine and plan for his or her future self (Nurmi, 2004). To the extent that cognitions and emotions associated with these plans are positive and energizing, an adolescent may be said to have hopeful expectations for the future.

s0010 **A. THE ROLE OF HOPE IN CONSTRUCTING A POSITIVE
FUTURE**

p0045 Adolescents' thoughts about their futures are typically concerned with normative developmental outcomes, including educational and vocational achievements, having a family, or lifestyle or material desires (Nurmi, 1991). These goals for one's future may in fact reflect actual possibilities for youth, since developmental paths may be marked by multidirectionality, equipotentiality, and equifinality across individuals (Lerner, 2002). That is, across adolescence, the individual may pursue different end states and may take any number of routes toward his or her goals. Although starting at different points, individuals may end up reaching similar ends. Of course, the reality is that the particular paths taken by youth are shaped by both individual characteristics— aspirations, hope, cognitive, and behavioral skills—and contextual influences (e.g., “developmental assets”; Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sems, 2006; Benson, Scales, & Syvertsen, in press) found in families, schools, peer groups, communities, and the vicissitudes of their historical era. Variables in these settings may serve as barriers or assets to achieving future expectations (Nurmi, 2004).

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p0050 Within developmental science, a key goal is to identify features of the individual or the context that will help explain why certain adolescents are able to construct positive futures, while others follow developmental paths marked by problematic behaviors. Just as researchers and practitioners are energized by the aspiration (the “hope”) to optimize youth development (in addition to describing and explaining it; Baltes, Reese, & Nesselroade, 1988), so too may hope be a motivating factor for youth to attain their goals. Hope reflects positively valenced expectations about the self, others, valued institutions, or desired events,

and it encompasses both cognitions and emotions regarding the future. Later, we discuss some processes by which hope may influence the behaviors of adolescents toward achieving future goals. However, in order to better understand the role of hope in shaping adaptive outcomes for youth, it is important to first place hope within a developmental systems framework.

s0015 **II. Understanding Hope from a Developmental Systems Perspective**

p0055 A focus on the nature of the influence of individual and contextual characteristics on the attainment of developmental outcomes represents a defining feature of contemporary developmental science (e.g., Lerner, 2006). Historically, theoretical foundations for the study of human development were based on a Cartesian split conception that development could be reduced to direct influences of either the environment or biology. However, the contemporary study of human development is predicated on a relational scientific worldview which holds that all levels of organization within an individual's ecology, from the biological to the sociocultural and historical levels, are integrated, or fused (Lerner, 2002; Overton, 2010). This relational paradigm is thus a meta-theory that rejects debates of "nature versus nurture" (and other split conceptions, such as continuity–discontinuity) of human development as inherently counterfactual. That is, relational meta-theory maintains that because the organism and its context are always mutually embedded and mutually influential, it is not useful to discuss relative influences of environment, on one hand, or genetics on the other (Overton, 2010).

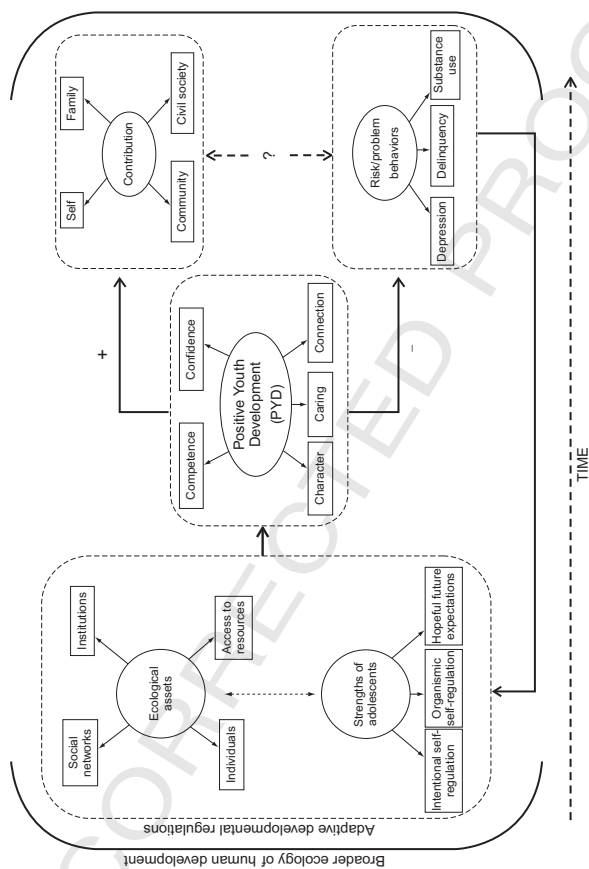
p0060 Theories within this relational paradigm are often modeled through a developmental systems framework (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Ford & Lerner, 1992; Magnusson & Stattin, 2006; Overton, 2010). Developmental systems theory holds that development—for example, involving the physiological, somatic, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social processes that comprise individual ontogeny—is the result of dynamic interaction of the individual and his or her context. That is, because of the integration of the levels of organization within the individual's ecology (e.g., the biological, psychological, and social levels), developmental systems theories emphasize that there are mutually influential relations between the individual and his or her context, represented as individual ↔ contextual relations (Lerner, 2004; Overton, 2006). These relations regulate the course of development. Further, because of the

ability of the individual to act on his or her environment, the agency of an adolescent (or any individual) in guiding his or her own development is a critical feature of this fused relationship. That is, individuals actively contribute to the developmental regulations in which they are involved, and such actions constitute a means through which adolescents construct pathways toward future adult roles (Lerner, 2006).

p0065 One example of this agency is that the adolescent must select behaviors that both serve his or her own development and contribute to his or her own context in order to achieve future goals. In other words, to function adaptively in the face of the myriad changes that characterize adolescence, youth must maintain or enhance the developmental assets that exist in their ecologies, by supporting the contexts that are supporting them (e.g., Lerner, Freund, De Stefanis, & Habermas, 2001; Nurmi, 1991). That is, *adaptive developmental regulation* occurs when the person–context relationship is mutually beneficial to both person and context (Brandstädter, 2006). Moreover, one’s capacity for adaptive developmental regulation, that is, his or her ability to successfully align individual strengths with contextual resources, is an agentic process that is shaped by such individual characteristics as intentional self-regulation (e.g., Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 2006; Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2008). Intentional self-regulation may involve selecting goals (S), optimizing one’s resources in order to achieve those goals (O), and compensating by adjusting when original goals are blocked or when strategies for optimization fail (C; Freund & Baltes, 2002). This formulation reflects the “SOC” model of Baltes and colleagues (Baltes, 1997; Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Freund & Baltes, 2002).

p0070 In addition to intentional self-regulation, other psychological characteristics related to cognitive and emotional development have been found to be important influences on the shaping of future adult roles (e.g., Nurmi, 2004). Hope has been a particular focus among researchers interested in the cognitive and motivational constructs associated with positive developmental outcomes, including educational achievement (e.g., Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder et al., 2002), psychological well-being (e.g., Arnau, Rosen, Finch, Rhudy, & Fortunato, 2007; Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2006), coping and resilience (e.g., among adolescents with cancer; Haase, 2004), and predictors of thriving among youth, for example, in the form of PYD (e.g., Schmid et al., 2011). Figure 1 presents this role of hope within the individual ↔ context relations characterizing the developmental system. As seen in the figure, hope is conceptualized as an individual strength of adolescents that fuse with ecological assets. Together, adaptive developmental regulations lead to PYD, which in turn is positively associated with youth contribution, and negatively associated with risk or problem behaviors. These positive and

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f0005 Fig. 1. A relational, developmental systems model of the role of hope in positive youth development.

negative developmental outcomes provide feedback vis-à-vis changes to both the individual and the context, as well as to the individual ↔ context relations.

p0075 As emphasized in contemporary developmental systems theories (e.g., Lerner, 2006; Overton, 2010), and as displayed in Figure 1, neither individual attributes (such as hope) nor contexts alone, or an additive combination of these factors, determine the course of development. Rather, mutually influential *relations* (as indicated by the bidirectional arrow) between the developing individual and his or her context constitute the fundamental process of development. Clearly, it is important to ascertain key individual-level variables, such as hope, that fuse or coact with the well-documented contextual variables noted above to shape the developmental pathways across adolescence.

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III. Projections, Possibilities, and Purpose

p0080 Successful selection of behaviors that allow an adolescent to realize his or her future goals depends on the presence of specific cognitive and behavioral functions, such as the ability to plan for the future and to appropriately act to reach one's goals. According to Nurmi (2004), "In order to be active agents in the selection of their future developmental trajectories, adolescents' personal goals need to be evidenced in their positive thinking about the future and belief in personal control" (p. 99). In other words, there may be an emotional component to behavioral selection that serves as an impetus in the process of achieving goals. Indeed, Snyder's primary conclusion about hope, after extensive empirical, clinical, and ethnographic work (see Snyder, 1994), was that an individual's hope is rooted in his or her orientation toward specific goals. Positive motivation, in the form of hope, may be necessary to energize behavior in the direction of those goals.

p0085 Recent literature on the role of positive affect in how adolescents construct their future paths suggests that positive emotions with respect to one's future, such as hope or optimism, may be a crucial component in this process (e.g., Benson, 2009; Nurmi, 2004; Yowell, 2000). One line of research involves theories about the role of positive or optimistic future expectations in achieving developmental outcomes. For example, Markus and Nurius (1986) proposed that representations of one's future self may be thought of in terms of possible selves, which encompass one's expected, hoped for, and feared future self. According to Yowell (2000), "in facilitating meaning-making, incentives for behavior, and regulation, possible selves function to dynamically organize and energize behavior" (p. 251). In other words,

behavioral outcomes in later adolescence are influenced by earlier prospections about the future through self-conceptions that determine how information is processed; in turn, these prospections serve to regulate an individual's behavior.

p0090 In studies of Latino adolescents' conceptions of their futures, Yowell (2000, 2002) found that while hoped-for selves did reflect the salient ideology of Latino adolescents, that is, to graduate from high school and to attend college, hoped-for selves did not predict students' academic performance. However, findings from these studies also suggested that participants had low procedural knowledge (e.g., optimization skills) about how to achieve their future goals, which may account for the lack of connection between hoped-for selves and academic achievement. In other words, a hopeful future may be a motivating factor in applying specific behavioral and cognitive skills to achieve one's future goals. However, without self-regulatory skills (i.e., without SOC skills), a hopeful future in and of itself may be insufficient. Although Yowell's findings are important for understanding variation in the connections between a hopeful future and academic achievement, they emphasize the necessity for further investigation into the mechanisms, or processes, through which a hopeful future might influence later developmental outcomes.

p0095 Given the associations between hope and future goals, research connecting future-oriented beliefs and intentional self-regulation may be especially useful for understanding these mechanisms. For example, to account for the role of expectations in self-regulatory processes (particularly those related to academic achievement), Zimmerman (2002) proposed three cyclical phases of intentional self-regulation. These are forethought, performance, and self-reflection. The forethought phase encompasses task analysis such as goal setting and planning. Also included in forethought are self-motivation beliefs, which refer to outcome expectations and learning goal orientation. According to Zimmerman (2002), students who are expert self-regulators "engage in high-quality forethought," compared to novices, who "instead attempt to self-regulate their learning reactively" (p. 69). Thus, the future goals activated in the forethought phase of intentional self-regulation motivate the performance and self-reflection phases; in turn, students receive feedback from performance and self-reflection and adjust their goals and motivations accordingly. While expectations and hope clearly overlap with regard to adolescents' constructions of their futures, more research will need to be conducted on the nature of the relations between hope and intentional self-regulation (e.g., Schmid et al., in press).

p0100 Finally, in addition to intentional self-regulation, hope may represent an individual developmental asset by which youth engage meaningfully with

their context (see Figure 1). For example, Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2003; see also Chapter 3) conceptualized hope with regard to the development of purpose; they define purpose as an “intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self” (p. 121). An individual has purpose if he or she is able to set meaningful future goals that contribute to both the self and the larger context (e.g., society). Using this definition of purpose, Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib, and Finch (2009) found that hope was correlated with both searching for one’s purpose and having an identified purpose among adolescents and young adults. Moreover, findings from this study suggested that hope mediated the relationship between purpose and life satisfaction. Thus, hopefulness and purpose may be inextricably linked in driving action toward one’s future goals. In other words, it may be that adolescents will not move forward on accomplishing a future goal—in fact, they may not ascribe meaning to that goal in the first place—if they do not first have some hope that such a goal can be achieved.

p0105 More broadly, the specific mechanisms by which hope for the future informs behavior in the present are at least related to, if not explicitly identified by, a broader domain of scholarship about expectations of self and context, and how such beliefs guide adaptive developmental regulations (see Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Wigfield, Eccles, Schiefele, Roeser, & Davis-Kean, 2006 for reviews on motivational beliefs, values, and goals). For example, literatures informed by Bandura’s (1997) self-efficacy theory, children and adolescents’ development of self-concept (Harter, 1990), as well as theories related to locus of control (e.g., Skinner et al., 1998) are all pertinent for understanding the role of hope in how adolescents construct positive futures. Expectancy-value theories (e.g., Wigfield & Eccles, 1992) may be particularly useful for modeling the role of hope in motivation for academic achievement or school tasks. Further, work that focuses on optimism (e.g., Carver, Scheier, Miller, & Fulford, 2009) may provide insight into how the affective or emotional element of hope leads to positive future expectations, which in turn guide adolescents’ behavioral selections.

p0110 These literatures are all key facets of the scholarship that points to the importance of a person’s prospectives in modulating one’s trajectory through life. While hope exists in a positive manifold relationship with all of the constructs mentioned here, hope is distinct—at least insofar as the positive development of youth is concerned—in that, in the present conception, it provides the emotional fuel for intentional self-regulations aimed at goal selection and optimization.

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IV. Consequences of Hopelessness

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What are the implications of an absence of hope among children and adolescents? Without hope, a person's goals for his or her future may more closely resemble the German concept of *Sehnsucht*, or life longings (Scheibe, Freund, & Baltes, 2007). Life longings are intense desires for optimal, even utopian, life states. However, unlike goals, which are theoretically specific and attainable, life longings are abstract and unattainable by definition. Further, whereas goals are future oriented, life longings take into account experiences and emotions from across ontogeny, that is, from a person's past, present, and future. Finally, emotions related to *Sehnsucht* may be both positive and negative, encompassing hope and excitement but also frustration or regret. Thus, the role of hope in relation to life longings is more ambivalent, or nostalgic. However, having a hopeful future may energize a person in the direction of his or her goals, preventing those future goals from becoming life longings.

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Even more critical for adolescents is a sense of hopelessness about the future that may lead to engaging in risky behaviors in the present (Taylor, 1990, 1993). Bolland (2003) reported that, in a study of almost 2500 inner-city youth, about half of the males and 25% of the females felt hopeless about their futures. Youth who were hopeless endorsed survey questions such as, *All I see ahead of me are bad things, not good things*; and, *I don't expect to live a very long life*. Bolland (2003) and others (e.g., Stoddard, Henly, Sieving, & Bolland, 2011) have found that hopelessness is associated with violence, substance use, suicidal ideation, teen pregnancy, and other risk behaviors. Ethnographic research reveals similar trends. For example, interviews with female gang members conducted by Taylor (1993) revealed that young people participate in life-threatening behaviors because they have no hope that they will survive more than a few years into the future. However, as with the construct of hope, more research will need to be conducted to elucidate the relational, developmental processes by which hopelessness may lead to negative developmental outcomes.

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V. Empirical Evidence for the Role of Hope in PYD

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Informed by relational, developmental systems models of individual ↔ context relations (e.g., Overton, 2006, 2010), scholars have used the PYD perspective to study the bases and outcomes of thriving across the adolescent period. Researchers have sought to identify the strengths of young

people that, when integrated with developmental resources in their ecology, provide foundations for trajectories of healthy, successful functioning (e.g., Lerner, Phelps, Forman, & Bowers, 2009). In this section, we describe evidence for the role of hope in constructing positive pathways to adulthood that has emerged from research framed by a developmental systems perspective (e.g., Schmid et al., 2011).

s0035 **A. EVIDENCE FROM THE 4-H STUDY OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

p0130 Prior research testing processes involved in PYD have identified characteristics of intentional self-regulation (e.g., SOC skills) as key individual strengths that, when aligned with developmental assets in families, schools, and communities, are linked to thriving, as operationalized by the Five Cs of PYD—Competence, Confidence, Character, Connection, and Caring (Gestsdóttir, Bowers, von Eye, Napolitano, & Lerner, 2010; Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007; Gestsdóttir, Lewin-Bizan, von Eye, Lerner, & Lerner, 2009; Urban, Lewin-Bizan, & Lerner, 2010; Zimmerman et al., 2007, 2008). Research conducted by Schmid and colleagues (e.g., Schmid et al., 2011, in press) sought to extend this literature by ascertaining whether a young person's hope for a positive future would add to, or interact with, characteristics of intentional self-regulation in the prediction of thriving across the adolescent period. Based on the idea that a hopeful future constitutes both emotional and cognitive activation needed to make meaningful the use of intentional self-regulatory abilities (Benson, 2009; Damon, 2008; Damon et al., 2003), this work sought to expand understanding of the important individual attributes that may be necessary to find (or promote) in a young person in order to understand the presence and pathway of positive change across adolescence.

p0135 Analyses of data from Grades 7 to 9 of the 4-H Study of PYD (see Lerner et al., 2005, for a full description of this study) indicated that both intentional self-regulation (as indexed by scores derived from the SOC measure developed by Freund & Baltes, 2002) and a hopeful future (as indexed by a measure developed from items present in the 4-H Study data set; Schmid et al., 2011) were associated in theoretically expected ways with trajectories of positive developmental outcomes (PYD and youth contribution), and of negative developmental outcomes (depressive symptoms and risk behaviors). That is, as expected, high scores for both intentional self-regulation and hopeful future predicted membership in the most highest instantiations of positive outcomes, as well as in the lowest problematic developmental trajectories. For example, participants with

higher hopeful expectations for the future were significantly more likely to be in the group of youth who followed a path of high contribution scores across Grades 7 through 9, with contribution characterized by attitudes and actions about helping in one's community, school, and family. In addition, youth with higher hopeful future expectations were less likely to be among the group of participants characterized by high scores on risk behaviors (e.g., substance use, delinquency) across Grades 7 through 9.

p0140 Research has also explored the relations between hopeful future expectations and SOC in predicting PYD. Using data again from Grades 7 through 9 of the 4-H Study, Schmid et al. (in press) explored whether hopeful expectations for one's future would predict self-regulatory behaviors or if instead, the successful application of SOC skills would predict expectations for a hopeful future. The findings suggested that hopeful future expectations and intentional self-regulation were reciprocal in their influences across Grades 7 and 8; however, the magnitude of the relationship indicated that earlier hopeful future expectations had greater influence on later SOC scores.

p0145 Given these findings from the 4-H Study, as well as the theoretical links between hopeful future, intentional self-regulation, and positive developmental outcomes, we believe the hopeful future construct offers a rich new area for investigation into the variables involved in the relations between individuals and their context that are important for thriving across adolescence.

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VI. Conclusions: The Future Study of Hope

p0150 Hope has long been regarded by scholars as an important facet of the human experience, although perhaps only within the past few decades have researchers begun to consider the role of hope in positive psychosocial functioning (Menninger, 1960). Attempts to understand the meaning of hope for developing youth are even more recent. Certainly, hope has important implications for adolescents' lives and represents a construct that can tell us much about the future expectations of diverse youth. Snyder's seminal work on hope theory (e.g., Snyder, 1994) provides a foundation for the understanding of hope as it relates to goal-directed processes.

p0155 However, there remains a lack of developmental research and, across the breadth of the literature that does exist, the construct of hope, or hopeful future expectations, lacks a cohesive definition.

p0160 Therefore, in this chapter, we explored the role of hope from a developmental systems perspective. We proposed that hope, much like intentional

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self-regulatory processes, represents a strength of adolescents that has potential to interact with features of their contexts, to produce adaptive developmental outcomes (Figure 1). Future research will be required to elucidate the nature of the relationship between intentional self-regulation and hope (Schmid et al., in press).

p0165 We believe the theoretical and empirical findings presented here regarding the importance of hope for adolescents' well-being provide myriad implications for assessing hope in the future. Unfortunately, previous empirical research on hope has largely ignored the relational nature of the developmental system, in which hope is necessarily influenced by both individual-level variables, including self-regulation and optimism, and contextual-level developmental assets, such as parental support. However, some research has already begun to delineate the relations among contextual assets and hope. For example, Dubow, Arnett, Smith, and Ippolito (2001) found that parental support, but not peer support, predicted increases in positive future expectations within a sample of disadvantaged, inner-city youth over a 9-month period. While such research provides a much-needed jumping off point for the study of the role of context in promoting hope, future investigations must further explore the ecological milieu that nourishes hope across childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood. Other contextual assets that may be important include a young person's social networks (e.g., peer networks or social resources within a neighborhood), access to resources, and institutions such as schools, youth development programs, and faith-based organizations (see Figure 1).

p0170 In turn, future research must consider the influence that hope may have on an individual's context. As previously noted, findings from the 4-H Study of PYD indicate that hopeful future expectations are associated across middle adolescence with both PYD and youth contribution (Schmid et al., 2011, in press). Damon and colleagues emphasize the mutual benefit of purpose and hopefulness for both the individual and context (Damon et al., 2003; see also Mariano & Going, in press); thus, hopeful youth may be more likely to identify meaningful goals, or purposes, which actively engage and contribute to their families, schools, and communities. Certainly, such work underscores the importance of a developmental systems framework for understanding the role of a hopeful future in achieving developmental outcomes in young people and their settings.

p0175 In recent years, the measurement of hope, particularly Snyder's Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1997), has been criticized for the lack of evidence regarding its divergent validity with other measures, including measures of intentional self-regulation, self-efficacy, and goal-theory (e.g., Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002). In addition, Aspinwall and Leaf (2002) note that

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emotional regulation and the social contexts that may be necessary to sustain hope are lacking from the theoretical discussion and empirical investigations of hope. Future research must attend to these validity concerns, both to identify the unique contribution of hope in promoting positive outcomes for individuals and, as well, to reconcile it with other commonly used measures, for example, the SOC assessment of intentional self-regulation.

p0180 Finally, there are important gaps in the literature on the development of hope across the adolescent period. In fact, the literature has largely ignored variation in hope not only with respect to age but also in terms of other demographic markers (e.g., socioeconomic status) and with respect to diverse cultures and faith traditions. For instance, in the relatively small literature on adolescent spirituality, hope is equated to faith, especially where hope is institutionalized by a religious tradition (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Roehlkepartain, Benson, King, & Wagener, 2006). Nevertheless, little developmental analysis of, or culturally comparative research about, hope and religion/spirituality exists in regard with adolescence. Indeed, the interrelation of hope and other psychosocial or demographic marker variables has not been embedded thoroughly in either developmental or culturally comparative research.

p0185 Understanding the role of hope for diverse youth in constructing their positive futures will have important implications for applied youth development work. In fact, some researchers have begun to explore the usefulness of hope for enhancing psychosocial resilience in the context of youth development programs (e.g., Dubow et al., 2001; Wyman, Cowen, Work, & Kerley, 1993). For example, among young urban adolescents exposed to highly stressful conditions, positive future expectations, such as being sure of having a happy life, may be associated with resilient developmental adaptations, including an internal locus of control (Wyman et al., 1993). However, as suggested by Yowell (2002), youth must be able to engage resources in their contexts if they are to realize their hopes for the future; therefore, simply building hopeful expectations may not be sufficient.

p0190 Nevertheless, given the previously noted relations between hope and intentional self-regulation (Schmid et al., in press), hopeful expectations about one's future may be one indicator of the success of a program to build self-regulatory capacity in youth. Only a nuanced understanding of the implications of these constructs for diverse youth will provide researchers and practitioners with the tools for designing maximally beneficial programs to promote positive developmental outcomes and give youth a truly hopeful future.

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