

Impact of Adolescents' Filial Self-Efficacy on Quality of Family Functioning and Satisfaction

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In this prospective study, we tested a structural model in which adolescents' perceived self-efficacy to manage parental relationships affected their satisfaction with family life both directly, and indirectly, through its impact on family practices. Findings based on 380 Italian adolescents showed that perceived filial self-efficacy was linked directly and indirectly to satisfaction with family life, and that these relations held both concurrently and longitudinally. In particular, the greater adolescents perceived their self-efficacy, the more they reported open communication with their parents, the more accepting they were of their parents' monitoring of their own activities outside the home and the less inclined they were to get into escalative discord over disagreements. Regardless of whether perceived filial self-efficacy was placed in the conceptual structure as a contributor to the quality of family interactions or as a partial product of family functioning, it consistently predicted satisfaction with family life.

Over the years, much theorizing and research has been devoted to the major changes from childhood to adolescence and the personal and social determinants governing this developmental transition (Cairns & Cairns, 1994; Compas, Hinden, & Gerardt, 1995; Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1999; Millstein, Petersen, & Nightingale, 1993). This transition presents special challenges because adolescents have to manage not only major biological, educational, and social role changes but also cope with the growing strains of independence. Nonetheless, most adolescents manage to pass through this period without undue disturbance (Bandura, 1964; Petersen, 1988; Rutter, Graham, Chadwick, & Yule, 1976). A vast literature underscores the importance of familial relationships in supporting adolescents' efforts to gain increasing independence and to manage the many challenges they face (Bandura & Walters, 1959; Fisher & Feldman, 1998; Noller, 1994; Steinberg & Morris, 2001; Youniss & Smollar, 1985).

Given the impact of recent societal changes demanding prolonged education and leading to a delayed entrance into full-time work, the adolescents' transition to adulthood is longer than in the past (Arnett, 2001). Because youth often continue to live with parents and to rely on them for financial support during this extended period, successful youth development requires negotiating new relationships and roles while maintaining rewarding affective ties with other members of the family (Egeland, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1993). From this perspective, it is crucial to investigate personal characteristics that contribute to adolescents' transition to adulthood and to better understand the active role adolescents may play in promoting relationships that foster mutual well being among adolescents and parents.

An Agentic Perspective of Adolescent Development and Adjustment

Social cognitive theory adopts an agentic perspective to self-development, adaptation, and change (Bandura, 1986, 2001; Caprara & Cervone, 2000). In this view, people are self-organizing, proactive, self-regulating, and self-reflecting. Particular attention is given to factors that enable individuals to select and structure their environments in ways that set a successful course for their lives. In the passage to adulthood, adolescents play an increasing agentic role in their developmental course by their selection and construction of life circumstances. Among the mechanisms governing this self-directedness, a strong sense of efficacy to manage one's level of functioning and events that affect one's life plays a paramount role. 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. Developmental analyses of self-efficacy have shown that the beliefs that adolescents hold about their efficacy operate as an influential personal resource as they negotiate their lives through the life cycle (Bandura, 1995, 1997; Flammer, 1995; Schneewind, 1995).

In a multi-faceted longitudinal project, we recently have been examining how perceived self-efficacy operates in concert with socioeconomic, familial, educational, and peer influences in shaping the developmental trajectories of children. The findings of this body of research clearly show that different forms of efficacy beliefs—academic, social, self-regulatory, and empathic—make independent contributions to children's social, emotional, moral, education, and career development (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996a, b; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, Pastorelli, & Regalia, 2001; Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Gerbino, & Pastorelli, 2003; Bandura, Pastorelli, Barbaranelli, & Caprara, 1999; Caprara, Scabini, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Regalia, & Bandura, 1998; Caprara, Scabini, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, & Regalia, 1999; Caprara, Regalia, & Bandura, 2002).

The present prospective study extends this line of research to adolescents' perceived self-efficacy to manage family relationships in ways that foster satisfaction with their family life. A vast literature has documented the influential role of parent-adolescent interactions on family functioning, satisfaction, and well-being (Freeman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Larson, 1986; Larson, Richards, Moneta, Holmbeck, & Duckett, 1996; Jackson, Bijstra, Oostra, & Bosma, 1998; Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Olson, Sprenkle, & Russell, 1979). Yet, little attention has been given to the influence of adolescents' self-efficacy, namely, the effects that an adolescent's beliefs about his/her capacity to relate effectively with his/her parents may exert on their feelings of satisfaction with family life. As adolescence is a phase in which one's self-system becomes more differentiated and organized (Harter, 1999; Steinberg & Morris, 2001), it is likely that youths' self-beliefs, connected to goals of autonomy and interdependence, are crucial in promoting a favorable family context (Youniss & Smollar, 1985). We expected that beliefs of filial efficacy lead to family satisfaction, either directly or indirectly, through better communication with parents, positive management of conflicts, and parental monitoring.

Perceived Filial Efficacy

In the present research, adolescents' perceived capability to exercise their expanding agentic role in their relationships with their parents is conceptualized as filial self-efficacy. In particular, it encompasses adolescents'

perceived efficacy to talk with their parents about their personal problems even when things are tense, express positive feelings and manage negative emotional reactions toward their parents, get their parents to understand their point of view on contentious issues, manage stress arising from marital conflicts, and influence their parents' attitudes and social practices constructively.

Focusing on the proactive role that young people may exert in the domain of interpersonal and social relations, preliminary studies on filial efficacy have shown positive relations with open communication with parents and negative relations with escalation of conflicts. These outcomes, in turn, should increase adolescents' satisfaction with their family life. Thus, filial efficacy was expected to play a crucial role in fostering open communication between adolescents and their parents, in preventing escalation of conflicts, in enabling effective monitoring, and, ultimately, in leading to family satisfaction.

Open Communication

Relationships grounded in open communication enable adolescents to weather transitional stressors and to negotiate their growing independence and individuation (Marta, 1997; Scabini, 1995; Scabini, Lanz, & Marta, 1999). Families with better parent-adolescent communication tend to be closer, more loving, flexible in resolving family problems, and, ultimately, more satisfied with their family than families where parent-adolescent communication is less effective (Barnes & Olson, 1985). The study of Jackson et al. (1998) further supports the hypothesis that adolescents' perception of good communication between family members encourages positive feelings about the family. Several studies have shown that positive interactions with parents, based on closeness and open communication, better equip adolescents with personal resources that facilitate social-emotional adjustment, effective coping with life's problems, and enhance the quality of their adult life (Ben-Zur, 2003; Best, Hauser, & Allen, 1997; Lasko, Field, Gonzalez, Harding, Yando, & Bendell, 1996; Fluori & Buchanam, 2002; Sim, 2000; Shumow & Lomax, 2002). On the contrary, problematic communication with parents is positively associated with aggressive style and escalation of conflict (Jackson et al., 1998).

Conflict Management

Conflict is inevitable in close relationships, including those between family members. In some families, discord even over petty matters may swell

into escalative conflicts (Patterson, 1976, 1986; Reid & Patterson, 1989), negatively affecting the quality of interactions between adolescents and their parents (Kim, Conger, Lorenz, & Elder, 2001; Rubenstein & Feldman, 1993). Escalative conflicts may enhance reciprocal negative evaluations predisposing family members to hostility and rejection and ultimately leading to a negative family atmosphere (Holahan, Valentiner, & Moss, 1994; Shek, Ma, & Cheung, 2000; Fondacaro, Dunkle, & Pathak, 1998). In the end, these processes may jeopardize adolescents' satisfaction with their family.

Parental Monitoring

As children move increasingly into the larger social world outside the home, parents cannot be present to guide their behavior. Instead, they must rely on children's personal standards and self-regulatory sanctions to serve as guides and deterrents in nonfamilial contexts. To provide further guidance and support to adolescents, parents need to know what activities they are engaging in and their choice of acquaintances or friends outside the home. Parental monitoring, which allows parents to know their child's whereabouts and activities, provides social safeguards against heavy involvement in detrimental and risky activities (Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Donenberg, Wilson, Emerson, & Bryant, 2002; Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992; Robins & Rutter, 1990; Rolf, Masten, Cicchetti, Nuechterlein, & Weintraub, 1990; Webb, Bray, Getz, & Adams, 2002) and, thus, contributes to psychosocial adjustment (Brown, Mounts, Lanborn, & Steinberg, 1993; Crouter, MacDermid, McHale, & Perry-Jenkins, 1990; Jacobson & Crockett, 2000). Parents have to depend largely on the adolescents themselves to learn what they are doing when they are on their own away from home (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). In reality, parental monitoring depends on parents' capacity to stay informed about their children's life outside the family and the adolescents' willingness to report on their own daily activities to their parents. When this reciprocal process takes place within an engaging communicative family climate, beneficial modes of coping with difficult situations can be fostered, and detrimental coping forestalled before adolescents become more troublesome (Kerns, Asplenmeier, Gentzler, & Grabill, 2001).

Thus, we expected that parental monitoring—as a critical expression of parental attention, care, and concern—also contributes to adolescents' family satisfaction. In particular, if parental monitoring is not intrusive but supportive, adolescents are willing to inform their parents about their activities outside their home and this, in turn, fosters communication and satisfaction.

Family Satisfaction

Studies on family satisfaction have pointed to the family as a context of secure belonging, where adolescents can return at the time of uncertainty and doubts concerning the social world they are facing. When family boundaries are well regulated according to an adolescent's need of self-development and adjustment, his or her parents' responsible guidance offers flexible protection and promotes full acquisition of adult responsibility (Scabini, 2000). As adolescents live longer in their families and family plays a filter role in the relations between adolescents and their societal world (Scabini & Cigoli, 1997), it is important to take into account the level of satisfaction for their family life. High family satisfaction, and the resulting good family climate, can make the adolescents' processes of individuation and differentiation more comfortable (Scabini et al., 1999).

In this view, family satisfaction represents a global variable of family functioning, namely, a sort of blue print of the ways in which family members are satisfied of the level of support received, of the ways of solving family problems, of the quality of time spent together, and of the grade of independence within the family. Adolescents' family satisfaction in particular appears intimately connected to the quality of parent-child interactions and to their appraisals of family cohesion and flexibility (Belsky, Jaffee, Hsieh, & Silva, 2001). Empirical findings show that adolescents who are satisfied with their family life are more prosocial and have a higher sense of self-worth (Gilman, 2001; Gilman & Huebner, 2000; Harter, 1999). Conversely, dissatisfaction with family life is accompanied by social and emotional difficulties, such as negative peer relations, anxiety, and depression (Cumsille & Epstein, 1994; Huebner & Alderman, 1993; Valois, Zullig, Huebner & Drane, 2001).

Hypothesis and Conceptual Model

In the structural model under study, adolescents' filial self-efficacy was posited to exert its influence on their own satisfaction within the family directly, and through its impact on open communication, parental monitoring of extra-familial activities, and escalative conflicts over contentious issues. Efficacious adolescents actively structure their family environment to maximize their satisfaction. They are likely to feel more free to voice their opinions and to diffuse disagreements before they escalate into serious discord. Furthermore, adolescents who feel secure about managing their relationships with their parents are more likely not only to confide in their parents but also to view their parents' monitoring as more supportive

than do those adolescents who feel relatively less secure about managing their relationships with their parents. Thus, by being more able to interact constructively with their parents, self-efficacious adolescents may succeed in avoiding dysfunctional patterns of interaction while contributing to a satisfactory level of relationships among family members.

These processes and structural relations between filial self-efficacy, family functioning, and practices and satisfaction with family life are schematically illustrated in Figure 1. As the figure shows, perceived filial self-efficacy was hypothesized to exert an effect on open communication, parental monitoring, escalative conflict with parents, and satisfaction with family life. Furthermore, we hypothesized that the effects of filial self-efficacy on satisfaction were both direct and indirect, operating through the mediating role of the other family processes and practices. Satisfaction with family life was measured at two time points to assess the unique contribution of the variables of theoretical interest after controlling statistically for the stability of family satisfaction.

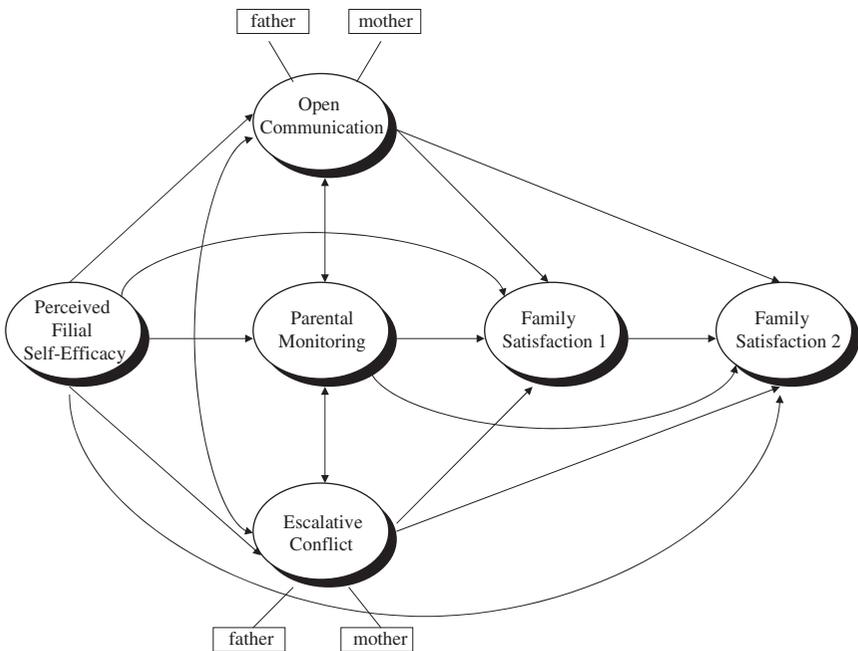


FIGURE 1 Posited structural relations between filial self-efficacy, family functioning practices, and satisfaction with family life.

Since the literature on children and adolescent development and family socialization processes indicates gender as a possible moderator of the family relations and practices with respect to different outcomes (Bandura et al., 1999; Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 2001; Jacobson & Crockett, 2000; Leaper, Anderson, & Sanders, 1998; Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994; Smetana, Yau, & Hanson, 1991), the role of gender differences was taken into account. Furthermore, considering that there is some evidence that adolescents' perception of family relationships may vary according to family role (Youniss & Smollar, 1985; Noller & Callan, 1991), we assessed adolescents' relationships with mother and father separately.

METHOD

Participants

Three hundred and eighty high-school adolescents (i.e., 185 boys and 195 girls) participated in the present study and were interviewed on two occasions 2 years apart. The average age of the participating adolescent sample was 15 and 17 years old, at time 1 and time 2, respectively.

The participating adolescents were drawn from two high schools in Genzano, a residential community located near Rome. The community represents a socioeconomic microcosm of the larger society, composed of families of skilled workers, farmers, professionals, local merchants, and their service staff. In particular, 16% were in professional or managerial ranks, 42% were merchants or employees in various types of businesses, 12% were skilled workers, 22% were unskilled workers, 3% were retired, 2% were temporary unemployed but with a salary, and 3% were unemployed. This occupational socioeconomic distribution matched the national profile (ISTAT, 2002). The composition of the family also matched national data with regard to type of families and number of children. Most adolescents were from intact families (94.1%) and only 5.9% were from single-parent homes (i.e., separated or divorced). On average, the sample was composed of one-child families.

The present study is part of a larger longitudinal project that started in 1992 with the primary goal of investigating the personal and social determinants of children and adolescents' adjustment. During the project's first year, all the 4th and 5th graders from one of two large elementary schools in Genzano were recruited for participation, and additional cohorts of 4th graders were added from the same school over the course of following years. Overall, the project adopted a staggered, multiple-

cohort design, with four different cohorts recruited in four consecutive school years, and annual assessments were conducted until 1998. The research was initially approved by a school council composed of parent and teacher representatives at the junior and high-school level. In addition, parents gave consent, and children were free to decline to take part.

Since then, the project has been focusing on the transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood with assessments 2 years apart. The present study is based on data collected during this latest phase of the larger project from adolescents belonging to the four original cohorts ($n = 445$). All families consented to have their adolescents participate in the study. The adolescents were then contacted by phone and invited to participate in the study for which they received a small payment. At that time (i.e., time 1 assessment), most of the students were attending 8th, 9th, 10th, or 11th grade. Adolescents were contacted again for a second assessment 2 years later, and 85% of the recruited adolescent sample ($n = 380$) participated and completed both assessments. Attrition was due mainly to family relocation from the area or absence from school at the time of the assessments. In preliminary analyses, the attrited group did not differ significantly from their counterparts on data from previous assessments in either across or within-group analyses.

Procedures and Measures

In order to carry out the two assessments, adolescents were asked to be part of assessment groups that were scheduled during the initial phone contacts. During these sessions (held in a school), a series of paper-and-pencil instruments were administered to groups of about 30 students by three trained female researchers.

With the exception of perceived filial self-efficacy, the set of instruments measuring the variables of theoretical interest was originally developed with English-speaking samples. They, therefore, were first translated into Italian and then back-translated into English to verify the validity of the Italian version. The Italian versions of the instruments concerning open communication, escalative conflict, and family satisfaction had already been used in other programs of research (Lanz, 1997; Scabini et al., 1999; Zani & Cicognani, 1999).

Perceived filial self-efficacy. Participants' perceived filial self-efficacy was measured by 16 items assessing adolescents' beliefs in their capabilities to discuss personal problems with their parents even under difficult circumstances, express positive feelings and manage negative

emotional reactions toward them, get parents to see their side on contentious issues, manage stress arising from marital conflicts, and influence parental attitudes and social practices constructively. For each item, participants rated their beliefs on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all well) to 7 (very well). Examples of self-efficacy items are: "How well can you get your parents understand your point of view on matters when it differs from theirs" and "How well can you get your parents to pay attention to your needs even when they are preoccupied with their own problems". Items were averaged. The α reliability coefficient was .93 for boys and .92 for girls, respectively.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of this set of items was conducted to verify the single factor structure of the scale. In line with a previous study (Caprara, Regalia, Scabini, Barbaranelli, & Bandura, 2004), results supported the mono-factorial structure of the filial efficacy scale. In particular, CFA tests yielded a significant χ^2 (103,380) = 319.139, $p < .001$, a comparative fit index (CFI) of .91, a nonnormed fit index (NNFI) of .92, and RMSEA of .07 (CI: .065, .085).

Open communication with parents. Communication with parents was measured by a 10-item subscale selected from the parent-adolescent communication scale (PACS), an instrument developed by Barnes and Olson (1982) to assess adolescents' open and problem communication with both parents. The adolescents rated, on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), the extent to which they felt free to discuss problems with their parents and whether the parent responded in an understanding, supportive way. For each item, adolescents gave two separate responses: one referring to their mother and the other to their father. Examples of items measuring openness to communication are: "It is easy for me to express all my true feelings to my mother/father", and "When I ask questions I get honest answers from my mother/father". A factor analysis yielded two main factors corresponding to open communication and problem communication. The present study used only the open communication subscale. The α reliability for this 10-item subscale was .83 for communication with both mother and father.

Adolescents' report of parental monitoring. The extent to which adolescents informed their parents about their activities and relationships outside the home was assessed by a seven-item scale developed on the basis of the operational definition of monitoring provided in Capaldi and Patterson (1989). For each item, adolescents rated, on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*), how often they kept their parents

informed about their activities outside the home and how often their parents kept track of their activities outside the home. Examples of items are: "Do you inform your parents about activities you are doing or intend to do?" and "Do your parents ask you what you have done during the day?". The α reliability for the scale was .84.

Escalative conflict with parents. The degree to which disagreements with parents turn into escalating conflicts was measured by 13 items selected from "the parent-adolescent disagreement" scale, an instrument originally developed by Honess, Charman, Zani, Cicognani, Xerri, Jackson, and Bosma (1997). For each item, participants rated, on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*), how often negative disagreements with their parents escalated and left bad feelings. The item "we start out disagreeing about one thing and end up arguing about a lot of things" measured escalating dispute, whereas the item "I end up feeling annoyed or angry" assessed the negative emotional aftermath of disagreements. The participants rated how well the statements of escalative conflict described their transactions with their parents over contentious matters. As in the case of open communication, participants responded to these 13 items by giving two separate responses to each item, one referring to their mother and the other to their father. Items were averaged. α reliability coefficients were .86 for escalation of conflict with the father and .87 for escalation of conflict with the mother, respectively.

Family satisfaction. The adolescents' satisfaction with their family life was measured by a scale developed by Olson and Wilson (1982). This 14-item instrument assessed the two major dimension of Olson's Circumplex Model of family functioning, that is, adaptability and cohesion. For each item, participants rated, on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*dissatisfied*) to 5 (*extremely satisfied*), how satisfied they were with different aspects of family life, including the amount of time they spent together, the ways the family makes decisions and handles family problems, how it carries out mutual responsibilities, and the sense of fairness in family relations. Examples of items are: "How satisfied are you with how close you feel to the rest of the family?" and "How satisfied are you with the way you talk together to solve family problems?" Following Olson and Wilson's recommendations, the total score was used as an index of satisfaction with family functioning. A principal component analysis with Oblimin rotation yielded a single factor with an eigenvalue of 6.87 that accounted for 40% of the variance. Items were averaged. α reliability for the scale was .87 in the first phase of assessment and .85 for the second assessment conducted 2 years later.

RESULTS

The Distinction Among the Family Constructs

The conceptual distinctiveness among the constructs of open communication, escalative conflicts, parental monitoring, and family satisfaction was tested by a series of confirmatory factor analyses. In particular, three models were tested: (a) *a unique factor model*: in this model, loadings and error variances for the four hypothesized factors were estimated with correlations among the factors fixed to 1. The model thus hypothesized that the family scales were the expression of a single latent factor; (b) *an orthogonal model*: in this model, the loadings and error variances for the four factors were estimated with the correlations among the factors fixed to 0. This model thus hypothesized that the family scales were independent of each other and (c) *an oblique model*: in this model, the loadings and error variances for the four factors were estimated along with the latent correlations among the factors. The model thus specifies that the family scales were interrelated and not an expression of a single latent factor. Table 1 presents the results of these confirmatory factor analyses. As shown, all CFA models obtained a statistically significant χ^2 and not completely adequate CFI, NNFI, and RMSEA indices. These results are likely to be because of the large sample and the order of the covariance matrices analyzed. However, the Aikakes (1974) values (i.e., Akaike's information index (AIC)), which compare the adequacy of models fitted to the same correlational matrix, showed that the oblique model fit the data better than the other two models. These results show that open communication, escalative conflict, parental monitoring, and family satisfaction are interrelated and distinct constructs rather than the expression of a single latent factor.

TABLE 1
Fit Indices of Confirmatory Factor Analyses

<i>Models</i>	χ^2	<i>Df</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	<i>NNFI</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>AIC</i>
A. Unique factor model	2308.72	819	.15	.77	.78	670.72
B. Orthogonal model	1797.09	819	.10	.85	.86	159.08
C. Oblique model	1476.83	813	.08	.90	.90	- 149.17

Note. $n = 380$; RMSEA, root means square error of approximation; NNFI, nonnormed fit index; CFI, comparative fit index; AIC, Akaike's information criterion.

The Hypothesized Structural Model

Table 2 presents, separately for boys and girls, the means and the standard deviations for all of the variables of interest as well as the matrix of correlations among them. One-way ANOVAs revealed no statistically significant gender effects, except for open communication with mothers and adolescents' report of parental monitoring. Compared with boys, girls reported better communication with their mothers, $F(1, 379) = 7.05$, $p < .01$, and keeping parents more informed of their activities, $F(1, 379) = 28.89$, $p < .001$.

The correlations among filial efficacy, open communication, parental monitoring, escalative conflict, and satisfaction were all statistically significant and in the expected direction in both gender groups. Perceived filial efficacy and family satisfaction were highly and positively correlated at both time points, and for both boys and girls. Furthermore, adolescents' perceived filial efficacy was also positively and moderately correlated to parental monitoring and open communication with mothers and fathers. Conversely, perceived filial self-efficacy was negatively correlated to escalation of conflict with mothers and fathers. Finally, mother and father measures of open communication and escalative conflict were highly and positively intercorrelated, and family satisfaction showed moderate stability over time.

The posited pattern of latent structural relations among the variables was examined by evaluating the covariance matrix via structural equation modeling using the EQS program (Bentler, 1995). In modeling these relations, scale scores were used as the observed indicators and the measurement errors estimated on the basis of scale reliability. Although there were only a few gender differences regarding the different family variables, the structural model was tested using the multiple-group model approach in order to determine whether the causal structure would be replicated across gender groups. The multiple-group model approach estimated simultaneously the same pattern of relations in the two samples of boys and girls. In this approach, equivalence among different samples was evaluated by constraining the estimates for both the measurement and structural parameters of the model to be equal in the two gender groups (Byrne, 1994; Scott-Lennox & Scott-Lennox, 1995). In EQS, the plausibility of these equality constraints is examined by the Lagrange multipliers (LM) test (Bentler, 1995). In particular, for each of the constraints, the LM test provides evidence that the constraint applies to the populations involved.

Based on the LM test, the results of this first series of analyses suggested that there were four coefficients for which estimates were significantly different across boys and girls, namely, the path coefficient between per-

TABLE 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Matrix for Perceived Filial Self-Efficacy, Familial Communication, Monitoring, Management of Conflict, and Family Satisfaction Assessed Concurrently (1) and Longitudinally (2)

Variables	Males (<i>n</i> = 185)		Females (<i>n</i> = 195)		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>								
1. Perceived filial self-efficacy	4.57	1.05	4.75	1.10	–	.48**	.49**	.52**	–.51**	–.50**	.70**	.53**
2. Open communication with mother	3.63	.70	3.82	.71	.54**	–	.72**	.39**	–.44**	–.41**	.52**	.40**
3. Open communication with father	3.56	.71	3.55	.84	.51**	.81**	–	.41**	–.37**	–.45**	.52**	.40**
4. Parental monitoring	3.71	.78	4.12	.71	.43**	.42**	.42**	–	–.39**	–.37**	.49**	.49**
5. Escalating conflict with mother	2.46	.66	2.45	.77	–.33**	–.29**	–.31**	–.25**	–	.82**	–.46**	–.38**
6. Escalating conflict with father	2.50	.73	2.39	.72	–.33**	–.31**	–.30**	–.19*	.87**	–	–.50**	–.38**
7. Family satisfaction 1	3.78	.77	3.82	.73	.67**	.50**	.47**	.36**	–.32**	–.35**	–	.57**
8. Family satisfaction 2	3.68	.60	3.67	.67	.54**	.38**	.38**	.34**	–.18*	–.24*	.60**	–

Note. Correlation coefficients for males are below the diagonal and those for females are above the diagonal.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

ceived filial self-efficacy and escalative conflict with parents, the two measurement residuals of, respectively, escalation of conflict and open communication with mothers, and, finally, the residual term of escalative conflict with parents. Following the procedure recommended by Bentler (1995) and Byrne (1994), we then released the equality constraints for these four coefficients. Figure 2 presents the results of this revised model.

For boys and girls alike, perceived filial self-efficacy was accompanied by adolescents' satisfaction with their family life, both concurrently and over time. In particular, filial self-efficacy were positively and strongly correlated with concurrent family satisfaction, both directly and through open communication and low conflict escalation with parents. This last effect was significantly higher for females than for males.

Perceived filial self-efficacy was also linked to family satisfaction on the longer term, both directly and through parental monitoring and prior family satisfaction. In this regard, it must be noted that the mediated effect was stronger than the direct effect. Except for three paths, all of the posited

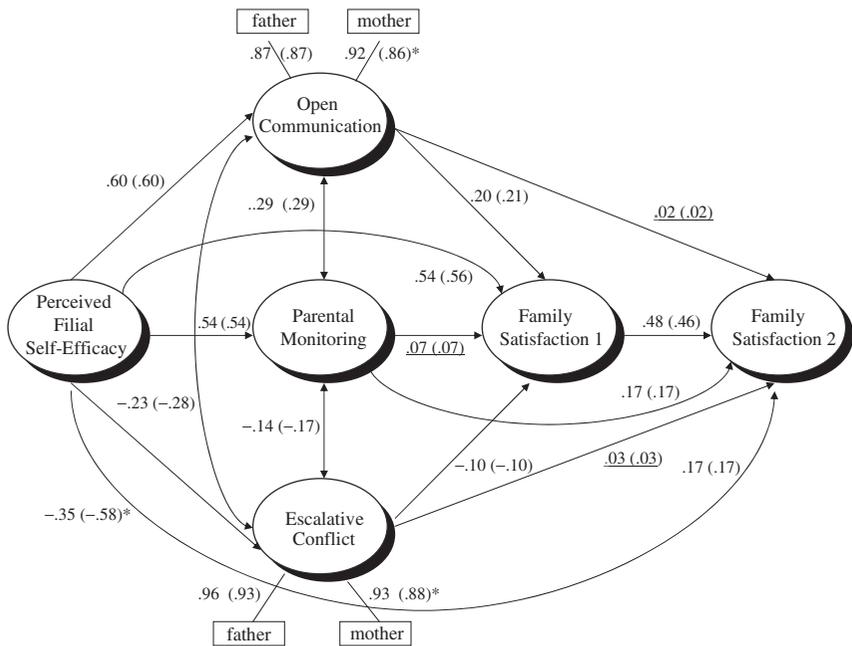


FIGURE 2 Structural analysis of the links of perceived filial self-efficacy and family functioning/management to satisfaction with family life. The first path coefficient of each of the structural links is for males; the second coefficient in brackets is for females. All of the path coefficients are significant beyond the $p < .05$ level. The coefficients with an asterisk on the paths differ significantly across gender.

structural links were verified. In particular, neither open communication nor escalative conflict were linked prospectively to family satisfaction, although they were linked to concurrent family satisfaction. Furthermore, parental monitoring did not contribute to concurrent family satisfaction, but did so in the long run. The structural paths were fully replicated across gender.

The model provided a very good fit to the empirical data, as shown by different goodness-of-fit indexes. These tests yielded a nonsignificant $\chi^2(40, 380) = 43.23, p = .26$, a CFI of 1.00, a NNFI of 1.00, and RMSEA of .02 (CI: .000, .041). For the CFI and NNFI indices, the closer the value is to 1, the better the model fit. For the RMSEA index, the closer the value is to 0, the better the fit of the model to the empirical data. For girls, the model accounted for 67% of the variance in concurrent family satisfaction and 51% of the variance in family satisfaction longitudinally. The corresponding levels of explained variance were 59% and 52% for male adolescents' family satisfaction at the two time points, respectively. Thus, even though the results showed similar patterns of relations for both genders, the percentage of variance explained by the model for current family satisfaction was greater in girls than it was in boys.

Finally, to examine the possibility of reverse causal paths, we tested an alternative multiple-group model in which we hypothesized that adolescents' filial self-efficacy represented, both concurrently and prospectively, the intervening factor linking family functioning and practices to adolescents' satisfaction with family life. Figure 3 shows this alternative model. For both adolescent boys and girls, open communication with their parents and low proneness to escalating conflict were related concurrent to family satisfaction, both directly and through their impact on perceived filial self-efficacy. Furthermore, the relation of parental monitoring to concurrent family satisfaction was entirely mediated by perceived filial self-efficacy. Parental monitoring was also directly related to family satisfaction. Perceived filial self-efficacy directly affected both concurrent and prospective family satisfaction.

This alternative model also provided a satisfactory fit to the empirical data, yielding a nonsignificant $\chi^2(40, 380) = 47.59, p = .19$, a CFI of .99, a NNFI of .99, and RMSEA of .023 (CI: .00, .04). For girls, the model accounted for 59% of the variance in concurrent family satisfaction and 50% of the variance in family satisfaction 2 years later. For adolescent boys, the corresponding levels of explained variance in family satisfaction were 60% and 50% at the two assessment points, respectively.

In order to compare the two models reported, respectively, in Figures 2 and 3, we adopted the AIC, which is particularly well suited for comparing the adequacy of nonnested models fitted to the same correlational

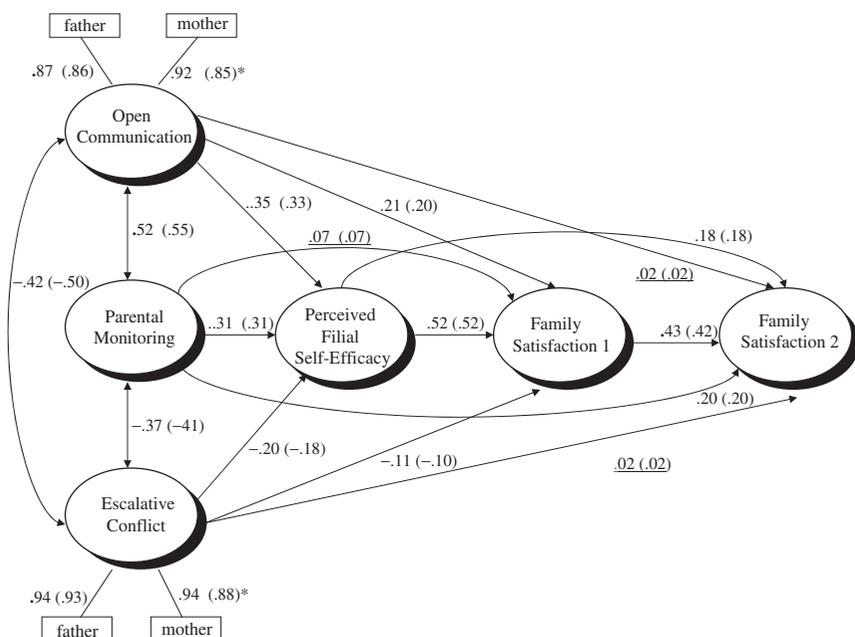


FIGURE 3 Structural analysis of the links of family functioning/management and perceived filial self-efficacy to satisfaction with family life. The first path coefficient on each of the structural links is for males; the second coefficient in brackets is for females. All of the path coefficients are significant beyond the $p < .05$ level.

matrix (Burnham & Anderson, 2000). The lower the AIC index, the better the goodness of fit. In this comparison, the AIC indices suggested a slightly better fit for the model hypothesizing that the filial self-efficacy effects on adolescents’ family life satisfaction operate through intervening family functioning and practices (i.e., -34.8 versus -32.2 for the model assigning primacy to the family variables).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this longitudinal study support the hypothesis that adolescents’ beliefs in their efficacy to manage parental relationships have an impact on the quality of family functioning, on parental monitoring, and on adolescents’ satisfaction with family life. In particular, the findings indicated that, relative to adolescents with low self-efficacy, adolescents who held stronger self-efficacy beliefs experienced better family communication, accepted their parents’ monitoring of their own activities outside

the home, and were less inclined to get into escalative discord over disagreements. Furthermore, perceived filial self-efficacy also contributed to satisfaction with family life both concurrently and 2 years later. This structure was replicated across gender. The only gender difference that was found concerned the relation between perceived filial self-efficacy and escalative conflict, which was slightly stronger in girls than in boys. Perceived filial self-efficacy, acting in concert with parent-child interaction patterns, accounted for substantial variance in adolescents' level of satisfaction with their family life. Adolescents' satisfaction with their family life is not only important in its own right, but also because of its impact on other important aspects of life.

Although the predictive relations were studied prospectively, this study presents some limitations. The first limitation pertains to reliance on adolescent self-report data. In the case of parental monitoring and family functioning variables, other family members, such as mothers, fathers, and siblings, may certainly serve as sources of information, and other methods may be used (Capaldi & Patterson, 1989). To support the validity of adolescents' report, however, one should note that there exist moderate and convergent relations between children and their parents on all family variables examined in the present study (Caprara, Pastorelli, & Regalia, 2002).

Regarding self-efficacy, self-beliefs are subjective phenomena that are necessarily measured through self-report. Satisfaction with one's family life is also a subjective matter accessible through the reports of the person experiencing the affective state. Children act on how they perceive familial practices rather than in terms of any "objective" that is external to their construal of it (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). It would be of interest, in future studies, to evaluate whether adolescents' satisfaction with their family life is better explained by their construal of familial environment than by a socially rated measure of it.

Given the importance that sibling relationships may have in the development of adolescents' self-knowledge and adjustment (Bandura, 1997), another limitation is the lack of measurement of adolescents' self-efficacy beliefs in the context of their relationships with siblings. Families may differ in number of siblings, age differences among siblings, and siblings' gender. This poses serious problems in disentangling various effects because of age, gender, and family size. However, one must note that Italy registers one of the lowest birth rate (1.29 average number of children in the family), attesting to a high percentage of single-child families. When families have more than one child, older siblings may be several years ahead in their development compared with their younger siblings.

Other limitations pertain to the generalizability of findings from Italian adolescents to other cultural contexts. In previous studies (Bandura, 1990; Pastorelli, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Rola, Rozsa, & Bandura, 2001), in which we used self-efficacy scales originally developed in US to examine academic, social, and regulatory efficacy, we found that the same self-efficacy scales were valid across Italian and different Eastern European cultures (i.e., Hungary, Czech Republic, and Poland). Since the perceived filial efficacy scale used in the present study has been validated only with Italian adolescents, it is recommended that future studies provide cross-cultural validation data. In particular, although adolescents in Western societies may face common challenges concerning global communication, education and work opportunities, and—consequently—share common problems or patterns of adaptation within and outside the family, one cannot underestimate the possibility that there exist distinctive patterns of relations between adolescents and their families within Western countries and, even more so, across Western and Non-Western cultures (Arnett, 2001; Bornstein, Hayness, Azuma, Galperin, Maital, Ogino, Painter, Pascual, Pecheaux, Rahn, Toda, Venuti, Vyt, & Wright, 2000; Caprara, Scabini, & Sgritta, 2003).

Illustratively, compared with Americans, adolescents from Southern European countries such as Spain, Greece, and Italy tend to either stay in their families longer (i.e., median age they leave home ranges from 25 to 27 years) or to return more frequently to their own families. The prolonged transition to adulthood appears to be the product of complex intergenerational transactions, namely, a “joint enterprise” of both children and parents. In particular, adolescents and young adults construct their identity not as much outside the family as within the family, taking advantage of a great deal of both personal freedom and emotional support (Caprara et al., 2003; Cherlin, Scabini, & Rossi, 1997; Scabini, 2000). Specific features of the *Italian case* recommend further caution in generalizing our findings on the role of filial efficacy in the quality of family life to other cultural milieus. It should be noted, however, that in cross-cultural studies, the determinants of efficacy beliefs, their psychosocial effects, and the mechanisms through which they operate have been replicated across individualistically and collectivistically oriented societies (Bandura, 2002), thus adding support to the generalizability of the functional role of this belief system in different cultural contexts.

Although the posited structural model provided a good fit to the empirical data, the alternative model hypothesizing that good family management of problem situations affects family satisfaction by fostering filial self-efficacy also provided an acceptable fit. These findings would suggest a process of reciprocal causation (Rueter & Conger, 1998), and future con-

tributions should empirically test the pathways of bi-directional influences. It must also be noted, however, that several findings of ours and related research indicate that, during the transition to young adulthood, adolescents' confidence in their capability to manage their relationships with their parents plays an influential role in satisfaction with their family life. In line with this, the causal link between efficacy beliefs and concurrent family satisfaction in the first model was higher than the direct causal links between family variables and satisfaction in the second model. Furthermore, the structural model in which perceived filial self-efficacy has primacy provided a somewhat better empirical fit than the model in which the quality of family interpersonal functioning is the driving force.

Regardless of whether perceived filial self-efficacy was hypothesized as a contributor to quality of family functioning or as a partial product of family functioning, it consistently predicted satisfaction with family life both concurrently and longitudinally for males and females alike. It contributed independently to family satisfaction after controlling for the influence of quality of family functioning and prior level of family satisfaction. By contrast, with the exception of monitoring, quality of family functioning contributed to family satisfaction concurrently but not longitudinally.

The primacy of adolescents' sense of personal efficacy has also been demonstrated in other research concerning other forms of perceived self-efficacy and different developmental outcomes (Caprara et al., 2002). In particular, this latter research clearly showed that adolescents' strong sense of efficacy to resist peer pressure for transgressive activities counteracted engagement in violent conduct directly, and mediationaly through its effects on enhanced communication with parents. As in the causal structure for family satisfaction, lack of open parental communication predicted adolescent involvement in violent activities concurrently but not longitudinally.

Although quality of family functioning had no direct longitudinal relation to family satisfaction, it was linked to adolescents' longer-term family satisfaction through its intervening influence on family satisfaction in the earlier period. In particular, the more their family social management practices raised adolescents' family satisfaction, the more satisfied they were with their later family life.

Patterson and his colleagues have documented the influential role of parental monitoring on adolescents' delinquent conduct (Capaldi, Chamberlain, & Patterson, 1997). Failure to keep track of what adolescents are doing outside the home is among the factors that contribute to delinquent conduct, both directly and through their gravitation to an antisocial peer group. The present research sheds further light on the developmental

impact of supportive parental monitoring, showing that it contributes to the long-term affective quality of family life.

Interestingly, parental monitoring predicted adolescents' satisfaction with their family life longitudinally but not concurrently. There may be several explanations for the lack of a significant concurrent link. One explanation is that age moderates this link, depending on the outcomes that are considered (Jacobson & Crockett, 2000). One might speculate that the beneficial effect of parental monitoring over adolescents' conduct is more apparent over time than concurrently, when their limiting and inhibiting effects are more salient. That is, these positive effects of early parental monitoring on family satisfaction are, in some way, delayed and become evident later, when children find themselves coping with matters that are more consequential. As children progress from early to late adolescence, they face quite different realities. They have to seriously consider what they want to do with their lives. The preparatory choices they make concerning what lifework to pursue will then shape the pathways they follow into adulthood.

Late adolescence is also a time of involvement in heterosexual relationships, formation of emotionally charged partnerships, and accompanying emotional ups and downs. Learning how to manage emotionally invested relationships becomes a matter of considerable importance. To the extent that parental monitoring is enabling and supportive it can contribute to a satisfaction with parental relationships during this more challenging period of development (Dishion & McMahon, 1998).

Social cognitive theory conceptualizes human development within an agentic conceptual framework (Bandura, 1997, 2001). In this view, adolescents are proactive agents of their self-development rather than just reactors to parental social management practices. They are producers as well as products of their social environment. This perspective is consistent with Elder's (1994, 1995) agentic analysis of life trajectories in the social and historical context. The present study focused on adolescents' perceived agentic capabilities to manage relationships with their parents. The family operates as a social system with multiple interlocking relationships, rather than simply as a collection of members. Accordingly, future studies should further examine the beneficial effects of filial efficacy on other domains of adolescents' life as well as on other family members' satisfaction and well-being.

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