Handbook of Adolescent Development

Editors
Sandy Jackson and Luc Goossens

A Psychology Press Book

HANDBOOK OF ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

What specifically characterises adolescents? What does it mean to be young at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

Handbook of Adolescent Development tries to fill a gap in the literature on adolescent development and behavior. All the authors of the various chapters have been invited to include as many findings on European adolescents as possible. Through this specific emphasis, the handbook provides a complement to other reviews of the literature that are mostly based on North American samples.

The contributors are all eminent researchers in the field and the individual chapters cover their specific areas of expertise. Theories of adolescence, along with emotional, physical and cognitive issues are explored. Topics covered include: families, peer relations, school and leisure time as well as problem areas such as depression, drug consumption and delinquency. *Handbook of Adolescent Development* also incorporates a comprehensive review of the literature in the area and considers avenues for future research.

This multidisciplinary text will be of interest to those studying and researching in the fields of developmental psychology, sociology, demography, epidemiology and criminology.

Sandy Jackson was a Senior Lecturer in Developmental Psychology at the University of Groningen (the Netherlands). He founded the European Association for Research on Adolescence (EARA) and served as its President for many years (1991–2000). He was one of the co-founders of the European Society for Developmental Psychology (ESDP) and served as its Secretary for an extensive period of time.

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2006 by Psychology Press

Published 2016 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

First issued in paperback 2013

Typeset in Times by RefineCatch Limited, Bungay, Suffolk

Cover design by Jim Wilkie

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Handbook of adolescent development / edited by Sandy Jackson and Luc Goossens.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 1–84169–200–X
1. Adolescence. 2. Teenagers. I. Jackson, Sandy, 1937– . II. Goossens, Luc.
HQ796.H2558 2006
305.235'5—dc22 2006002769

ISBN 978-1-84169-200-5 (hbk)
ISBN 978-0-41564-817-2 (pbk)

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Preface

This book has a long and complicated history. Work on it got underway in June 1997 when the European Commission, through its SOCRATES-ERASMUS programme, awarded money for a so-called European module (EM) on adolescent development to a consortium of European universities. The latter comprised eight universities: the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium), which acted as the coordinating institution, the University of Bergen (Norway), the University of Berne (Switzerland), the University of Bologna (Italy), the University of Groningen (the Netherlands), the University of Montpellier III (France), the Catholic University of Nijmegen (currently the Radboud University, the Netherlands), and the University of Valencia (Spain). The European Module (Reference 27945-IC-1.96.1.BE), entitled 'Youth and Adolescence: The European Dimension' was intended to introduce students to the diversity of adolescent development in the different regions of Europe. The course materials on this general theme, which were jointly developed by all the consortium partners, were to be taught at all the universities involved in the project. In brief, joint curriculum development was to lead to a European course on adolescent development that could be inserted, so to speak, into the existing curricula at the various universities that took part in the project (hence the name 'European module').

Representatives from all universities first met in Leuven in November 1997 and over the next few years in Montpellier (March 1998), Groningen (November 1998), Bologna (June 1999), Nijmegen (November 1999), and, finally, Valencia (March 2000). Few chapters, however, were ready when the contract with the European Commission expired in June 2000. The original plans for jointly developed teaching materials were then transformed into the somewhat more ambitious project of a European handbook of adolescent development. Thanks to Sandy Jackson's personal links with the world of publishing, a contract for such a handbook was signed with Psychology Press in July 1999. The team of authors, all of whom hailed from the eight universities involved, was expanded with colleagues from Italy, Norway, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, who could provide additional know-how on areas of expertise that were not well represented in that original group.

Work on this unwieldy project progressed slowly. On Tuesday, September 11, 2001, when Sandy travelled by train from Groningen (in the Netherlands) to Leuven (in Belgium) for what he saw as the final editorial meeting, he had no access to modern means of communication on that journey. On his arrival in my home town, I told him to turn on the TV set in his hotel room so that he could see the tragic events of that

fateful day unravel before his very eyes. Sandy's protracted illness and untimely demise in July 2003 caused further delays in the production schedule of the book. The book manuscript was finally ready by the summer of 2004. Each chapter was reviewed by an expert on the topic over the following months and the authors were invited to incorporate reviewers' comments in their final revision and to completely update their chapter by November 2005.

Now that the volume is finally completed, I would like to thank a number of people who, over the years, have contributed to the project in various ways. I want to extend my gratitude to Piet Henderickx and Leen Wyndaele, both at the International Relations Office of my home university, who guided me through the application process with the European Commission and helped me to comply with all the renewal and reporting requirements. Special thanks go to all the colleagues from our seven collaborating universities. I have fond memories of the biannual meetings with this core group of authors: Françoise Alsaker (then in Bergen and now in Berne), August Flammer (Berne), Augusto Palmonari and Giusy Speltini (Bologna), Sandy Jackson (Groningen), Henri Lehalle (Montpellier), Marcel van Aken (then at the Catholic University of Nijmegen and now at the University of Utrecht), and Gonzalo Musitu, Marisol Lila, and Sofia Buelga (Valencia).

I also express my gratitude to the authors who joined the group at a later stage, that is, Bruna Zani, Elvira Cicognani, Monica Rubini, and Marcella Ravenna (Italy), Jane Kroger (Norway), Ron Scholte, Willem Koops, and Bram Orobio de Castro (the Netherlands), Pierre-André Michaud, Isabelle Sossis, and Joan-Carles Suris (Switzerland), and Leo Hendry and Marion Kloep (United Kingdom). Special thanks go to Pierre-André Michaud and Willem Koops, who kept urging me to publish the book. I would also like to thank, in alphabetical order, the reviewers of the 18 chapters in this handbook, that is, Trevor G. Bond (Australia), Harke Bosma (the Netherlands), B. Bradford Brown (USA), John Coleman (United Kingdom), Maia Dekovic (the Netherlands), Eirini Flouri (United Kingdom), Beth D. Kivel (USA), Reed Larson (USA), Bonnie Leadbetter (Canada), Judith Smetana (USA), and all the colleagues who chose to send in their review anonymously. Thank you for your generous and constructive comments and your support.

On behalf of the chapter authors, I extend my deepest gratitude to all the people at Psychology Press who have encouraged and supported us over the last few years. Special thanks go to Michael Forster, founder of Psychology Press, who never lost faith in the project, and to Lucy Kennedy, Senior Commissioning Editor, who kept urging us to get the book ready for publication. I also want to thank editorial assistants Claire Lipscombe and Lizzie Catford, and Tara Stebnicky, Senior Editorial Assistant, who skilfully guided us through the final round of reviews and ensuing updates, and the manuscript preparation process, respectively. I am most grateful to my co-workers and former co-workers Wim Bevers (now at the University of Ghent), Koen Luyckx, Eline Sierens, and Bart Soenens, who carefully prepared extensive comments on earlier drafts of the chapters and urged the authors to adhere to APA-style as strictly as possible. Koen also acted as a skilful data manager who stored extra electronic copies of all chapters on his computer and saved the entire project from complete disaster when my hard disk crashed. Helen Baxter (of Helen Baxter Editorial Services) did a wonderful job when copy editing the final version of the chapters.

I also want to express my gratitude to the European Commission who provided funding during the initial phase of the project and to all my colleagues, both at the Center for Developmental Psychology in Leuven and within the European Association for Research on Adolescence (EARA), who kept asking me for an update on the status of this handbook.

Finally, I want to dedicate this handbook to my parents, Louis Goossens and Suzanne Persijn, who provided me with expert guidance and unconditional support throughout adolescence and all the other hazardous periods of development.

Luc Goossens
March 2006

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Adolescent development: Putting Europe on the map

Luc Goossens

This handbook tries to fill a gap in the literature on adolescent development and behavior. All the authors of the various chapters have been invited to include as many findings on European adolescents as possible. Through this specific emphasis, the present handbook is meant to provide a complement to other reviews of the literature that are mostly based on empirical studies conducted on North American samples. This project seems to come at an appropriate time, because there is an increasing contribution from developmentalists based outside the United States to the available knowledge base on child development. The children whose development is reported are also inceasingly more likely to be living outside the United States (Super, 2005). Exact figures on international representation in research on adolescence are currently lacking, but there is a growing realization that some aspects of development may proceed with different trajectories in different environments.

In this introductory chapter, we will define what we mean by the terms 'adolescence' and 'Europe' and we will indicate how cross-cultural comparisons of adolescent development can be made. Comparative work within Europe and between European cultures and the United States, however, should never represent the end point of cross-cultural research on adolescence. Rather, such comparisons should provide a stepping stone toward a global science of adolescent development, a science that no longer restricts the study of young people to selected regions of the world.

1. Boundaries of adolescence

Adolescence is the transitional period between childhood and adulthood. Its onset, therefore, is marked by the biological changes of puberty, whereas its upper boundary is defined by the transition to the adult status. In terms of age, these boundaries are somewhat flexible. For many

years, the Society for Research on Adolescence (SRA) has announced on the cover of its flagship journal, *The Journal of Research on Adolescence*, that it devoted itself to research on the second decade of life. Aspiring members of that society are still asked to indicate on the application form whether they are mainly interested in research on early adolescence (10 to 15 years of age), mid-adolescence (15 to 18 years), or late adolescence (18 to 22 years). Adolescence, therefore, effectively spans the age period of 10 to 22.

There are clear indications that the adolescent period tends to increase in length, at least in the Western world. One reason for this extension is that the first phases of pubertal development tend to take place at an earlier age (Herman-Giddens et al., 1997; Herman-Giddens, Wang, & Koch, 2001). Another important reason is that many individuals remain financially dependent on their parents well into their twenties and seem to postpone the transition to adulthood for many years. This socio-cultural trend has prompted certain authors to refer to the late teens and early twenties as a separate stage of development that is labeled 'emerging adulthood' (Arnett, 2000, 2004b). This new stage of life refers to the age period of 18 to 30, with a focus on ages 18 to 25. Alternative terms for this period have been suggested. Keniston (1971) referred to this period as 'youth', but this particular use of the term is problematic, because the word has long been used and continues to be used as a term for the combined periods of childhood and adolescence. 'Emerging adulthood', therefore, seems a more suitable term to refer to this transitional period, which is a distinct phase demographically, subjectively, and in terms of identity exploration.

An important demographic feature of emerging adulthood is that there is a great deal of variability and instability, for instance, in terms of residential status and relationship formation. From ages 18 to 25, some adolescents continue to live with their parents, whereas others enjoy a status of semi-autonomy during the college years, with some of them returning home after graduation (Arnett, 2000). During that same period some young people experience a period of cohabitation with a romantic partner, whereas others live on their own or are married. There are marked differences between European countries in this regard. Young people in Southern European countries tend to live with their parents much longer than do their agemates in Northern European countries (Cherlin, Scabini, & Rossi, 1997). Recent European data also indicate that the traditional sequence of events in which different markers of the transition to adulthood followed one another in orderly fashion, with completion of one's formal education followed by entrance into occupational life and entrance into marriage and parenthood, has been replaced with multiple transition patterns (Chisholm & Hurrelmann, 1995).

At the subjective level, adulthood is no longer defined in terms of marriage, which used to be an important marker in earlier times. Questionnaire studies in the United States (Arnett & Taber, 1994) revealed that individualistic qualities rank among the top criteria used by young people in their late teens and early twenties to define adulthood. These characteristics are: accepting responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent. Subsequent research on young people in other Western countries revealed that these individualistic criteria for adulthood are widely endorsed across the cultures examined, with some interesting cultural variations (Arnett & Galambos, 2003).

In terms of identity formation, emerging adulthood marks the transition from the tentative explorations of adolescence to more serious and focused attempts at self-definition. Such a transition can be observed in the areas of love, work, and worldviews. Adolescent dating, which is primarily recreational in nature, gives way to more intimate and serious explorations in which young people ask themselves what kind of person they wish to have as a long-term partner. Adolescent jobs, mainly in the service sector (e.g., fast food restaurants), do not provide young people with knowledge and experience that is related to their future occupations. During the years of emerging adulthood, however, young people ask themselves what kind of job they would be good at and what type of work would suit them as a long-term pro-

fession. Finally, adolescent worldviews, which are still strongly influenced by parental views, are re-examined during emerging adulthood and re-shaped into a set of beliefs that young people have arrived at through their own reflection (Arnett, 2000).

In terms of demographics, subjective characteristics, and identity, therefore, significant advances are made toward full attainment of adult maturity during emerging adulthood. Yet the volatility of this age period implies that these temporary solutions are primarily meant to broaden the range of experiences before taking on enduring adult responsibilities. Much remains open during this stage of life. For these reasons, emerging adulthood refers to a distinct period that cannot be captured adequately by traditional terms such as 'adolescence' or 'young adulthood'. This observation further helps to explain why emerging adulthood only exists in Western countries. These cultures allow young people a prolonged period of exploration during the late teens and early twenties (Arnett, 2000).

This optimistic portrayal describes ages 18 to 25 as the most volitional years of life, when many things are left to young people's independent decision. The extension of adolescence, however, can be described in more pessimistic terms as well. The 'maturity gap', that is, the age period between biological and social adulthood, is viewed as an important contributing factor to adolescent delinquency. Many young people engage in delinquent acts during that period because these activities provide access to adult status or adult privileges (Moffitt, 1993). As the maturity gap widens, the delinquency rate may continue to be high during emerging adulthood, when many issues regarding adult roles are not yet settled in a definitive way. Recent longitudinal research does in fact indicate that delinquent careers that are taken up in adolescence are extended into emerging adulthood (i.e., until age 26; Moffitt, Caspi, Harrington, & Milne, 2002).

Another problem is that young people who continue to be dependent on their parents into their late twenties are increasingly targeted as consumers by a recreation industry that is entirely geared toward mass culture (e.g., music and fashion) and by that very fact bars access to true adulthood (Côté & Alahar, 1996). One may legitimately ask, therefore, whether many emergent adults will ever reach adulthood in the psychological sense of the term (Côté, 2000). At any rate, young people will be forced to make a number of important decisions for themselves, as traditional value systems have lost much of their influence. The latter phenomenon, which sociologists call 'individualization', can have both positive and negative consequences for the young (Neubauer & Hurrelmann, 1995).

Whatever value one may attach to the extended transitional period between adolescence and adulthood, it is clear that a reconceptualization of the traditional boundaries of adolescence is in order. Researchers seem to be well-advised to focus on two adjacent periods of development that may be collectively referred to as 'adolescence and emerging adulthood'. It is to those two periods that this handbook is devoted, with a somewhat stronger emphasis on the traditional period of adolescence, now redefined as ages 10 to 18, than on emerging adulthood (ages 18 to 25). Viewed in a somewhat broader perspective, this latest shift in the conceptualization of life stages constitutes yet another phase in the long and dynamic history of the scientific use of terms such as 'adolescence', 'youth', and 'young adulthood' (Klein, 1990).

2. Europe: An old continent and an emergent reality

Europe is known as the 'Old Continent' and terms such as 'European' have been used for centuries. During the last decades, however, the continent has gone through a remarkable process of political change that has profoundly altered our understanding of age-old terms and divisions. It seems appropriate, therefore, to define the current boundaries of Europe in terms of the new entities that have come into existence as a result of that recent process of cooperation and integration.

Europe as conceived in this handbook is not restricted to the 12 countries of the Eurozone (or 'Euroland'), where a common currency was introduced on 1 January 2002, or to the countries

that made up the European Union (EU) up to 30 April 2004. Attention will be directed to a somewhat larger economic entity, that is, to the countries that made up the European Economic Area (EEA) up to that same date (March 2004). This area comprises the 15 member states of the EU at that particular moment in time (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) and three additional countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway). A final, strategic extension adds Switzerland to the countries of interest in this handbook. As a result, the area covered effectively coincides with what is commonly known as Western Europe. Throughout this handbook, the main focus will be on that geographical area.

Occasionally, the focus will be extended to the 10 countries that joined the European Union on 1 May 2004. These countries are the three Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), several countries in Eastern and Central Europe (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia) and some states in Southern Europe (Cyprus and Malta). Other aspiring member states in Eastern and Southern Europe (such as Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey), which have also entered into enlargement negotiations with the European Union, will receive less systematic attention in this handbook.

While these political changes were taking place, important developments also occurred on the European continent with regard to the formal organization of scholarly activity related to adolescence. A new scholarly society, the European Association for Research on Adolescence (EARA), was established by its first, inspirational leader, Alexander ('Sandy') Jackson. A native from Scotland, Sandy had moved to the Netherlands where he worked for many years (Bosma & Koops, 2004). The first meeting of EARA was held in 1988 in Paris. In the two decades that followed, with biennial conferences in Groningen, the Netherlands (1990), Bologna, Italy (1992), Stockholm, Sweden (1994), Liège, Belgium (1996), Budapest, Hungary (1998), Jena, Germany (2000), Oxford, United Kingdom (2002) and Porto, Portugal (2004) and through the leadership of the EARA presidents who succeeded Jackson – Monique Bolognini (Switzerland), Hakan Stattin (Sweden), and Luc Goossens (Belgium) – the organization flourished and provided a platform for continuous exchange of new ideas, new methodological tools, and new findings. Within this particular context, researchers increasingly began to struggle with the question of whether North American findings on adolescence could be generalized easily to European adolescents and whether adolescent development takes on a different form in each of the European countries represented within the association. These concerns, in turn, prompted greater interest in cross-cultural comparisons regarding psychological development in the phase of adolescence.

3. Cross-cultural comparisons of adolescent development

At first sight, there seems to be little reason to assume that adolescent behavior and development will be different in the United States than in Europe or will take on a different form in a particular European country than in another one. After all, all adolescents who are embedded in a predominantly European context (i.e., Europe, North America, and Australia) have many things in common, including a common set of basic values as handed on to them by the older generation and in fact, a long European-American cultural tradition. However, important differences do seem to exist, at least among European countries, in the objective social condition of late adolescents and emerging adults. The European Community Household Panel Survey, for instance, revealed large differences across European countries in young people's transition to adulthood. Their level of educational attainment, early experiences on the labor market, the age at which they leave the parental home, and their living standards all show important differences (Iacovou & Berthoud, 2001). From a sociological point of view (Hendry & Kloep, 1999) these differences are understandable, because each country or society handles the transition from the childhood to the adult status in a different way.

Whether adolescents in different European countries also show differences in psychological characteristics (such as self-esteem) is less clear as of yet. Comparative research on those characteristics looks like a difficult undertaking, because representative samples of adolescents have to be drawn from each country involved in the comparative effort. Finding two comparable samples of adolescents across different cultures always represents a difficult challenge.

These difficulties may be avoided, and the 'next-best-solution' to doing comparative research be adopted, by focusing on cultures rather than nations and by adopting an anthropological approach to defining cultures. The term culture is defined by cross-cultural psychologists and anthropologists as 'the total way of life of a people' (Schlegel, 2000, p. 71). The latter comprises language, political systems, and historical background, among other things. People coming from two different countries that differ on all these dimensions may therefore be considered as coming from two different cultures (Alsaker & Flammer, 1999). If we want to estimate how many cultures there are in Europe, we first have to define our working unit, so to speak.

3.1 Basic cultural units

Anthropologists have proposed the culture-bearing unit (or 'cultunit' for short) as the basic cultural unit. A cultunit is defined as a group of 'people who are domestic speakers of a common distinct language and who belong either to the same state or to the same contact group' (Naroll, 1973, p. 731). The latter implies that the members of the cultunit meet and interact with one another on a regular basis. To identify the various cultunits in a given geographical area, one can proceed in two steps. First, the language boundaries are drawn on the map of that region in a distinctive manner (e.g., by red lines). Second, the state boundaries are indicated in another, equally distinctive way (e.g., by blue lines). The various cultunits are then defined by the intersections of the two types of lines.

Such an approach will identify a substantial number of cultunits in contemporary Europe. In most countries, a single cultunit will suffice. Some countries will comprise two or more cultunits. In Switzerland, for instance, one can find two cultunits: a larger German-speaking one and a smaller French-speaking one. All cultunits may be further divided into subunits in terms of the dialect or regional variety of the common (or 'standard') language that is used in the home. Similarities across cultunits may be represented in a hierarchical system (or 'culture tree') with common groupings such as Western Europe and Eastern Europe (as defined in the previous section) as superordinate categories.

Moving to the level of cultunits rather than nations or countries has important strategic advantages. When comparing adolescents in different countries, the different samples have to be truly representative of their respective countries. When the samples are considered to represent culture-bearing units, the situation is different. Each sample is then thought of as a group of people who are under the influence of a particular set of cultural variables. A sample of adolescents from a particular city or region in Italy, for instance, is not completely representative of all young Italians aged 12 to 22. Yet, because these young people speak Italian and their life is governed by the Italian political system, which in turn is shaped by that country's particular history, the Italian culture is manifest in that sample. Such a sample, therefore, can be compared to a sample of German adolescents as long as the German culture (i.e., language, political institutions, and history) is clearly manifest in that sample. Whether differences that obtain between the two samples truly reflect cultural differences or additional differences between the two cultures is an empirical matter. Including other Italian and German samples (e.g., from different regions in their respective countries) can help to clarify the nature of these differences.

Studies that are directly comparative in their design, and therefore uniquely powerful in their conclusions, are scarce. An important study that illustrates the benefits of a comparative approach to adolescent development is the EURONET study (Alsaker & Flammer, 1999). Thirteen samples of adolescents (aged 14 to 16) were included in this study. There were six Western European

samples (France, Finland, Germany, Norway, and the German-speaking and French-speaking parts of Switzerland) and six samples from East and Central Europe (Bulgaria, the former Czechoslovak Federal Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Russia). All 12 samples were compared to a sample of adolescents from the United States. An additional sample of ethnic Hungarians living in Romania was added at a later stage.

A basic question of the study was whether and how age and gender interact with culture. In essence, these interactions were limited. The findings revealed that age and gender differences that have emerged from research on United States samples were replicated on the EURONET samples. In all countries, for instance, older adolescents spent more time dating and hanging around with peers. Boys and girls behaved in accordance with traditional gender stereotypes in all samples. In addition to these results, the EURONET study yielded two types of finding that are likely to emerge from any cross-cultural study of adolescence. These findings pertain to (a) differences across cultures in mean levels for certain variables and (b) different correlates of a given phenomenon in different cultures.

3.2 Differences in mean values across cultures

The EURONET study revealed both similarities and differences among the various cultunits, but there were no distinct national profiles. The final conclusion of the study, therefore, was that European adolescents are 'basically alike and excitingly different' (Alsaker & Flammer, 1999, p. 165). Some of the traditional distinctions among European cultures seemed to be confirmed by the results. The four Eastern European samples (Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, and Russia) were completely different from all other countries in terms of their daily life and basic values. These adolescents more often reported the presence of grandparents or other relatives in the household. They also rated social responsibility (which included taking care of one's parents) as more important than did Western adolescents. The United States sample was comparable to the Western European samples in many respects. Occasionally, however, Eastern European adolescents more closely resembled the United States sample than the Western European samples did. Visible success (e.g., 'earning much money' and 'becoming famous') were rated as more important by both Eastern European and United States adolescents. This finding may reflect the fact that the data were collected in 1992, that is, soon after the Eastern part of Europe opened up to the Western world and the new opportunities offered to the young seemed without limit.

Through a strategic choice of cultunits, the EURONET study allowed for a comparative study of the effects of national boundaries as opposed to language boundaries. The results were mixed. In some cases, national boundaries turned out to be more important than linguistic ones. Adolescents from the French-speaking part of Switzerland, for instance, closely resembled their agemates from the German-speaking part of Switzerland in terms of their time use (e.g., time spent on school and on meals). In other cases, linguistic boundaries seemed more important than national borders. Adolescents from the Hungarian minority living in Romania more closely resembled other Hungarian adolescents than their Romanian agemates.

3.3 Different correlates in different cultures

This topic was not a major concern in the EURONET study, which mainly concentrated on comparisons of mean levels across cultures. When the topic was addressed – for instance, when examining the correlates of adolescent well-being – few cross-cultural differences emerged. The associations between subjective well-being, on the one hand, and strain, control expectancy and problem-oriented coping, on the other, were very similar across countries or cultunits. In all 13 samples, high levels of strain were associated with lower levels of well-being, whereas higher levels of control expectancy and problem-oriented coping were associated with greater well-being (Alsaker & Flammer, 1999).

Other studies have effectively found different correlates of a given phenomenon in a sample of European adolescents as compared to a sample of United States adolescents. Different aspects of

parenting style, for instance, were associated with adolescent self-esteem in Germany and the United States (Barber, Chadwick, & Oerter, 1992). Support and control, two classical dimensions of parenting style, were found to be associated significantly with adolescent self-esteem in the United States sample, but were unrelated to that same variable in the German sample. A more general indicator of the overall quality of the relationship between parents and adolescents, which tapped feelings of security and availability in that relationship, was associated with higher self-esteem in both samples.

Such patterns of findings suggest that there may be important cultural differences in the link between the adolescent–parent relationship and adolescent development. Specifically, German adolescents must feel valued in their relationship with their parents through other processes than the ones examined in the North American literature (such as support and control). These other factors could include communication and decision-making processes through which German parents induce feelings of self-worth in their adolescent children.

This comparative study on correlates of adolescent self-esteem merely serves to illustrate the strategic value of cross-cultural comparisons. In addition to their evident descriptive function, such comparative studies can serve an explanatory function as well, by pointing to potential processes through which development arises or by providing clues about the relevant mechanisms involved (Tudge, Shanahan, & Valsiner, 1997). Again, this is not to say that numerous or large differences between European and United States adolescents are to be expected. More recent research, for instance, has revealed far greater similarity in the effects of traditional dimensions of parenting style on adolescent development and behavior across cultures (Steinberg, 2001). However, cross-national research is particularly needed to distinguish generality from specificity in particular results (Petersen, Silbereisen, & Sörensen, 1996). To reach that objective, the available database on adolescent behavior and development has to be expanded still further and researchers have to move beyond the boundaries of the Western world. Put differently, cross-cultural comparisons should not be limited to United States–European contrasts.

4. Globalization of adolescent research

Research that moves beyond the boundaries of the European–American part of the world, and the implicit conception of the stages of life shared by all its inhabitants, is bound to reveal the influence of the cultural life course (Caspi, 1987; Levine, 1982). Ethnographic analyses have shown that, in all cultures, shared expectancies about how lives should be lived play a central role in crucial phases of life. The prescribed behaviors regulated by these expectancies can be very different from Western conventions. The transition rites in early adolescence that marked the transition to the adult status in many non-Western, pre-industrialized cultures and that have no counterpart in contemporary Western cultures (Herdt & Leavitt, 1998) are a case in point here.

Of course, pre-industrialized societies no longer exist in their original form, as their members have come to adopt many aspects of Western lifestyle, through a process alternatively known as globalization or modernization. Across the world, however, one can find many instances of local cultural constructions of development and the various stages of life. These constructions are examined by the scientific discipline of psychological anthropology (Casey & Edgerton, 2005). Analyses as conducted by experts in this field of inquiry have revealed that the concepts of 'childhood' and 'adolescence' carry a different meaning for members of different sociocultural communities across the globe. Hence the experience of these stages of life takes on a different form across cultures as well (Weisner & Lowe, 2005).

North American scholars of adolescence have increasingly come to adopt the view long embraced by psychological anthropologists, that is, that the experience of adolescence can differ markedly as a function of time and place (Larson & Wilson, 2004). Some years ago, a joint task-force, funded by the Society for Research on Adolescence (SRA) and the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development (ISSBD) tried to project some trends for the future that

directly touch on adolescents' lives (Larson & Mortimer, 2000). One of the trends identified by this taskforce – the 'Adolescence in the 21st century' group – was the ever increasing level of contact between adolescents from different parts of the world. A direct result of this trend, typically referred to as globalization, is that adolescent scholars in the future will need to be more international in their expertise. The taskforce decided to publish an edited book on the adolescent experience in eight regions of the world (Brown, Larson, & Saraswathi, 2002). In addition to North America and Europe, these regions comprised Sub-Saharan Africa, India, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, China and Japan, Russia, and Latin America. This is not an isolated effort. A recent textbook on adolescence and emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004a) adopts an explicitly cross-cultural approach in that adolescent development in North America is systematically compared to young people's experiences in other cultures. One of the important messages to emerge from these books is that researchers should not routinely assume that North American findings will be confirmed by adolescents from other cultures.

The increased contact between adolescents from different continents may have both advantages and drawbacks. There is indeed growing concern that this new trend will lead to globalization. This latter term needs to be carefully defined. A process of globalization is effectively taking place in the sense that the experience of adolescence around the world has increasingly become more homogeneous as a result of widespread schooling. The latter trend, in turn, is a by-product of the increasing spread of industrialization and urbanization. While they are in school, adolescents have limited contact with adults and primarily turn to one another for social contacts. During their spare time, they all listen to the same type of popular music and are wearing the same type of Western casual clothing all over the world. Some authors fear that this emergence of a global youth culture (Banks, 1997; Mody, 2001), or the homogenization of daily adolescent experience, will ultimately lead to a homogenization of cultural forms. Put rather more mildly, other authors expect that identity problems will become much more common in non-Western cultures as adolescents in these cultures are increasingly confronted with two sets of cultural values, the one offered by their own traditional culture and the one implied in Western media messages (Arnett, 2001). In short, the globalization of adolescent culture appears as a real threat or a true challenge to contemporary youth in non-Western cultures.

Fortunately, anthropologists (Schlegel, 2000) and cross-cultural psychologists (Dasen, 2000) are convinced that these dangers do not loom large. Traditional cultures have proved to be remarkably impervious to Western influences, as far as their basic value systems are concerned. Cultural transmission, apart from the adoption of consumer goods, is by no means an automatic process. New ideas are typically transformed and incorporated into the existing culture. This means that each culture reacts in its own way to Western products and customs.

Adolescent culture has two general features that make it readily transportable from one culture to another: it makes few demands on the listener or consumer and it is typically grounded in universal values (e.g., love and friendship) rather than local ones. These same qualities, however, also make it rather ephemeral. One could argue that as the Western type of adolescent culture becomes more widespread, adults all over the world will be able to draw on a common source of memories and that cultural differences will gradually be blurred by this new trend. This is not a real danger, however. It is well-known that, as adolescents develop into adults, key factors that shape the world of adults, such as income or class, increase in importance at the expense of universal values (Schlegel, 2000). Adolescents, moreover, are not inevitably socially isolated from adults because some Western cultures (e.g., Germany and Northern Italy) have developed ways to keep young people involved in the adult worlds of work and community life and this may well happen in non-Western cultures as well (Schlegel, 2003).

In a related argument, cross-cultural psychologists (e.g., Dasen, 2000) argue that increased

contact with Western ideas need not lead to increased conflict between parents and adolescents in traditional societies, as long as there is some basic form of continuity with the past and cultural identity and basic values such as family solidarity are preserved during the acculturation process.

5. Conclusion

This introductory chapter has illustrated that scholars of adolescence currently witness exciting new developments. Recent societal and psychological trends extend adolescence, alter the classical markers of the transition to adulthood, and – through increased contact between cultures – may well change the traditional meaning of adolescence across the globe (Larson, Brown, & Mortimer, 2002). In a literature that has long been dominated by North American research, it seems appropriate therefore to pay greater attention to adolescent development in other parts of the world, such as Europe, and to compare these European findings to what is known from earlier research on adolescents in the United States.

These comparative efforts are but a first step toward a global science of adolescent development that deliberately relies on comparisons of both European and North American adolescents with their agemates from Asia, Africa, Australasia, and Latin America when sketching a comprehensive picture of adolescence. The hope is expressed that this handbook, which systematically tries to include relevant findings on European adolescents whenever possible, can contribute to this emergence of a new, more global, and pluralistic view of adolescence (Larson, 2002).

Acknowledgement

The author is greatly indebted to Marcel van Aken for his insightful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

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2

Theories of adolescence

Luc Goossens

Following a brief introduction on the role of developmental theories in the history of the scientific study of adolescence, a series of classical theories of adolescence is presented. Several attempts at conceptual integration of these theories are also reviewed. The latest generation of developmental theories, collectively referred to as contextualist theories, will also be discussed in some detail, with particular emphasis on applications of these theories to the study of adolescent development. Throughout the chapter, special attention will be devoted to the numerous contributions of European authors to classical theories of adolescence. Finally, the implications of recent, contextualist theories for European research on adolescence will be outlined.

1. Developmental theories: Their role in the history of adolescent psychology

Generally speaking, theories of development (Lerner, 2002; Miller, 2002) are concerned with or focus on systematic changes in behavior over time (see Flammer, 1996). This focus presents developmental psychologists with three tasks: (a) to describe changes in one particular domain of behavior (e.g., cognition or emotion), (b) to describe changes in associations among different domains of behavior, and (c) to explain the course of development that has been described in those domains. Developmental theories that address these three tasks offer two contributions to empirical researchers: (a) they organize and give meaning and coherence to what would otherwise remain isolated facts, and (b) they guide further empirical work by allowing researchers to deduce testable assumptions from the general statements of the theory and to effectively put these hypotheses to the test (Miller, 2002).

All theories of development address at least four basic issues, be it explicitly or implicitly. Phrased as questions, these issues read as follows:

1. What is the underlying conception of development and of human nature in general?
2. Is development basically quantitative or qualitative in nature?
3. How do the individual ('nature') and the

environment ('nurture') contribute to development?
4. What is it that develops? (Miller, 2002).

The answers that developmentalists provide to these questions, and that ultimately reflect their philosophical outlook on life itself, will have a strong impact on the topic or the subject matter they want to study and the methods they are inclined to use (Lerner, 2002).

By way of illustration, the variety of answers provided by different theories will be reviewed briefly for two of the four questions. With regard to the first question, essentially two types of developmental theory can be distinguished: the organismic and the contextual. Adherents of these views think of the developing person, and, in fact, of the world as a whole, in terms of a living organism and a historical event, respectively. With regard to the fourth question, many theorists tend to concentrate on a specific aspect of the developing person, such as feelings, cognition, or personality. For each of them, this particular aspect represents the 'essence' or core domain of development, which leads to additional differences in emphasis in the various theories developed over time.

By and large, two distinct phases may be distinguished in the history of the scientific study of adolescence. These phases were characterized by a predominance of organismic and contextualist theories, respectively. It is important to realize, however, that each of these types of theory predominated during one of two overlapping phases in that history, each of which was characterized by a different relationship between theory and empirical research on adolescence. The first, organismic phase, which began in the early years of the 20th century and lasted until the 1970s, was characterized by grand theoretical models, whereas empirical research during that phase was largely atheoretical and descriptive in nature.

The second, contextualist phase, which began in the 1970s and continues to this day, is characterized by somewhat less ambitious theoretical models and an intimate link between theory and empirical research. During this phase, researchers with an active interest in developmental processes as influenced by the broader context began to study adolescence to test their theoretical notion that development may be decribed as the set of a person's changing relationships to his or her environment (Lerner & Steinberg, 2004; Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). The research prompted by these concerns (see reviews by Lerner & Galambos, 1998; Petersen, 1988; Steinberg & Morris, 2001) also led to an increased interest in applied issues and to the promotion of positive youth development in particular (Benson, Mannes, Pittman, & Ferber, 2004; Larson, 2000). One could even claim that a third phase is currently emerging in the history of the scientific study of adolescence. In this emergent phase, the findings from research on adolescence and associated theorizing are increasingly used to advance civil society and to forge strong collaborative links between researchers, policy makers, and practitioners (Lerner, Fischer, & Weinberg, 2000). This chapter will focus on the theories developed during the first two phases of this history, which will be referred to as the classical and the contextualist theories, respectively.

2. Four classical types of theory on adolescence

All theories of adolescence, being theories of development, will by necessity adopt a specific position regarding the four basic questions addressed in developmental theories, as described in the previous section. For historical reasons, however, the important themes that differentiate among the various theories of adolescent development are organized in a slightly different way. They revolve around two questions:

1. Is adolescence a distinct phase in development?
2. Is the period of adolescence characterized by increased levels of emotional turmoil, that is, by 'storm and stress'?

This particular way of rephrasing the important theoretical issues does of course give a certain degree of specificity to theories of adolescence (Miller, 1989).

The various psychological theories that address these two questions are typically organized into

four broad categories. These categories refer to (a) biological, (b) psychoanalytic, (c) social–cultural, and (d) cognitive theories of adolescence, respectively (Berzonsky, 2000; Miller, 1989; Muuss, 1996). (See Flammer & Alsaker, 2002, for an overview of sociological theories of adolescence or youth.) Each of these four types of theory is presented in this section.

Most of the classical theories of adolescence, Freud's psychoanalytic theory and Piaget's cognitive theory in particular, are organismic theories. In the organismic model, in which the world is conceptualized as a living organism, the individual is conceived of as active and the emphasis is on the impact of the individual ('nature') on development. Living organisms, such as plants or animals, are to be considered in dynamic fashion in this model. This means that an organism is not just a static collection of cells or organs. Rather it is defined in terms of distinct steps in an organic process (e.g., egg, caterpillar, cocoon, and butterfly), with particular emphasis on the principal features of the organic system that will ultimately be achieved (i.e, the butterfly stage). Development, therefore, is the result of inherent properties and goals of the developing individual (Lerner, 2002).

The fact that the end state or goal of development (i.e., 'genital sexuality' in Freud's theory or 'formal operations' in Piaget's, respectively) is postulated in advance in these theories has other consequences as well. Adherents of organismic theories are also more inclined to posit qualitative changes, which leads them to phrase stage theories of development. Piaget's classical theory of cognitive development, which posits a universal sequence of transitions to ever more sophisticated forms of thought (e.g., from concrete to more abstract forms of thinking), based on an internal dynamic (i.e., increasingly higher levels in the way thinking is organized), is an example of this approach.

2.1 Biological theories of adolescence

The first scientific account of adolescence and, in fact, the first biological theory of psychological development in that period, was proposed by Granville Stanley Hall in his two-volume book *Adolescence* (Hall, 1904). Hall truly was a founding father of psychology in the United States. He received the first Ph.D. in psychology in that country, founded its first psychological journal, and served important functions in professional associations of psychologists such as the American Psychological Association (APA) (White, 1992). In his thinking about development, however, he was strongly influenced by European thinkers. Many of these European ideas Hall seems to have picked up in the course of two extensive study visits to Germany and extensive reading afterwards (Ross, 1972). In the second half of the nineteenth century, European thinking was dominated, in large part, by the theory of evolution.

Inspired by this biological theory, Hall (1904) applied the so-called law of recapitulation to psychological development. In essence, this view implies that the development of the species (or phylogenesis) is recapitulated in the development of the individual (or ontogenesis). In his own account of human development, which he consistently referred to as 'genetic psychology', Hall therefore distinguished four periods of individual development that corresponded to four long periods in our development as a species (Dacey & Kenny, 1997).

In the first phase, infancy (0 to 4 years), children recapitulate the animal stage of our development as a species. Mental development is still quite primitive and motor and sensory development are very important during that period. In the second phase, childhood (4 to 8 years), children recapitulate the anthropoid phase of our development as a species (in which humans closely resembled the primates or human-like apes). Hunting and fishing were important means of subsistence during that nomadic stage. This explains, according to Hall, why children in the corresponding phase of individual development have such a strong interest in those activities and in playing with toy weapons and hiding in caves (which our ancestors were supposed to have done in the corresponding 'anthropoid' stage). In the third phase, preadolescence (or the juvenile stage; 8 to 12 years), young people recapitulate the half-barbarian phase of our development as a species.

In the latter phase, humans first began to settle and work the land permanently (which explains why preadolescents are so fond of building camps) and routine training and drills (which still work well with preadolescents) began to be used in agrarian societies. The fourth and final phase, adolescence, began with puberty, which according to Hall took place around 13 or even 14 years of age, and continued well into the twenties (roughly up to 25 years of age). This phase corresponds with the civilized phase in our development as a species. During adolescence the so-called higher emotions, that set us apart as humans and were slow to develop in our own history as a species, were thought to emerge. Due to inherent properties of these emotions, periods of strong emotional upheaval, or 'storm and stress' are to be expected during adolescence.

Two aspects of Hall's theory of adolescence stand out as unusual:

- Hall's notion of adolescence was different from our current definition of that period. His operational definition of adolescence was 'the years from 14 to 24' (Hall, 1904, Vol. 1, p. xix).
- He thought that 'storm and stress' was bound to emerge during adolescence for structural reasons. Because the higher emotions (i.e., reason, true morality, religion, sympathy, love, and esthetic enjoyment) are a recent and somewhat tenuous acquisition in the development of the human species, they stand in continuous opposition to their counterparts and have to be continually re-asserted against them, so to speak. (In other words: these higher emotions are not permanently inherited yet.)

This particular feature of emotional life in adolescence explains the frequent oscillations between emotional extremes that are so characteristic of adolescents. The 12 oppositions that Hall describes are the following:

1. inertness and excitement
2. pleasure and pain
3. self-confidence and humility
4. selfishness and altruism
5. good and bad conduct
6. solitude and society
7. sensitiveness and dullness
8. curiosity and apathy
9. knowing and doing
10. conservatism and iconoclasm
11. sense and intellect
12. wisdom and folly.

With real sensitivity to the adolescent experience, Hall (1904, Vol. 2, pp. 71–94) describes all these oppositions in detail. He sketches, for instance, how adolescents can be truly elated at times and feel deeply depressed on other occasions (Opposition 2), how they tend to love being alone and to enjoy looking at the stars at one point in time and to be completely immersed in social activities and all sorts of social clubs at other moments (Opposition 6), and how they are oversensitive to other people's critique on their own behavior, while being utterly insensitive to others' feelings and sufferings (Opposition 7). Because of the high potential represented by the positive poles of these dualities, adolescence represented for Hall a second birth (i.e., into our own uniquely human form) and the 'best decade of life' (Hall, 1904, Vol. 1, p. xviii).

Hall's theory, of course, implies some sort of inheritance of acquired characteristics in subsequent generations, an idea that is now completely discredited. He did not refer to genes (which were not generally known in his days), but in the neo-Lamarckian era that he lived in, Hall assumed that memories (or 'traces') of earlier experiences were transmitted to later generations in the 'echo chamber' of our individual souls (Arnett, 1999). Similar ideas had found rather widespread acceptance in the second half of the 19th century and Hall's theory seems to have undergone numerous neo-Lamarckian influences. An intellectual biography of Hall's ideas (Grinder, 1967) traced their origins back to European authors like Lamarck, Darwin, Haeckel, and Spencer and to American authors like John Fiske, a leading proponent of Spencer's ideas in the United States.

Hall's genetic psychology also led him to offer some suggestions for educational reform. In the

early phases of individual development, when the evolutionary momentum is still strong, educators should try not to intervene in development. Catharsis was assumed to be at work in development, which meant that every stage of development should be allowed free expression if development were to proceed smoothly. By allowing children to express their 'natural cruelty' in milder forms (e.g., by twisting a friend's arm), they would be rendered immune from expression of cruelty at later stages in development (Grinder, 1969). This 'Nature-is-right' idea was easily accepted by many educators in Hall's time, because another European author, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, had expounded similar ideas some time earlier.

Educating adolescents, however, is a different affair altogether. Because the higher emotions were late to emerge in the development of the species, their evolutionary momentum is weak. The full expression of these emotions should therefore be actively encouraged and nurtured by parents and other educators. If and when adults do so in continuous fashion, the whole of humankind could be brought to a higher level of functioning still, which would naturally be transmitted to the following generations. In doing so, adolescence can be prolonged (indefinitely, at least in principle) and a new generation of human beings ('superanthropoids' as Hall called them) would come into existence in whose minds the higher emotions are engrained more deeply than in the generation of adolescents that Hall described in his work.

The whole of Hall's 'genetic psychology' was aimed at determining so-called 'sensitive periods' or 'critical periods' for different psychological functions or emotions (Hall referred to them as 'nascent periods') in which educators could assist young people, either at a distance (in the phases before adolescence) or in much more active fashion (in adolescence). To this aim, he pioneered the use of open-ended questionnaires on a given topic (or topical 'syllabi' in Hall's terminology). Teachers were asked to carefully observe the children or adolescents entrusted to them and to detail in brief written reports, for instance, the age of occurrence and precise form of instances of altruistic behavior. This part of Hall's work should have yielded valuable information on developmental norms. Few such norms, however, can be found in his books, because it proved to be extremely difficult to process the rich data for the syllabi (several hundreds of even thousands of reports per study) that were sent to Hall and his team by diligent teachers all over the United States.

This brief description of Hall's theoretical views of adolescence and the limited achievements of his empirical work on psychological development serves to make an important point. Hall was not a maturationist, as he is occasionally described to be. He did not think of development as an unfolding of physical structures and behaviors according to a biological blueprint (Crain, 2000), or to be more precise: he accepted such a notion for the phases that preceded adolescence only. In all probability, Hall is associated with the maturationist viewpoint, because one of his students, Arnold Gesell, came to embrace such an extreme view. In Gesell's work, we find a detailed normative description of development up to and including the phase of adolescence (ages 10 to 16 for Gesell), complete with vivid descriptions of the '12-year-old', the '14-year-old' and the '16-year-old' (Gesell, Ilg, & Ames, 1956).

An evaluation of Hall's complex theory must, by necessity, be a balanced one. In fact, contemporary authors tend to value the three key aspects of his work in radically different ways:

- His general developmental principle (recapitulation) has long been refuted by additional findings in comparative biology and evolutionary theory.
- His sharp insight into the psychology of adolescence (i.e., the 12 oppositions pertaining to the higher emotions) continues to be valuable until the present day.
- His belief in the plasticity (or malleability) of adolescent development makes him a precursor of contemporary contextualist theories of adolescence (as described later in this chapter) and was truly innovative and provocative in his own time (Cairns, 1998).

2.2 *Psychoanalytic theories of adolescence*

In sharp contrast to Hall's theory, psychoanalysis does not assign a decisive role to the phase of adolescence. Earlier phases, labelled the oral, anal, and oedipal (or phallic) stages, occupy a much more central role in the theory advanced by Sigmund Freud. During these phases of early childhood, children experience various types of sexual and aggressive impulses (or drives). Following a brief interlude in middle childhood (labelled the 'latency' phase), these drives are re-awakened by the biological changes of puberty. Freud addressed the issue in one of his essays ('The Transformations of Puberty') in general terms (Freud, 1953). He mainly asserted that puberty is marked by the emergence of the mature or genital form of sexuality which implies that all of the earlier sexual impulses (i.e., oral and anal drives) have to be subsumed under the primacy of genital or adult sexuality. This view does, of course, imply another version of the recapitulation theory advanced by Hall (1904). Psychological development in adolescence recapitulates earlier phases in the development of the individual rather than phases from the development of the human species (as was the case in Hall's theory).

Incidentally, this is more than a superficial analogy. There are direct links between Hall and Freud. Hall was the first (in 1909) to invite Freud and some of his co-workers, including Carl Gustav Jung, to the United States for a series of lectures. This event represented the first form of academic recognition of psychoanalysis anywhere in the world (Rosenzweig, 1992). What seems to have attracted Hall in Freud was his historical or archeological approach, in which the different layers of personality each referred to a different period of development and each layer only made sense in relation to these different periods of development considered as a whole. Hall was even more interested, it seems, when he heard late in his life of Jung's notion of the collective unconsciousness as a reservoir of psychical experiences and religious images of the human race (Ross, 1972).

Sigmund Freud left it to his youngest daughter Anna, who, like him, lived in Vienna first and in London afterwards, to fully develop the psychoanalytic version of the recapitulation theory (Gallatin, 1975). She saw puberty as a period of increased activity of the drives ('storm and stress'). This increase is first quantitative in nature (i.e., higher level of general arousal) and qualitative later on. Oedipal feelings, that is, sexual impulses directed at the parent of the opposite sex and aggressive impulses directed toward the same-sex parent, are re-awakened and are all the more dangerous because the adolescent has reached full sexual maturity and bodily strength. Strong mechanisms of defense, therefore, have to be put into place to curb these impulses.

In addition to well-known Freudian mechanisms of defense, Anna Freud described two special mechanisms, which she labeled ascetism and intellectualization, respectively. Ascetism means that adolescents deny themselves any type of pleasure, for fear of losing control over their sexual impulses. Adolescents who commit themselves to highly demanding schedules of studying or sports can provide an example of this particular mechanism of defense. Intellectualization implies that personal conflicts of a highly emotional nature are transformed into abstract philosophical arguments, stripped of emotion (Miller, 1989). As an illustration, one can refer to young adolescent males who calmly assert that all tyrants all over the world have to be deposed immediately. On closer inspection, such adolescents typically have a somewhat strained relationship with their father whom they find too strict as a parent (Freud, 1966).

In her later work on adolescence, Anna Freud came to regard the 'storm and stress' of adolescence as normal. If it failed to manifest itself in some adolescents, this should not be seen as a sign of adaptive functioning. Rather, one should routinely assume that the mechanisms of defense used by these young people are too strong, because the re-emergence of oedipal longings was believed to be inevitable (Freud, 1969, 1971). This drive/defense view became the cornerstone of the classical psychoanalytic theory of adolescence (Blos, 1962).

A new perspective on the psychoanalysis of adolescence was introduced by Peter Blos (1979),

who had first worked with Anna Freud in Vienna and had later moved to the United States. These new ideas were phrased within the framework of object relations theory. Object relations or object representations are (mostly unconscious) inner representations of one's relationships with important people in one's life, such as one's parents. (These important people are labeled 'objects' in psychoanalytic parlance.) Blos (1979) states that adolescence is a second separation–individuation phase in life, which in important ways parallels the first such phase, which occurs in the first two to three years of life. In that phase, described by Margaret Mahler and her co-workers (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975), young children distance themselves physically from their mother. In the course of this process, they are first absorbed into their own autonomous functioning ('practicing phase'), seek close proximity to the mother figure again ('rapprochement'), and finally develop a primitive sense of self. According to Blos (1979), adolescents go through similar phases as they strive to distance themselves psychologically from their parents. His new psychoanalytic view, therefore, is once again a recapitulation theory.

Both Anna Freud and Peter Blos, however, did recognize that adolescence represents a distinct phase in psychological development. This is evident from the developmental objectives they set out for adolescents. For Anna Freud, the ultimate goal for adolescents was the integration of adult sexuality into their developing personality. Peter Blos likewise suggested the shedding of outdated forms of dependency on parents and the achievement of age-appropriate forms of autonomy as major objectives for adolescents. For all psychoanalysts, therefore, adolescence represents both a recapitulation and a complete reworking of older impulses, representations, and conflicts. A final note on the psychoanalytic position regarding adolescence is that one ultimately has to come to an integration or synthesis of the classical drive/defense view (Adelson & Doehrman, 1980) and the more recent object relational view. Both perspectives refer to parallel tasks that the developing adolescent has to deal with simultaneously (Lerner, 1987).

2.3 Social–cultural theories of adolescence

Many theories about adolescence, including social-learning theory, hold that adolescent behavior is shaped to a certain extent by the reactions from their immediate social environment, that is, by reactions from their parents and peers. Other views within the broader class of social theories of adolescence focus on the role of the broader social environment, that is, the cultural context in which adolescents live. The period of adolescence has managed to capture the attention of social and cultural anthropologists from the first quarter of the 20th century onwards. In her book, *Coming of age in Samoa*, Margaret Mead (1928) set out to examine whether the 'storm and stress' of adolescence was universal. It is clear from the date of publication of her work, that she must have been referring to Hall's work, because the psychoanalytic version of the 'storm and stress' theory was yet to be fully developed at that time. In fact by the 1920s, 'storm and stress' had developed into a popular stereotype of adolescence that comprised three components. Adolescents were thought:

1. to evidence frequent mood swings
2. to have strained relationships with their parents
3. to be prone to risk taking which leads to higher levels of delinquency among adolescents (Arnett, 1999).

Mead (1928) herself referred to 'storm and stress' as a broad category of adolescent behaviors that included idealism and rebellion against parental authority.

In her study, Mead (1928) conducted individual interviews with 50 girls from a remote island in American Samoa, in the eastern part of the Samoan archipelago (Polynesia). These girls were distributed about evenly across three phases of pubertal development: pre-pubertal, pubertal, and post-pubertal. In these interviews, Mead could find no signs of 'storm and stress' among these girls. Because the biological changes of puberty were considered to be universal, and American adolescents were all supposed to suffer from emotional turmoil, this finding led Mead to presume that there were differences between the

two cultures (Samoa and the United States) that accounted for this difference in experienced 'storm and stress'.

In her speculative account of these differences, Mead (1928) came up with two explanations. First, she pointed out that life on Samoa was simpler because adolescents were not confronted with difficult decisions that had a strong impact on their lives (as was the case in the United States). Second, she referred to the general casual nature of the Samoan lifestyle, which extended toward a more casual attitude toward premarital sex. Mead's work on Samoa, therefore, had a message for Western civilization, which is typical for many of her books (McDermott, 2001). The implication was that adolescence would be less troublesome for young people in America if they were less pressured into taking important decisions and if the general nature of the American culture were to be more casual. At any rate, Mead's (1928) work led to the conclusion that the degree of 'storm and stress' experienced by adolescents also depends, to a certain degree at least, on the broader cultural milieu.

A few years after Mead's death, her ideas from her Samoan work were seriously challenged by one of her colleagues in social and cultural anthropology. Derek Freeman had spent some time on another island in the western part of the Samoan archipelago and had come to conclusions that were radically different from Mead's. He maintained that Mead had failed to understand the Samoan culture as a whole and adolescence on Samoa in particular. His analyses of juvenile court cases, for instance, indicated that there was considerable 'storm and stress' on Samoa as well (Freeman, 1983). Mead would further have been duped by her native informants into believing that Samoan youths in the 1920s could indulge in premarital sex with few restrictions (Freeman, 1999). These allegations led to the most hotly debated issue in social and cultural anthropology in recent years and arguably one of the 10 liveliest debates in science ever (Hellman, 1998), the so-called Mead–Freeman controversy.

Careful re-analyses of Mead's original work (Côté, 1992) and of the entire Mead–Freeman controversy (Côté, 1994, 2000) indicate that Mead's main finding *can* be upheld. She could have phrased her conclusions somewhat more conservatively (e.g., by pointing out that they applied only to the island that she had visited and not to the whole of Samoa, as she occasionally implied). Her explanations of the observed difference between the Samoan and American cultures continue to be speculative. There seems to be no reason, however, to doubt that adolescence was indeed a somewhat easier phase of life on that particular island in American Samoa in 1925–1926 when Mead did her fieldwork there than it was in the United States at that time. The fact that the island concerned is strongly Americanized now and that other islands in the same archipelago in Polynesia may have presented a different state of affairs is not all that important. To make her point, Mead needed just a single example of a non-Western culture (which had had relatively limited contact with the Western world) where the experience of adolescence was conspicuously different from its experience in the American culture at that time, and she seems to have found just that on a remote island in the Central Pacific in the 1920s. Her main conclusion, therefore – that adolescent 'storm and stress' is not universal and is co-determined by the cultural milieu, among other factors – continues to stand the test of time (Côté, 1992).

Mead did not care to interview a control group of American adolescents, simply because she assumed 'storm and stress' to be universal in the United States. Subsequent research (e.g., Offer & Sabshin, 1974) has revealed, however, that marked difficulties as implied in the popular stereotype of adolescence are not widespread in that culture either. Disturbances in the self-image were only found in about 20% of American adolescents. In addition, most adolescents turned out to have positive relationships with their parents (Arnett, 1999).

2.4 Cognitive theories of adolescence

Cognitive theories of adolescence state, in essence, that adolescent behaviors that are of some concern to adults have their origins in the cognitive changes that take place at the onset of adolescence. In his classical work on adolescent

thinking (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958), Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget made exactly that point. Two different types of thinking, concrete operations vs. formal operations, were shown to underly children's and adolescents' reasoning about simple scientific experiments, respectively. In the final chapter of the book Inhelder and Piaget (1958) considered the broader implications of the transition to formal thinking. Adolescents can think about their own thinking and reality becomes secondary to possibility, in the sense that the world that we live in is just one of the many possible worlds that one can envisage.

This new type of insight lies at the core of adolescent idealism, which was described by Margaret Mead (1928) as an intrinsic element of the 'storm and stress' of adolescence. Adolescents, Inhelder and Piaget (1958) state, are strongly inclined to develop philosophical, ethical, and political systems in an attempt to change the world for the better. These solutions are inherently naïve, because the possibilities of solving important social problems through logical reasoning are limited. When adolescents come to realize this, they take an important step toward adulthood, that is (a) their insertion into society and (b) the formation of their socially corrected and socially sanctioned personality.

Reasoning along similar lines, David Elkind (1967) claimed that the advent of formal thought would lead adolescents to develop certain misconceptions about the self and others that he referred to as 'adolescent egocentrism'. This type of egocentrism would lead to two mental constructions. Because adolescents are preoccupied with themselves, they tend to think that others are paying just as much attention to them as they are doing themselves. This leads to the construction of an imaginary audience. Adolescents believe they are constantly being watched, hence the term 'audience', but this is seldom effectively the case (and that is why the audience only exists in their own minds). As a complement to this lack of differentiation between self and others, adolescents tend to overdifferentiate their feelings from the feelings of others. This gives rise to a second mental construction that Elkind (1967) called the personal fable. Adolescents tell themselves a story about themselves that is not true to reality. The personal fable leads to adolescent feelings of uniqueness, omnipotence, and invulnerability.

Adolescents' belief in the imaginary audience helps explain many of their typical behaviors. When they feel critical about themselves, they are convinced that others feel equally critical. That is why adolescents tend to be self-conscious and why shame is such an important emotion for them. When they admire themselves, adolescents project these positive feelings unto their imaginary audience. That explains why adolescents who have just bought a new outfit they find 'cool' cannot understand that others do not think much of their new clothes. The personal fable helps to account for the oft heard cry from adolescents that no one can understand their feelings. It also accounts for the risks that adolescents take while driving recklessly or while having unprotected sex. They simply do not believe that harm can come their way. Many of the phenomena that can be explained in terms of the twin cognitive constructions of the imaginary audience and the personal fable are often explained in psychoanalytic terms.

3. Integrative approaches

As the classical theories describe a whole range of changes during adolescence and empirical research on adolescence was largely unrelated to these theoretical frameworks in the first phase of the development of the discipline, several attempts have been made to integrate the various theoretical viewpoints and to integrate the growing body of research with those theories. In this section, two such approaches will be described that focus on complementarity among the classical theories and on the effect of cumulative changes, respectively.

3.1 Complementarity

It is clear from the foregoing description that each type of theory tends to emphasize a different aspect of the developing person, such as feelings, cognitions, or involvement in social interaction. Many authors have therefore suggested that no single type of theory can provide a complete

picture of adolescent development. Researchers, therefore, are strongly encouraged to combine different theoretical perspectives to arrive at a composite picture of the developing adolescent (Berzonsky, 2000; Miller, 1989).

There is a second reason why researchers are well advised to 'think together' different theories of adolescence. All the available types of theories are formulated at a level that is far too general. As soon as one enters into greater detail, one is naturally led to include elements from other theoretical frameworks in the explanation of typical adolescent behaviors. Psychoanalytic explanations naturally lead into a discussion of social factors. Incorporating adult sexuality into one's personality will inevitably be done in interaction with others. Cognitive explanations of adolescent idealism lead to social factors that explain its demise, as we have seen in the previous section. The twin constructions of the imaginary audience and the personal fable will also disappear gradually through social interaction. In intimate conversations, for instance, adolescents come to realize that most other people have feelings similar to their own. Conversely, changes in social interaction presuppose cognitive changes as well, which allow the adolescent to think of social interaction in new and more complex ways (Lehalle, 1996).

Some authors have even suggested that the same adolescent phenomena can be explained from different theoretical perspectives. The imaginary audience and the personal fable, for instance, have been explained in terms of developments in adolescent object relations. This explanation, which is thought to complement the original cognitive account, assigns a different role to each of these mental constructions. As adolescents try to distance themselves from their parents, they still want to be connected to others and that is why they construct an imaginary audience. At the same time, their belief in the personal fable gives them the strength to go their own way (Goossens, Beyers, Emmen, & van Aken, 2002; Lapsley, 1993).

Such attempts at integration have led some authors to conclude that a comprehensive theory of adolescence can be developed as some sort of 'conceptual umbrella'. Gallatin (1975) maintained that such a theory was developed by Erik Erikson (1968), who also studied with Anna Freud in Vienna and later moved to the United States (Friedman, 1999). Erikson assigned equal importance to the individual and his or her social environment in adolescent identity formation. At the individual level, adolescents have to define their own personal life style. This personal approach to life has to be recognized by the social environment. On closer inspection, three dimensions can be distinguished in Erikson's theory, which sum up most of the theories discussed in the previous section. These are (a) the biological dimension (as in the drives that occupy a central place in psychoanalytic theory), (b) the social dimension (as in the cultural influences emphasized in social-cultural theories), and (c) the individual dimension (because no two people can have the same identity). One may object that cognitive elements are not included in Erikson's theory of identity. It can be shown, however, that Erikson assigned an important role to the cognitive changes of adolescence that give rise to adolescents' time perspective which is important in making plans for the future (Gallatin, 1975). In summary, Erikson's theory of adolescent identity formation can effectively be claimed to incorporate elements from all the main theories of adolescence.

3.2 Cumulative changes

An alternative approach to the many changes of adolescence is to consider the developmental sequencing of these changes and its impact on adolescents. British psychologist John Coleman (1974) asked himself why so many adolescents managed to cope well with the many changes of adolescence. A small minority (about 20%) seems to experience serious problems with these changes, which, of course, implies that 80% of all adolescents do comparatively well. To answer this question, the author developed the focal model of adolescent development (Coleman, 1974; Coleman & Hendry, 1999). The model states that, for most adolescents the different changes (which were all social relationship issues for Coleman) successively come into focus, in the sense of being

most prominent. Put differently: most adolescents deal with one issue at the time when working through their relationships with their parents, same-sex friends, opposite-sex friends, groups of agemates, and authority figures. Only a small group (about 20% of all adolescents) are forced by the circumstances to deal with several or all issues at the same time and evidence the signs of adolescent 'storm and stress' (because they are overwhelmed by their problems).

Empirical support for Coleman's (1974) focal model was provided in North American research on the effects of cumulative change on early adolescents. Five types of important life events were distinguished in this study: school change, pubertal change, early dating, geographical mobility (e.g., moving to a new neighborhood), and major family disruption (e.g., parental divorce). The greater the number of important life events the adolescents were confronted with, the more negative effects they experienced. They felt worse (i.e., lower self-esteem) and did worse in school (i.e., poorer school results; Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Simmons, Burgeson, Carlton-Ford, & Blyth, 1987).

In an interpretation that went somewhat beyond the data, the authors surmised that adolescents need at least one 'arena of comfort', that is, one domain of their lives (e.g., family life) that is undisturbed and to which they can withdraw and become reinvigorated. Under these conditions, adolescents can deal successfully with problems that present themselves in other domains of their lives. However, if adolescents experience disruptions in all important domains of their lives, they are bound to experience substantial problems (Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Simmons et al., 1987).

Subsequent research (Call & Mortimer, 2001) has found empirical support for this notion. An arena of comfort was defined as an interpersonal context in which adolescents experienced support from others and four such potential arenas were distinguished: the family, the peer group, school, and (part-time) work. The findings supported earlier results in that adolescents who reported more arenas in which they were provided with social support exhibited a stronger sense of well-being. Only a small group (about 10%) did not have any arena of comfort and they reported the lowest level of well-being. Finally, moderating (or compensating) effects were obtained. Stressors that related to family change (e.g., changes in father's employment status) had a smaller negative impact on adolescent self-esteem and well-being among those young people who experienced support from both friends and supervisors at work. Supportive relationships in school, and with teachers in particular, had similar buffering effects on adolescent well-being when the family moved geographically.

The fact that empirical findings are in line with the predictions made by the focal model does not solve all the questions one can address to that model. An important issue that needs to be dealt with is the role of the person in the focal model. An implication of the model seems to be that some adolescents at least may actively choose to deal with one important issue at the time and try to organize their lives in such a way that they can effectively do so (Goossens & Marcoen, 1999; Jackson & Bosma, 1992). Empirical support for this important assumption, however, has not been forthcoming. Despite this important gap in current knowledge, research on cumulative changes in adolescence and the theoretical models that can account for such effects provides a potential avenue to conceptual integration of the various changes that different theories of adolescence tend to concentrate on.

4. Contextualist theories

The prime metaphor for development in the contextual model is that of an historical event or a tapestry, which are both situated in time and space (Lerner, 2002). Each behavior has meaning only in its socio-historical context (and therefore represents a historical event or historical act). Alternatively, the horizontal threads of time and the vertical threads of space can be thought to produce the pattern of human life. Viewed within this metaphor, each part of the tapestry makes sense in the context of the whole texture. Both metaphors used (i.e., the historical event and the tapestry) imply that the emphasis in development is neither on the individual ('nature') nor

on the environment ('nurture') but rather on their interaction.

A 'pure' contextual model of development, however, is difficult to conceive of because that would treat each event as a purely historical accident. Researchers have therefore tried to combine the best of both world views by incorporating elements of the contextual model into the organismic models that had served developmentalists so well for such a long time. The new elements in this combined organismic–contextual model try to account adequately for the role of time and place in development (Lerner, 2002). Three instantiations of this combined model are discussed in some detail in this section. These three theories are (a) ecological theory, (b) life course theory, and (c) developmental contextualism.

4.1 Ecological theory

Ecological theory was developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2005), an American author who migrated from Russia to the United States with his entire family when he was about 5 years of age. The theory essentially provides a detailed description of the environment in which psychological development takes place. The theory is often called the 'bio-ecological' theory, to make clear that it wants to address all levels in the interaction between individuals and their environment, from the lowest (i.e., biological) to the highest (i.e., cultural) level. True to this ambition, Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes different types of system within the environment that fit into one another, like a series of nesting Russian dolls (Muuss, 1996). Bronfenbrenner identified four of these behavioral systems, which he defined in terms of how directly they impinge on an adolescent's development (Thomas, 2001).

The setting that affects the adolescent most directly is called the microsystem. A microsystem is a pattern of activities and relationships within a particular face-to-face setting in the immediate environment. Typical microsystems for adolescents are the family, the peer group, and the school context. At the next higher level, Bronfenbrenner defines the meso-system as the system that encompasses the linkages and processes that operate between two or more of the developing adolescent's microsystems. Parental attempts to co-structure the adolescent's relationships with her friends would be an example of such a linkage between two microsystems, that is, between the family and the peer group.

Behavioral systems beyond the meso-system are referred to as exo-systems. Such a system represents a context that, although not directly influencing the developing adolescent (e.g., the workplace of the father), nevertheless has an influence on the adolescent's behavior and development. Such a linkage within that particular meso-system can occur, for instance, when father returns home from a stressful day at the office and is less effective that evening in his role as parental caregiver (Lerner, 2002). The macrosystem, finally, is the highest level in Bronfenbrenner's hierarchy of levels, that is, the level most remote from the adolescent's immediate experience. This system is the cultural milieu which may comprise macro-institutions such as the nation's government and public policy. This macrosystem encompasses all the other systems (i.e., the micro-, meso-, and exo-systems).

In more recent years, Bronfenbrenner has come to realize that he had only developed a comprehensive theory of the environment in which psychological development takes place. He then set out to devise an equally well-developed theory of the developing person. While doing so, he came to grasp that he also had to devise a more fully developed vision of the process that operates between person and environment and of the role of historical time in this entire process. In short, he designed a Person-Process-Context-Time theory (or PPCT theory, for short). Some elements of this ambitious undertaking have already been worked out in some detail.

With regard to process, Bronfenbrenner (1995; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) broadened his conception of the microsystems. He did so by advancing two basic propositions. First, he states that so-called proximal processes are operating within these systems and that those processes are the primary mechanisms that initiate and sustain human development. Second, he maintains that the power and direction of these proximal processes depend on the characteristics of the

developing person, the characteristics of all systems within the environment, the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration, and the social continuities and changes occurring over time (both in the life course of the individual and in the historical period in which the person lives).

Bronfenbrenner (1995) stipulates that proximal processes, in order to be effective, must be reciprocal interactions that occur on a regular basis over extended periods of time. Classical aspects of parenting style, or periods in which parenting style is translated into concrete parenting activities, are primary examples of proximal processes that operate in the microsystem of the family. Parental support of the adolescent's learning activities (alternatively referred to as responsiveness to the adolescent's needs) or active parental monitoring of the adolescent's activities and whereabouts (when conceived of as ongoing reciprocal activities) are useful illustrations here.

With regard to the developing person, Bronfenbrenner now distinguishes three types of characteristic that influence development or, to be more precise, that have an impact on the proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). 'Force characteristics' are dispositions (e.g., control of emotions, activity level, creativity, and ego control) that can set proximal processes in motion and continue to sustain their operation. 'Resource characteristics' (e.g., experience, knowledge, and skills) are required for the effective functioning of proximal processes or can hamper their functioning (e.g., in the case of chronic illness). 'Demand characteristics', finally, invite or discourage reactions from the social environment in such a way that the operation of proximal processes is fostered or disrupted. Factors that act in the spontaneous process of attraction and rejection, such as physical attractiveness or unattractiveness, are a case in point here.

The whole array of new concepts, such as proximal processes, and the forces, resources, and demands within the developing person that set and keep them in motion, represents an important first step toward the full articulation of Bronfenbrenner's (1995) all-encompassing Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT) model. Some elements of that comprehensive model, and the role of historical time in individual development in particular, have already been clarified in other conceptual frameworks such as life course theory, which is described in the next section.

4.2 Life course theory

The sociological concept of the life course refers to the succession of life stages (i.e., childhood, youth, adulthood, mid-life, and old age) as it is influenced by social and cultural factors (Hunt, 2005). Life course theory integrates several theoretical orientations and therefore, emphasizes both the role of social structure and individual agency (Mortimer & Shanahan, 2003). As a result, the theory takes into account the social surroundings of the individual and traces the stories of people's lives over time in an ever-changing society. Through this integrative approach, life course theory in the particular form developed by Glen Elder Jr. represents an effort to include historical influences in developmental research, which has rarely been attempted. (See Elder, Modell, & Parke, 1993, for exceptions to this general rule.)

The empirical basis for the theory was provided by the author's longitudinal analyses on two samples that were first studied in the 1920s when they were children or adolescents and followed ever since at regular intervals. One of these samples (born in 1920), the Oakland sample, was followed from their entry into adolescence (Grade 7) until they were in mid-life. In later work, a sample from a somewhat younger cohort (born in 1929), the Berkeley sample, was also followed for an extensive period. Although publications on these samples have appeared in print since the 1970s (Elder, 1999), the basic principles of life course theory were only derived from that work in the 1990s (Elder, 1998a, 1998b).

A first central concept in the new theory are life paths or social trajectories, such as education, work, and family. A succession of transitions occurs within each of these trajectories (e.g., getting one's first job, the birth of a first child) and there are age-graded normative expectations associated with these transitions (i.e., optimal ages at which one is expected to make each of these transitions). The whole of these life paths,

which typically are not neatly synchronized among them, is referred to as the life course. A second concept are the influences of the historical context, which offers opportunities and imposes certain restrictions. A third concept, finally, is the developmental trajectory of the individual who makes certain choices regarding the different transitions in his or her life.

Life course theory, therefore, provides a framework for studies that attempt to relate social pathways to history and to developmental trajectories. A whole series of age-related expectations structure the social pathways in our life, but historical conditions bring new opportunities or new restrictions to these pathways, and individuals create their own developmental trajectories through life by the choices they make regarding these social pathways. The core of the theory can be summarized in four basic principles.

The first principle ('historical time and place') states that: 'The life course of individuals is embedded in and shaped by the historical times and places they experience over their life-time' (Elder, 1998a, p. 3). In his own work, Elder (1999) has been able to detail how the historical circumstances of the Great Depression in the 1930s and World War II had a profound impact on the psychological development of the young people in both the Berkeley and the Oakland cohorts.

The second principle ('timing in lives') states that: 'The developmental impact of a succession of life transitions or events is contingent on when they occur in a person's life' (Elder, 1998a, p. 3). In his historical analyses, Elder was able to contrast the effect of the Great Depression on young people of different ages. The participants in the Oakland cohort (born in 1920) experienced this series of historical events when they were adolescents, after they had had a prosperous childhood. The participants in the Berkeley cohort (born in 1929), by contrast, experienced the Great Depression when they were children and spent their adolescence in the years of World War II. This difference in timing led to a different experience of the adolescent period in the two cohorts.

There were few signs that the Oakland cohort experienced a stressful period of adolescence. Adolescents in the Berkeley cohort, however, had low aspirations as adolescents and developed a 'dependency' syndrome in adolescence (e.g., they tended to feel victimized, to withdraw from adversity, and to exhibit self-defeating behavior). These feelings of personal and social inadequacy, in all probability, reflected the joint influence of economic deprivation early in their lives (in the 1930s) and the peculiar circumstances that applied during the war years. A positive finding was that the participants in the Berkeley cohort did substantially better when they had developed into mature adults (Elder, 1980).

The third principle ('linked lives'), states that: 'Lives are lived interdependently, and social and historical influences are expressed through this network of shared relationships' (Elder, 1998a, p. 4). Elder's work shows many cases in which children and adolescents experience the effect of the historical conditions through the older generation, that is, their parents. In all families that experienced economic hardships, regardless of the age of the children, three types of changes could be observed. These comprised changes in the household economy (e.g., because father was unemployed, mother and the older adolescents in the family had to find a job), changes in family relationships (e.g., mother's relative power was increased), and social strains in the family (e.g., increased conflict and emotional distress; Elder, 1980).

A family stress model of economic deprivation was developed in which loss of income and indebtedness led to increases in depressive feelings and marital negativity among parents. These processes in turn undermined effective parenting, which increased the likelihood of behavioral problems in the younger generation (Elder, 1998a, 1998b). Subsequent longitudinal research on the aftermath of the Great Farm Crisis in the United States in the 1980s, suggested some important qualifications to that model. The initial findings on young adolescents (Grade 7) in the early 1990s, who had experienced the Great Farm Crisis as children, effectively revealed increased problem behaviors. A few years later, by Grade 10, however, there no longer were such negative effects. These findings were attributed to particular characteristics that are commonly found among

people in rural areas, who tend to have strong ties to the land. These characteristics include an extensive social network of relatives and active involvement of the younger generation in meaningful activities on the farm and in the broader community. Historical conditions, therefore, interact with characteristics of the developing person and his social environment to produce the eventual developmental outcome (Elder & Conger, 2000).

The fourth principle ('human agency'), finally, states that: 'Individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstances' (Elder, 1998a, p. 4). An illustration of this principle is provided when older adolescents find themselves a job and decide to leave the family and to make the transition to adulthood at an early age, and in so doing construct their own life course.

In all their generality, the four principles of life course theory, when taken together, provide a useful framework for researchers who want to include the role of historical conditions into their explanatory framework. This theoretical framework will undoubtedly be expanded as other historical eras and different geographical regions are examined in future longitudinal work on adolescents.

4.3 Developmental contextualism

Developmental contextualism (Lerner, 2002; Muuss, 1996) provides a basic theoretical framework that could support and theoretically enlarge the findings revealed in all other contextual approaches. Summarizing the contributions of these theories, one can state that there are many (bi-directional) relationships between the developing individual and aspects of his or her environment (e.g., family members, peers, teachers, the neighborhood, the cultural milieu, and the historical context). Developmental contextualism simply suggests to regard the whole pattern of these dynamic person–context interactions as the key phenomenon of psychological development.

This view has important implications:

- The developing person changes continually, because his or her relationships with the environment are in constant flux. At least one of these many relationships is bound to change at any point in time.
- Human development is characterized by a great potential for systematic change, that is, by plasticity, at any point in the life span. This plasticity is not absolute, however, as certain biological restrictions apply.
- Applied research and intervention research in particular should be relatively easy, because it merely involves that the relationship with one aspect of the environment is changed. As a consequence, developmental contextualism transcends the traditional distinctions between person and context, individual and environment, nature and nurture, and fundamental and applied research.

Bronfenbrenner's (1995) ecological theory and Elder's (1998a) life course theory are all members of the family of contextualist theories, of which developmental contextualism is the prime representative.

For all of its merits, developmental contextualism faces the real danger that it may remain an abstract formalism, that is, some sort of philosophical 'relationalism'. There is a continuing need, therefore, for concrete applications of the theory that attest to its usefulness and viability. Two such applications can be found with regard to adolescence. The first application deals with the effect that different types of relationships with the context can have on adolescents. Optimal conditions apply when there is a 'goodness-of-fit' (or 'match') between person and context. Individuals are strongly motivated and tend to do well in social environments that fit well with their social needs. Conversely, when the social environment does not match the needs of the individual, a decrease will be observed in motivation, interest, and achievement.

Examples of lack of fit have been found in early adolescence. In that phase of development, young people strive to have greater autonomy in their lives. In the first years of secondary school, however, they tend to have less control over their learning activities in school than they used to

have in the upper grades of elementary school. Secondary schools tend to be bigger and more impersonal and teachers in these schools prefer working with the entire class as a whole rather than in small groups, which are all features of the environment that contribute to a decrease in autonomy in early adolescence (i.e., the early years of secondary school). Empirical research has shown that this mismatch between individual and school context effectively has deleterious effects on early adolescents' school performance. The most compelling evidence in support of this view were longitudinal findings showing that as the degree of incongruence increased, school achievements decreased (Eccles, Lord, & Buchanan, 1996).

A second application deals with active regulation of person–context relationships. Borrowing from life-span developmental psychology, Lerner has recently applied a general model of developmental regulation to adolescents' search for identity (Lerner, Freund, De Stefanis, & Habermas, 2001). This 'Selection-Optimization-Compensation' (or SOC) model suggests that adolescent identity formation includes an initial phase of goal selection (e.g., the decision to start focusing one's attention in the initial search for possible options regarding one's vocational identity). In a second phase of goal pursuit, adolescents will have to learn the necessary skills to achieve their self-selected objectives (e.g., test-taking skills for academic goals). Finally, they will have to engage in goal maintenance or alteration in the face of difficulties. The latter implies that they have to learn from their mistakes and redefine their objectives when necessary (Lerner et al., 2001). Both of these applications (the SOC model and the goodness-of-fit concept) provide a first glimpse of the potential advantages offered by developmental contextualism in the study of adolescence.

5. Conclusion

At the end of this chapter, it seems appropriate to return to the two classical questions that help researchers to differentiate among the many theories of adolescence. To the first question, which asks whether adolescence is a distinct phase in development, all theories provide an affirmative answer (including psychoanalytic theories, as we have seen). Contemporary, contextualist theories will emphasize, for instance, that adolescence is characterized by a unique meso-system (ecological theory) or by a specific succession of important transitions and age-related expectations in the various life paths that constitute that specific part of the life course (life course theory).

To the second question which asks whether adolescence is characterized by increased emotional turmoil ('storm and stress'), as the popular stereotype of that period would have it, the various theories provide different answers. The degree to which adolescence is experienced as a difficult period depends on the cultural milieu (social–cultural theories), the concurrent experience of important life events or transitions (focal model and accumulation theories), or the historical era (life course theory). To sum up: whether 'storm and stress' emerges or not and how strongly it is experienced depends on the entire pattern of relationships that adolescents have with their environment (developmental contextualism).

Contextualist theories of adolescence may be usefully applied in adolescent research in Europe. The concept of development that emerged from these theories and associated research was summarized by Lerner (1998) in terms of four principles. These entail that development is best viewed (a) as a combination of both systematic changes and plasticity, and as characterized by (b) dynamic interaction with the environment, (c) historical embeddedness and temporality, and (d) limited generalizability. This means that, because these contemporary theories of adolescence assign an important role to historical and local conditions, and because historical time and local influences will inevitably be different in Europe as compared to the United States, research on European samples provides additional tests of contextualist theories and its results will help to place the findings obtained on American samples in a broader perspective. Recent historical events in Europe, such as the collapse of the former Eastern bloc, and the process of German unification that got underway in the aftermath of those changes and is continuously being monitored

ever since (Juang, Silbereisen, & Wiesner, 1999) have provided unique opportunities to study the way in which adolescents are influenced by and react to social change (Crockett & Silbereisen, 2000; Noack, Hofer, & Youniss, 1994; Nurmi, 1998).

Looking back on the entire chapter, one may also conclude that European authors have contributed substantially to the development of the classical theories of adolescence. This tradition seems to have got lost in the latest generation of theories of adolescence and should be revived, because all of these contextualist theories are largely based on North American findings and have been devised by authors residing in the United States. International collaboration between European and North American scholars in particular should be encouraged. Referring to the history of developmental psychology as a whole, Cairns (1998, p. 92) noted that: 'Over the past 100 years, the insights and emphases of developmental investigators in Europe have often been on a different frequency than those in North America, and the reverse held as well. When exceptions occurred . . . the whole discpline was revitalized.' Similar revitalizing effects on adolescent psychology are bound to emerge as the discipline grows more international.

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