

Social Cognitive Theory in Cultural Context

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La théorie socio-cognitive adopte une perspective d'action pour ce qui est du développement, de l'adaptation et du changement humains. Cette théorie distingue trois types d'action: l'action personnelle exercée individuellement, l'action par procuration où l'on s'assure de bénéfices désirés en incitant autrui à intervenir en sa faveur, et l'action collective où les gens agissent ensemble pour construire leur avenir. Des dichotomies conflictuelles parsèment notre domaine, opposant l'autonomie et l'interdépendance, l'individualisme et le collectivisme. Les déterminants et les doses d'action individuelle, par procuration et collective varient culturellement. Mais tous les modes d'action sont nécessaires pour parvenir à ses fins quel que soit le contexte culturel. Les cultures sont diverses et dynamiques, ce ne sont pas des monolithes statiques. La diversité intraculturelle et les écarts dans les orientations psychosociales mettent en évidence la dynamique aux multiples facettes des cultures. La globalisation croissante, la pluralité des sociétés et l'immersion dans un monde virtuel qui se joue du temps, des distances, des lieux et des frontières incitent à élargir la portée des études interculturelles. Les préoccupations se focalisent sur la façon dont les forces nationales et globales interagissent dans la création de la vie culturelle.

Social cognitive theory adopts an agentic perspective to human development, adaptation, and change. The theory distinguishes among three modes of agency: personal agency exercised individually; proxy agency in which people secure desired outcomes by influencing others to act on their behalf; and collective agency in which people act in concert to shape their future. Contentious dualisms pervade our field pitting autonomy against interdependence; individualism against collectivism and communality; and personal agency against social structure. The determinants and agentic blends of individual, proxy, and collective instrumentality vary cross-culturally. But all agentic modes are needed to make it through the day whatever the cultural context in which one resides. Cultures are diverse and dynamic social systems not static monoliths. Intracultural diversity and intraindividual variation in psychosocial orientations across spheres of functioning underscore the multifaceted dynamic nature of

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cultures. The growing globalisation and cultural pluralisation of societies and enmeshment in a cyberworld that transcends time, distance, place, and national borders call for broadening the scope of cross-cultural analyses. The issues of interest center on how national and global forces interact to shape the nature of cultural life.

INTRODUCTION

The present article addresses human functioning in cultural embeddedness from the agentic perspective of social cognitive theory. To be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances. Social cognitive theory distinguishes among three modes of agency: direct personal agency; proxy agency that relies on others to act on one's behest to secure desired outcomes; and collective agency exercised through group action. In personal agency exercised individually, people bring their influence to bear directly on themselves and their environment in managing their lives. In many spheres of life people do not have direct control over the social conditions and institutional practices that affect their everyday lives. Under these circumstances, they seek their well-being and valued outcomes through the exercise of proxy agency. In this socially mediated mode of agency, people try to get those who have access to resources, expertise or who wield influence and power to act at their behest to secure the outcomes they desire. People do not live their lives autonomously. Many of the things they seek are achievable only through socially interdependent effort. Hence, they have to pool their knowledge, skills, and resources, provide mutual support, form alliances, and work together to secure what they cannot accomplish on their own.

Successful functioning requires an agentic blend of these different modes of agency. The relative contribution of individual, proxy, and collective modes to the agentic mix may vary cross-culturally. But all of these agentic modes need to be enlisted to make it through the day, regardless of the culture in which one happens to reside. People's efforts to manage their everyday lives cannot be reduced to polarities that arbitrarily partition human agency into individual and collective forms. Cross-cultural variations are differences in relative emphasis in agentic patterning rather than cultural exclusivity of agency to individual or collective modes.

Among the mechanisms of human agency none is more central or pervasive than beliefs of personal efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Whatever other factors serve as guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to produce desired effects by one's actions, otherwise one has little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Self-efficacy beliefs regulate human functioning through cognitive, motivational, affective, and decisional processes. They affect whether individuals think in self-enhancing or self-debilitating ways; how well they motivate themselves and persevere

in the face of difficulties; the quality of their emotional life, and the choices they make at important decisional points which set the course of life paths.

Numerous large-scale meta-analyses have been conducted on findings from studies with diverse experimental and analytic methodologies applied across diverse spheres of functioning (Boyer, Zollo, Thompson, Vancouver, Shewring, & Sims, 2000; Holden, 1991; Holden, Moncher, Schinke, & Barker, 1990; Moritz, Feltz, Fahrbach, & Mack, 2000; Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Sadri & Robertson, 1993; Stajkovic & Lee, 2001; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). The converging evidence from these diverse lines of research verifies that efficacy beliefs contribute significantly to the quality of human functioning.

As previously noted, in social cognitive theory efficacy beliefs are not confined solely to judgments of personal capabilities. The theory also encompasses perceived collective efficacy representing shared beliefs in the power to produce desired effects by collective action (Bandura, 1997, 2000). Perceived collective efficacy is not simply the sum of the efficacy beliefs of individual members. Rather, it is an emergent group-level property that embodies the coordinative and interactive dynamics of group functioning.

A group, of course, operates through the behavior of its members. The locus of perceived collective efficacy resides in the minds of group members. It is people acting in concert on a shared belief not a disembodied group mind that is doing the cognising, aspiring, motivating, and regulating. There is no emergent entity that operates independently of the beliefs and actions of the individuals who make up a social system.

Although beliefs of collective efficacy have a sociocentric focus, the functions they serve are similar to those of personal efficacy beliefs and they operate through similar processes (Bandura, 1997). People's shared beliefs in their collective efficacy influence the type of futures they seek to achieve through collective effort; how well they use their resources; how much effort they put into their group endeavors; their staying power when collective efforts fail to produce quick results or meet forcible opposition; and their vulnerability to the discouragement that can beset those taking on tough social problems. Meta-analysis of laboratory and field studies corroborates that perceived collective efficacy enhances group functioning just as personal efficacy enhances individual functioning (Stajkovic & Lee, 2001).

CROSS-CULTURAL THEORETICAL GENERALISABILITY

Because of the expanded conception of human agency, social cognitive theory is well suited to elucidate human personal development, adaptation, and change in diverse cultural milieus. Cultural analyses must address the basic issue of whether there is a universal human nature or many human natures spawned by diverse cultural milieus. This calls for a brief discussion of the nature of human nature in social cognitive theory. Viewed from the

sociocognitive perspective, human nature is characterised by a vast potentiality that can be fashioned by direct and vicarious experience into a variety of forms within biological limits. Biology provides potentialities and sets constraints but in most spheres of functioning biology permits a broad range of cultural possibilities. Gould (1987) argues cogently that evidence favors a potentialist view over a determinist view of biology. In this insightful analysis, the major explanatory battle is not between nature and nurture as commonly framed, but whether nature operates as a determinist that has culture on a “tight leash”, or as a potentialist that has culture on a “loose leash”. For example, people possess the biological potentiality for aggression, but the answer to the cultural variation in aggressiveness lies more in ideology than in biology. There is wide intercultural and intracultural diversity in aggression and entire nations, such as Sweden and Switzerland, have transformed from warring ones to pacifist ones (Alland, 1972; Bandura, 1999; Moerk, 1995).

People have changed little genetically over recent decades, but they have changed markedly through rapid cultural and technological evolution in their beliefs, mores, social roles, and styles of behavior. As Dobzhansky (1972) puts it succinctly, the human species has been selected for learnability and plasticity of behavior adaptive to remarkably diverse habitats not for behavioral fixedness.

The plasticity, which is intrinsic to the nature of humans, depends upon specialised neurophysiological structures and mechanisms that have evolved over time. These advanced neural systems are specialised for channeling attention, detecting the causal structure of the world around one, transforming that information into abstract form, integrating it and using it for adaptive purposes. The evolved morphology and information processing systems provide the capacity for the very characteristics that are distinctly human—generative symbolisation, forethought, evaluative self-regulation, reflective self-consciousness, and symbolic communication (Bandura, 2001).

Through agentic action, people devise ways of adapting flexibly to remarkably diverse environments. Moreover, they use their ingenuity to insulate themselves from selection pressures. They create devices that compensate immensely for their sensory and physical limitations, circumvent environmental constraints, redesign and construct environments to their liking, create styles of behavior that enable them to realise desired outcomes and pass on the effective ones to others by social modeling and other experiential means. Through development of biotechnologies, people are now changing the genetic make-up of plants and animals, and even toying with the prospect of fashioning some aspects of their nature by genetic design. The accelerated growth of knowledge is greatly enhancing human power to control, transform, and create environments of increasing complexity and to shape their social future.

The common human nature is at the level of basic capacities and the specialised mechanisms through which they operate, but cultures shape these potentialities into diverse forms. For example, humans have evolved an advanced capacity for observational learning that enables them to acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, emotional proclivities, and competences through the rich fund of information conveyed by actual and symbolic modeling (Bandura, 1986). It is difficult to imagine how cultures could develop and replicate themselves if their language, mores, customs, and social practices in diverse spheres of life had to be gradually shaped in each new member by direct consequences of their trial-and error performances without benefit of models who display the cultural patterns. Modeling is a universalised human capacity but how it is used varies in different cultural milieus.

The present article focuses on the cross-cultural commonality of agentic capacity rooted in beliefs of personal and collective efficacy to produce effects by one's actions. Although efficacy beliefs have generalised functional value, how they are developed and structured, the ways in which they are exercised, and the purposes to which they are put, vary cross-culturally. In short, there is commonality in basic agentic capacities and mechanisms of operation, but diversity in the culturing of these inherent capacities. The cultivated identities, values, belief structures, and agentic capabilities are the psychosocial systems through which experiences are filtered.

Some people live in predominantly individualistically oriented social systems, others in more collectively oriented ones (Kim, Triandis, Kâğıtçibasi, Choi, & Yoon, 1994; Triandis, 1995). A high sense of personal efficacy is just as important to group-directedness as to self-directedness. Group pursuits are no less demanding of personal efficacy than individual pursuits. Nor do people who work interdependently in collectivistic societies have less need or desire to be efficacious in the particular roles they perform than those in individualistic societies.

Personal efficacy is valued, not because of reverence for individualism, but because a strong sense of personal efficacy is vital for success regardless of whether it is achieved individually or by group members putting their personal capabilities to the best collective use. A firm group loyalty creates strong personal obligations to do one's part in group pursuits as efficaciously as one can. Members are respected for their personal contributions to group accomplishments. Efficacy beliefs operate in complex, multifaceted ways, regardless of how the cultural pursuits are socially structured. All too often the complexities and subtleties get lost in oversimplified cross-cultural comparisons. We shall return to this issue later.

Earley's (1994) cross-cultural research on organisational efficacy and productivity in the United States, Hong Kong, and Mainland China attests to cross-cultural generality of the functional value of efficacy belief. In each of these settings the organisations were manufacturing the same

telecommunications equipment and offering the same service. In each place, half the managers were trained in an individually oriented management system, the other half were trained in a group-oriented management system. Managers from the United States, an individualistically oriented culture, achieve the highest perceived efficacy and organisational productivity under the individually oriented system. Those from collectivistic cultures, Hong Kong, and China, judge themselves most efficacious and achieve the highest organisational productivity under the group-oriented system.

There are collectivists in individualistic cultures and individualists in collectivistic cultures. Acknowledging intracultural diversity, Earley analysed the functional relations between training focus, efficacy beliefs, and organisation productivity in terms of whether the inhabitants favored an individualistic or collectivistic ethic, regardless of geographic locale. Managers achieved the highest personal efficacy and group productivity when their personal orientation matched the organisational social system. Thus, American collectivists did better under a group-oriented system, whereas Chinese individualists did better under an individually oriented system. The personal orientation rather than the geographical cultural locale was a major carrier of the effects. Analysis in terms of key psychosocial dimensions has greater explanatory import than categorising people by geographic locale because the former is grounded in a theory about the psychosocial factors posited to account for cultural differences and addresses diversities in cultural groupings. Both at the societal and individual level of analysis, strong perceived efficacy fosters high group effort and performance attainments.

INTRACULTURAL DIVERSITY

People live their lives in sociocultural milieus that differ in their shared values, customs, social practices, and institutional constraints and opportunity structures. Dichotomous cultural groupings, such as individualistic–collectivistic types, mask much diversity between cultural systems assigned to the same type and within a particular culture. Such classifications rely on a disputable homogeneity assumption. For example, collectivistic systems founded on Confucianism, Buddhism, and Marxism favor a communal ethic, but they differ significantly from each other in particular values, meanings, and the customs they promote (Kim et al., 1994). Nor are so-called individualistic cultures a uniform lot. Americans, Italians, Germans, French, and the British differ in their particular brands of individualism. Even within an individualistically oriented culture, such as the United States, the Northeast brand of individualism is quite different from the Midwest and West versions and the latter differ from that of the Deep Southern region of the nation (Vandello & Cohen, 1999). Even the informativeness of regional comparisons is questionable because of a substantial ethnic heterogeneity

within them. Cross-ethnic comparisons, such as Latinos, African-Americans, and Orientals, can be highly misinformative because of the diverse nature of ethnicity. For example, to lump Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Chicanos, and Spanish, who have quite different cultural origins, into a Latino category imposes homogeneity on intra-ethnic diversity. Hence, cultural contrasts, in which members of a single collectivist culture is compared to those of a single individualist one, can spawn a lot of misleading generalisations.

Cultures are diverse and dynamic social systems not static monoliths. There is substantial heterogeneity among individuals within both individualistic and collectivistic systems. Thus, for example, there are generational and socio-economic variations in communality in collectivistic cultures with younger and more affluent members adopting more individualistic orientations (Matsumoto, Kudoh, & Takeuchi, 1996). Under the sway of global market and media forces, entrepreneurship is supplanting communality in collectivistic cultures. Conversely, some of the excesses of individualism are prompting a resurgence of efforts to restore a sense of community and social responsibility in individualistic cultures.

There is even greater intraindividual variation in communality across different types of social relationships. Members of a collectivistically oriented society are highly communal with ingroup members, such as family members, friends, and colleagues, but members of an individualistically oriented society are more communal with outgroup members (Matsumoto et al., 1996). Indeed, variation in communal style of behavior across classes of relationships swamps variation across cultural milieus. Analyses across activity domains would undoubtedly reveal that people behave communally in some aspects of their lives and individualistically in many other aspects. Moreover, people express their cultural orientations conditionally rather than invariantly depending on incentive conditions (Yamagishi, 1988). Thus, members of a collectivistically oriented society are active contributors to collective effort with ingroup members, but slacken their effort in groups composed of outgroup members. But when negative sanctions against free riders are instituted they become as communal with outsiders as do people in individualistic cultures. Freeman and Bordia (2001) further confirm that people vary in individualistic and collectivistic social orientations depending on whether the reference group is familial, peer, academic, or national. Cultural measures cast in terms of faceless others and disembodied from domains of activity, social contexts, and incentive conditions mask this diversity on which human adaptation is conditional. Global, decontextualised measures shrink psychosocial variability to uniform polarity that lends to be ascribed to entire cultures and their residents.

Intracultural and interdomain variability, and changeability of cultural orientations as a function of incentive conditions underscores the conceptual and empirical problems of using nations as proxies for culture and

then ascribing psychosocial attributes to the nations and all its members as though they are static monoliths (Gjerde & Onishi, 2000). This is culturalism by bounded territory rather than by psychosocial orientations and social customs. All too often, a selected cultural factor that yields a small difference in group averages is generalised to all individuals in the cultural grouping as though they all believed and behaved alike as dichotomously classified. The categorical approach also lends itself readily to misattributing effects to traits ascribed to the classification when, in fact, other dynamic processes may be at play. For example, collectivists tend to be most efficacious and productive when they manage things together. It is assumed that this is because the collectively oriented are disposed to place group interest and shared responsibility above self-interest. However, collectivists are not always group oriented as if driven by an all-reaching communal disposition. Indeed, they have a low sense of efficacy and perform poorly when managing activities within an ethnically mixed group (Earley, 1993). Psychosocial processes triggered by perceived ingroupness–outgroupness seem to be at work.

There is a substantial difference between theorising based on categorical cultural trait ascriptions and process analyses. Human behavior is socially situated, richly contextualised and conditionally expressed. The complexities described above require analyses of psychosocial determinants and governing mechanisms grounded in a comprehensive theory of human functioning. Global decontextualised and nonconditionalised measures of psychological orientations mask the substantial intracultural diversity and intraindividual variation in self-conception. There is no autonomous self unless one is living the life of a hermit, nor is there an entirely interdependent self completely submerged in collectivity without any individual identity or sense of personal capability. Such measures are ill-suited to advance understanding of the structure, dynamics, and functions of sociocultural factors that shape how people live their lives in given cultural milieus.

CONTENTIOUS DUALISMS

Contentious theoretical dualisms pervade the cross-cultural field, pitting autonomy against interdependence; personal agency against social structure; and individualism against collectivism and communality. Most of the current theorising and research on cultural variations is structured around these categorisations. One duality inappropriately equates self-efficacy with individualism and pits it against collectivism (Schooler, 1990). A contentious correlative duality regards any reference to self in psychological theorising as championing self-centeredness and self-indulgence in contrast to communal attachments and civic responsibilities (Seligman, 1990; Sampson, 1977). These jaundiced views are grounded in a number of erroneous assumptions.

Perceived self-efficacy does not come with a built-in individualistic value system. Therefore, a sense of efficacy does not necessarily spawn an individualistic lifestyle, identity, or morality. If belief in the power to produce effects is put to social purposes, it fosters a communal life rather than erodes it. People with resilient efficacy and strong prosocial purpose often subordinate self-interest to the benefit of others. For example, parents in impoverished environments with a resilient sense of efficacy refuse to have their children's development dictated by adverse circumstances by bringing their influence to bear on things that matter through resourceful effort and self-sacrifice (Bandura, 1997). The same is true for tenacious social reformers. Gandhi provides a striking example of self-sacrifice in the exercise of tenacious personal efficacy. He spearheaded the triumph over oppressive rule through unceasing nonviolent resistance and repeatedly forced concessions from ruling authorities by going on life-threatening fasts. He lived ascetically, not self-indulgently. Similarly, Mandela and King spurred extraordinary social changes that altered the course of sociopolitical life in their societies in the face of daunting challenge through an enormously resilient sense of personal efficacy. Without a robust sense of self, people are easily overwhelmed by adversities in attempts to change their lives for the better through collective effort.

A sense of collective efficacy is not disembodied from perceived personal efficacy. A collectivistic culture with members plagued by self-doubts about their capabilities to perform their roles would achieve little. A strong sense of personal efficacy to manage one's life circumstances and to have a hand in effecting societal changes contributes substantially to perceived collective efficacy to shape their society's social future (Fernández-Ballesteros, Díez-Nicolás, Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Bandura, 2002).

The conjoint influence of perceived political efficacy and trust in the governmental system predicts the form and level of people's political activity (Craig, 1979; Pollock, 1983; Seligson, 1980). These belief systems function similarly regardless of whether the political activism is by United States' citizenry or Costa Rican peasants seeking social reforms. People who believe they can achieve desired changes through their collective voice, and who view their governmental systems as trustworthy, are active participants in conventional political activities. Those who believe they can accomplish social changes by perseverant collective action, but view the governing systems and office-holders as untrustworthy, favor more confrontive and coercive tactics outside the traditional political channels. The politically apathetic have little faith that they can influence governmental functioning through collective initiatives and are disaffected from the political system, believing it ignores their interests.

In political participation, people's efficacy beliefs to achieve social change are put in the service of bettering their lives. In everyday social relationships,

perceived self-efficacy is not antithetical to communality. Indeed, a high sense of social and empathic efficacy promote prosocialness as expressed in cooperativeness, helpfulness, and sharing (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Gerbino, & Pastorelli, 2001; Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, & Regalia, 2001). As already noted, social cognitive theory provides a theoretical framework applicable to both individualistically and collectivistically oriented social systems through its expanded conception of human agency exercised individually, socially mediated, and collectively. Kim and Park (1999) further extend the cross-cultural applicability of self-efficacy theory by adding belief in one's relational efficacy to promote positive communal relations. This facet of self-efficacy is well suited to capture the communal aspect of life, especially in the more collectivistically oriented cultural systems.

Another disputable duality pits psychological theories of personal agency and sociostructural theories as rival conceptions of human behavior or as representing different levels and proximities of causation. In the social cognitive theory of self and society (Bandura, 1986, 2001) personal agency and social structure operate interdependently rather than as disembodied entities. Personal agency operates within a broad network of sociostructural influences. In these agentic transactions, people are producers as well as products of social systems. Social structures are created by human activity to organise, guide, and regulate human affairs in given domains by authorised rules and sanctions (Giddens, 1984). The sociostructural practices implemented by social agents, in turn, impose constraints and provide resources and opportunity structures for personal development and functioning. Given this dynamic bidirectionality of influence, social cognitive theory rejects a dualism between personal agency and a disembodied social structure.

A full understanding of human adaptation and change requires an integrated causal structure in which sociostructural influences operate through mechanisms of the self system to produce behavioral effects. However, in agentic transactions, the self system is not merely a conduit for external influences. The self is socially constituted but, by exercising directive influence, human agency operates generatively and proactively on social systems not just reactively.

Nor are sociostructural and psychological determinants neatly dichotomised into remote and proximate ones. For example, poverty is a socioeconomic factor that does not operate in multilayered or remote causation. Lacking the money needed to provide for the subsistence of one's family pervades everyday life in a very immediate way. Analyses of paths of influence lend support for a multicausal model that integrates sociostructural and personal determinants. Economic conditions, socioeconomic status, and family structure affect behavior through their impact on people's sense of efficacy, aspirations, and affective self-regulatory factors rather than directly

(Baldwin, Baldwin, Sameroff, & Seifer, 1989; Bandura, 1993; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996b, 2001; Elder & Ardel, 1992).

A major part of people's daily life is spent in occupational activities. These pursuits do more than simply provide income for one's livelihood. Occupations structure a large part of people's everyday reality and serve as a major source of personal identity and self-evaluation. As an interdependent activity, occupational pursuits also structure a good part of people's social relations. Beliefs of personal efficacy play a highly influential role in occupational development and pursuits (Bandura, 1997; Betz & Hackett, 1986; Hackett, 1995; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). The higher the people's perceived efficacy to fulfill educational requirements and occupational roles the wider the career options they seriously consider pursuing, the greater the interest they have in them, the better they prepare themselves educationally for different occupational careers, and the greater their staying power in challenging career pursuits. People simply eliminate from consideration entire classes of occupations they believe to be beyond their capabilities, however attractive the occupations may be.

The career interests and pursuits of women tend to be constricted by a sense of inefficacy for quantitative activities and skills necessary for occupations traditionally occupied by males. The gendered patterning of perceived occupational efficacy is similar in the United States and Japan (Betz & Hackett, 1983; Hackett, 1995; Lucas, Wanberg, & Zytowski, 1997; Matsui, Ikeda, & Ohnishi, 1989). Moreover, gendered socialisation exerts a comparable impact cross-culturally even on judgments of personal efficacy for the same activities performed in different contexts. Women both in the United States and Japan have a high sense of efficacy for quantitative activities embedded in stereotypically feminine activities, but low perceived self-efficacy when these same quantitative activities are embedded in scientific pursuits (Betz & Hackett, 1983; Junge & Dretzke, 1995; Matsui & Tsukamoto, 1991).

Perceived coping efficacy also affects stress and burnout in occupational milieus in much the same way cross-culturally. Occupational stress arises when perceived task demands tax or exceed perceived efficacy to manage them and when people find themselves in jobs below their capabilities or are plateaued in their careers with little opportunity to make full use of their skills or to enhance them (Brouwers, Evers, & Tomic, 2001; Brouwers & Tomic, 1999, 2000; Chwalisz, Altmaier, & Russell, 1992; Jex & Bliese, 1999; Jex & Gudanowski, 1992; Salanova, Liorens, Cifre, Martinez, & Schaufeli, in press; Salanova, Peiró, & Schaufeli, in press; Schwarzer & Schmitz, 1999).

That perceived coping efficacy mediates the impact of work demands on occupational stress is replicated in diverse individualistically oriented social systems cited above, including Germany, Netherlands, Spain, and the United

States at the level of both perceived individual and collective efficacy. What is experienced as an occupational stressor also depends on the level of perceived efficacy in the collectivistically oriented Japanese culture (Matsui & Onglatco, 1992). Japanese women employees who have a low sense of coping efficacy are stressed by heavy work demands and role responsibilities. Those with a high sense of efficacy are frustrated and stressed by limited opportunities to make full use of their talents.

So far the cross-cultural generalisability of social cognitive theory has been evaluated in terms of its explanatory power and its predictive power. The power of the theory to effect society-wide changes in diverse cultural milieus provides a third way of gauging generalisability. Mass media dramatisations founded on social cognitive theory are being used to reduce the most urgent global problems, namely, the burgeoning population growth. Global applications of televised sociocognitive serials have proven successful in raising viewers' perceived efficacy to determine their family size, increasing approval of family planning, enhancing the agentic status of women, and increasing use of family planning services and contraceptive methods in Africa, Asia, and Latin America alike (Bandura, 2002; Vaughan, Rogers, Singhal, & Swalehe, 2000). These numerous global applications speak to the operative generalisability of social cognitive theory.

SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY IN DEVELOPMENTAL CULTURAL CONTEXT

Another line of research into the cross-cultural generalisability of social cognitive theory examines the origin, structure, and function of perceived self-efficacy and other sociocognitive determinants in child development. One such research examined the cultural embeddedness and structure of children's perceived self-efficacy in Italy, Poland, and Hungary (Pastorelli, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Rola, Rorza, & Bandura, 2001). Although these societies represent quite different sociocultural systems, the factor structure of children's self-efficacy beliefs was essentially replicated. These factors include perceived efficacy to regulate one's own learning activities and master academic coursework; perceived social efficacy to develop and manage interpersonal relationships; and perceived self-regulatory efficacy to resist peer pressure to engage in detrimental activities. Moreover, children in the collectivistically oriented Korean culture exhibit the same structure of perceived self-efficacy (Kwak & Bandura, 1997).

Although the factor structure is comparable, the different forms of perceived self-efficacy play out differently in the different cultural milieus. Children from the various countries have an equivalent level of efficacy to master academic subjects, but those from countries with authoritarian educational systems have a lower sense of efficacy to take charge of their own learning.

A low sense of efficacy to regulate one's own motivation and learning activities bears importantly on intellectual self-development. A major goal of education is to equip students with the intellectual tools and self-regulatory capabilities to educate themselves throughout their lifetime. Evolving educational technologies and the rapid pace of informational change are placing a premium on perceived efficacy for self-regulated learning.

In the socially oriented Italian culture, children judge themselves more socially efficacious than their counterparts in the Eastern European societies of Poland and Hungary. There are significant gender differences in perceived efficacy which are replicated cross-nationally. In all three societies, girls have a higher sense of efficacy for academic activities and to resist peer pressure to engage in transgressive activities.

Not only is the structure of efficacy beliefs comparable cross-culturally, but so are their functional properties. In the more individualistically oriented American social system, perceived self-efficacy to regulate one's learning and master academic activities is a good predictor of academic aspirations and level of academic achievement after controlling for prior achievement (Pajares, 1996; Pajares & Miller, 1994; Schunk, 1989; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Belief in one's academic efficacy serves a similar function in academic attainments in Chinese, German, Italian, and Korean cultures (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996b; Bong, 2001, in press; Joo, Bong, & Choi, 2000; Mayer & Kim, 2000; Shih & Alexander, 2000). The cross-cultural comparability of function is evident as well in the impact of efficacy belief on perceived occupational efficacy and career choice and development (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001; Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1986, 1987).

Perceived self-efficacy to manage one's academic activities not only operates similarly in the Korean culture as an enhancer of academic attainment, but even its mediating function is replicated cross-culturally (Park, Kim, Chung, Lee, Kwon, & Yang, 2000). Social support has been shown to enhance psychosocial functioning. However, mediational analysis across diverse spheres of functioning reveals that it does so only indirectly to the extent that it raises perceived self-efficacy to manage environmental demands (Benight, Swift, Sanger, Smith, & Zeppelin, 1999; Cheung & Sun, 2000; Cutrona & Troutman, 1986; Duncan & McAuley, 1993; Major, Mueller, & Hildebrandt, 1985).

Park and her associates (Park et al., 2000) examined the causal structure involving different sources of social support, perceived academic self-efficacy, life satisfaction, and academic achievement in Korean children at different age levels. In accord with the functional relations reported in studies in the American milieu, the impact of social support on academic achievement is entirely mediated through perceived self-efficacy. Social support raises perceived efficacy which, in turn, is accompanied by higher

academic achievement and greater satisfaction with one's home and school life. At the elementary school level, maternal, paternal, teacher, and peer support all contribute to children's perceived academic efficacy. At the middle and high school levels, teachers' support fades from the picture, the contribution of maternal support declines and that of paternal support increases. That latter finding reflects the growing role of the father as adolescents prepare for their occupational development. Although the relative weights of the different enabling supportive influences change with age, perceived self-efficacy retains its mediating predictive value throughout the age span. Research by Cheung and Sun (2000) in Hong Kong further verifies the generalisability of the sociocognitive causal structure at the adult level in a markedly different adaptational domain. The ameliorative effect of social support on anxiety and depression is entirely mediated through enhancement of perceived self-efficacy.

Replicability of social cognitive determinants across both individualistic and collectivistic cultures is similarly verified in a markedly different sphere of functioning, namely the exercise of moral agency. Psychological theories of morality have traditionally focused heavily on the formal character of moral reasoning to the neglect of moral conduct. A complete theory of moral agency must link moral knowledge and reasoning to moral conduct. This requires an agentic theory of morality rather than one confined mainly to cognitions about morality. In the social cognitive theory of the moral self (Bandura, 1991, 1999) moral reasoning is linked to moral conduct through self-regulatory mechanisms by which moral agency is exercised. It is one thing to possess self-regulatory skills but another to stick with them in the face of compelling inducements to behave otherwise. A strong sense of self-regulatory efficacy provides the necessary restraining power.

In the development of a moral self, individuals construct standards of right and wrong that serve as guides and deterrents for conduct. They regulate their actions by the consequences they apply to themselves. They do things that give them satisfaction and a sense of self-worth. They refrain from behaving in ways that violate their moral standards, because such conduct will bring self-condemnation. Moral standards do not function as fixed internal regulators of conduct, however. There are several psychological mechanisms by which moral self-sanctions can be selectively disengaged from inhumane conduct. Selective activation and disengagement of self-sanctions permit different types of conduct by persons with the same moral standards. The moral disengagement may center on the cognitive restructuring of inhumane conduct into a benign or worthy one by moral justification, sanitising language and advantageous comparison; disavowal of a sense of personal agency for the harm caused by diffusion or displacement of responsibility; disregarding or minimising the injurious effects of one's actions; and attributing blame to, and dehumanising those who are victimised.

Children of weak self-regulatory efficacy and who are facile moral disengagers show high engagement in antisocial conduct regardless of whether they reside in an individualistically oriented or collectivistically oriented culture (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996a; Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, & Regalia, 2001; Kwak & Bandura, 1997). Facile moral disengagement fosters aggressive conduct similarly in these two types of societies.

GROWING INTERCULTURAL COMMONALITIES THROUGH GLOBALISATION AND PLURALISATION OF SOCIETIES

Cultures are no longer insular. Transnational interdependencies and global market forces are restructuring national economies and shaping the political and social life of societies (Keohane, 1993; Keohane & Nye, 1977). Because of extensive global interconnectedness the actions of forces operating remotely now produce local effects. What happens economically and politically in one part of the world can affect the lives of vast populations elsewhere. Under the new realities of growing transnational influence, nation states seek to increase their controlling leverage by merging into larger functional units. For example, the nations of Western Europe formed the European Union to exercise greater control over their economic life. Other nation states will similarly be forced to merge into larger blocs; otherwise, they will have little bargaining power in transnational relations. However, the regional marriages do not come without a price. Paradoxically, to gain international control, nations have to negotiate reciprocal pacts that place some constraints on how they can conduct their national affairs and alter their traditional ways of life (Keohane, 1993). Imposed constraints generate fragmenting internal societal disputes between those who are adversely affected by the accords and those who benefit from them.

Some of the transnational market forces may erode or undermine valued cultural aspects of life when they are disregarded or considered detractors from profitability. Social bonds and common commitments that lack marketability are especially vulnerable to erosion by market forces.

Telecommunications technologies also contribute to a new collective consciousness. Ideas, values, and styles of behavior are being transmitted transnationally at an unprecedented rate. Although these symbolic environments feeding off communication satellites have not created a transnational culture, they are producing intercultural commonalities in certain lifestyle elements. Continued cultural cross-fertilisation may foster a more extensive globalisation of culture. The dawning of the electronic era in this third millennium underscores the growing role of electronic acculturation in people's lives. With further development of the Internet world, people will be even more heavily embedded in global symbolic environments.

People worldwide are becoming increasingly enmeshed in a cyberworld that transcends time, distance and place, and national borders. By enabling individuals to transcend their environment, these information technologies are placing a premium on the exercise of personal agency. For example, students can now exercise substantial personal control over their own learning. In the past, their educational development was dependent on the schools to which they were assigned. Students now have the best libraries, museums, and multimedia instruction at their fingertips through the global Internet for educating themselves independently of time and place. Through interactive electronic networking, people link together in dispersed locales, exchange information, share new ideas, and work collaboratively on matters of mutual interest (Robey, Khoo, & Powers, 2000). Worldwide connectivity is shrinking cross-cultural uniqueness.

In organisational life many activities are increasingly performed by members of virtual teams working together from scattered locations in different cultural milieus through computer-mediated transactions. Working remotely across time, space, and varied cultural orientations can be taxing. Employees with high perceived efficacy for remotely conducted collaboration have more positive work attitudes and achieve higher group job performances than those of low perceived efficacy (Staples, Hulland, & Higgins, 1998).

In addition, mass transnational migrations of people seeking a better life, ethnic intermarriages, and high global mobility of entertainers, athletes, journalists, academics, and employees of multinational corporations with more cosmopolitan orientations are changing cultural landscapes. This intermixing creates new hybrid cultural forms blending elements from different ethnicities. Members of societies with enduring ties to ethnic heritages and homelands add further intracultural diversity. In short, globalisation is homogenising some aspects of life, polarising other aspects, and fostering a lot of cultural hybridisation (Holton, 2000). Growing ethnic diversity accords functional value to bicultural efficacy to navigate the demands of both one's own ethnic subculture and that of the larger society. Efforts to build a new life elsewhere run up against untold stressors, especially when migrations involve radical changes in sociocultural customs and lifestyle patterns. Migrants who are assured of their coping efficacy feel challenged rather than threatened by the impediments to a new life (Jerusalem & Mittag, 1995). Beliefs of personal efficacy enhance successful migratory adaptation.

These new realities call for broadening the scope of cross-cultural analyses beyond the focus on the social forces operating within the boundaries of given societies to the forces impinging upon them from abroad. With growing international embeddedness and interdependence of societies, and enmeshment in the Internet symbolic culture, the issues of interest center on how national and global forces interact to shape the nature of cultural life. Although globalisation is changing the power relations of nation states, it

has not rendered them irrelevant (Lie, 1996). Transnational systems still have to operate through national institutional frameworks, human resources, and operational infrastructures. It is not as though there is little or nothing nations can do about transnational forces. As globalisation reaches ever deeper into people's lives, a strong sense of collective efficacy to make transnational systems work for them becomes critical to furthering their common interests and welfare.

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