

# ADOLESCENCE

Canadian Edition



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# Adolescence

Canadian Edition

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PEARSON

Toronto

I would like to thank my husband for keeping the house running and Marion for keeping the farm running, both of which allow me to teach, write, and learn.

The book is dedicated to all of my students...you have taught me well.

—Susan Thompson

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# Preface

Welcome to the Canadian edition of *Adolescence*. Over my years of teaching human development, I have come to realize that there is something special about what happens in the classroom during adolescent development courses. When reading the text, listening to lectures, or engaging in classroom discussions, students often have an “aha!” look when they recognize some tidbit of teen behaviour or thinking that most have so recently left behind. To introduce a Canadian context to the research and theories means that the text becomes that much more meaningful to these young adults, many of whom will go on to work with teens living in Canadian cities, towns, and rural enclaves. And the addition of material on emerging adulthood means that the text goes beyond adolescence to directly address the current concerns of students in the class.

The Puberty and Physical Development chapter of this edition features a discussion of the health habits of Canadian teens, including nutrition, exercise, and sleep patterns. The text provides updated information on physical changes to the brain associated with puberty and adolescence, as well as on the increasing cognitive skills evidenced in this age group. In addition, we discuss the paradox of these increasing cognitive skills co-existing with the high levels of risky behaviours found among many teens. Specifically, we highlight the work of Angela Prencipe and her colleagues on “hot” versus “cool” cognitive tasks.

In the Cognitive Changes chapter, we examine the factors—such as poverty, stigma, and inappropriate assessment methods—that may underlie the differential cognitive performance of some Aboriginal children. As well, we outline the Canadian work being carried out on self-regulation in the classroom.

The Families chapter includes descriptions of the variety of families found in Canada—including single-parent families, same-gender-parented families, and families with a transsexual parent or parents—and the challenges some of these families face. There is also a recognition that families differ from one cultural group to another, a significant variable in Canada’s multicultural population. The importance of authoritative parenting, regardless of culture, is also discussed in this chapter.

In addition to parents and siblings, peers represent an important influence in the development of teens. The Peers chapter features Leanna Closson’s work on peer status and aggression, as well as the growing problem of bullying (and cyberbullying) among Canadian adolescents.

School plays a central role in the life of adolescents. Our School and Work chapter presents research on school and class size in a Canadian context, along with research about student and parent perceptions of Toronto’s “black-focused” school. The chapter also highlights the strategies that are being employed to increase school engagement and connectedness, particularly for Aboriginal youth.

Another central influence in the lives of teens is, of course, media. The text gives an overview of Canadian teens’ use of media, including video games, and the potential pitfalls associated with excessive use of such technology. Canadian teens are embedded in the broader community, but the context of any particular teen may involve marginalization owing to ethnocultural status, poverty, or both.

A further challenge for Canadian teens is the pervasive influence of gender roles, and how gender stereotypes affect how teens view themselves. And in our discussion of identity development, we present research showing that Canadian teens with a strong sense of their ethnocultural identity fare better than those teens who lack this connection.

The Intimacy chapter includes an examination of the factors related to dating violence. As well, we discuss the relationship difficulties of shy and/or rejection-sensitive teens. Canada’s success in reducing teenage pregnancy rates is also highlighted, along

with the challenges represented by the relatively high rates of some sexually transmitted infections. We present research demonstrating the continuing stigmatization of GLBTQ youth, along with the many initiatives that schools and communities are embracing in an effort to reduce such stigmatization.

In the Challenges chapter we examine substance-abuse rates among teens, as well as the kinds of problems that result in either externalizing or internalizing behaviours among Canadian youth. Finally, in the Positive Prospects chapter, we feature research on those factors that not only encourage avoidance of negative outcomes but also allow teens to thrive.

## KEY THEMES

Two overarching themes are explored throughout this text:

1. Adolescent development involves individual, social, and cultural systems.
2. Positive adolescent development is the norm, even though the media—and research—frequently concentrate on adolescent problems.

Adolescent development does not occur in a vacuum or laboratory, and so this text takes an ecological systems approach to adolescence. For the individual, adolescence brings fundamental changes in biological, cognitive, and self systems, each of which acts upon, and is acted upon, by the others. The individual in turn is situated within embedded social contexts, especially the parents and family, the peer group, the school, the community, and the larger culture. Each of these contexts is potentially affected by the others and by relationships among the others. For example, community beliefs about a particular school can affect a student's self-esteem and cognitive achievement, the peers the student interacts with, and parental commitment to the school and to learning itself. All of these may in turn tend to confirm or disconfirm the community beliefs.

The adolescent experience today is profoundly affected by cultural diversity and globalization. Some aspects of adolescence are universal or nearly so, but many others are specific to a culture, subculture, or social group. In Canadian society, ethnic diversity has become more a norm than an exception. Adolescents everywhere are affected by the tensions between the specifics of their cultural and historical setting and the influences of globalization. It may seem at first glance that an unbridgeable gulf separates a snowboarding teen in Whistler, a 12-year-old militia member in Somalia, a street kid in a Rio de Janeiro favela, and a teenage bride in Sri Lanka. All, however, represent important aspects of adolescence at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The concept of stage–environment fit is also central to the book's portrayal of adolescence. As adolescents themselves change, so do their relationships with parents, peers, proximate institutions, and the culture. The same parental approach, for example, is likely to meet with very different responses from adolescents of ages 13, 15, and 17. Often there is a mismatch between adolescent stage and environment. For instance, just as young adolescents begin to strive for greater autonomy and to look for nonparental adult models, they are transferred into schools that typically put greater stress on rules and authority and greater distance between students and teachers.

Much of the research on adolescence, like much of the discussion of adolescence in the media, concentrates on adolescent problems—from drug use, early sexual behaviour, and delinquency to eating disorders, depression, and suicide. Certainly it is vital to gain an understanding of these problems and to learn about ways to treat or prevent them. It is at least as crucial, however, to emphasize positive development. How can parents, teachers, and community leaders help adolescents become confident, productive, caring, and involved participants in the life of their family, school, neighbourhood, and society? These questions are of critical importance to us all.

## GUIDING PHILOSOPHY

This text implements learning pedagogy that is intended to help students get the most out of their study of adolescent development. The guiding philosophy is that students learn best when they

1. Practise active learning and deep processing.
2. Focus on the practical applications of what they are studying.
3. Think critically and become educated consumers of the research.

Students derive greater educational benefits from active learning and deep processing. When we think about material in more meaningful ways and associate it with information that is already encoded in long-term memory, we remember it better. The more deeply new material (ideas, concepts, facts) is processed, the more likely it is to be recalled later. One of the most effective forms of deep processing is to link new information to oneself. When we engage with new facts and ideas and bring them into relationship with our own personal experience, we give them longer, more complete consideration and organize them more fully. This text makes a strong effort to foster deep processing through illustrative examples that connect to students' life experiences.

An understanding of adolescence has important practical applications. Students enroll in adolescence courses for reasons that range from intellectual curiosity and a desire for self-knowledge to a need to satisfy departmental requirements. A great many do so because they aspire to careers working with adolescents—as teachers, counsellors, providers of social services, and in other ways. Many also anticipate being parents of adolescents some day and hope that what they learn will help them when the time comes. Throughout the book, the implications that concepts and findings hold for the reader's actual practice are pointed out in the body of the text and explored in greater depth in special boxes.

Students benefit by becoming educated consumers of social science. The media continually trumpet astonishing theories, remarkable discoveries, and putative facts about adolescence. How can an ordinary layperson keep a sense of balance under all this buffeting? One important tool is a broad knowledge of the theories and basic findings in the field, which helps the student distinguish the truly new and significant from the faddish. Acknowledging the complexity of the questions that still need to be answered reminds students to be critical consumers of both media reports of teen behaviour and research on adolescence.

## STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The way the book is organized grows directly out of its emphasis on an ecological systems approach.

**Part One: Introduction** surveys the territory and provides a foundation for the rest of the book. *Chapter 1: Adolescence: Understanding the Past and the Present, and Planning for the Future* introduces students to the history of adolescence and describes demographic, economic, and social factors that affect its present and future.

**Part Two: Adolescent Changes** presents the biological, physical, and cognitive developments that are common to adolescents in general. *Chapter 2: Puberty and Physical Development* describes the hormonal, physical, and sexual changes that help define adolescence and the ways individual adolescents, their parents, and their culture respond to these changes. *Chapter 3: Cognitive Changes* explores approaches to understanding adolescent thinking that include Piaget's cognitive developmental theory and its recent variants, information processing, ideas about intelligence, and metacognition.

**Part Three: Adolescent Contexts** moves outward from the individual adolescent to the successively embedded contexts in which development takes place. *Chapter 4: Families* explores the position of adolescents within the family system, the effects of parenting styles, attachment, and conflict, the role of siblings, and family diversity in today's society. *Chapter 5: Peers* examines the growing importance of peers and peer influence during

adolescence, explores the nature of social status and popularity, and describes the evolution of social groups such as cliques and crowds. *Chapter 6: School and Work* examines the effects of educational policy, school size and climate, teacher attitudes and expectations, racial segregation, and school choice; describes the role of extracurricular programs and activities; and weighs some pluses and minuses of teen employment. *Chapter 7: Community, Culture, and the Media* discusses the ways in which community values and cultural attitudes affect adolescent development; examines the effects of minority status, social class, and poverty; and describes the rapidly growing impact of media on adolescents.

**Part Four: Adolescent Issues** takes a detailed look at three social/psychological issues that assume particular importance during adolescence. *Chapter 8: Gender* describes current ideas about gender development, examines gender differences in adolescence, and discusses how different social contexts influence gender. *Chapter 9: Identity* discusses the ways adolescence promotes the development of the self-concept, self-esteem, and a coherent sense of identity; and describes the evolution of moral judgment and a moral identity. *Chapter 10: Intimacy* considers three crucial aspects of personal involvements during adolescence: close friendships, romantic relationships, and sexuality.

**Part Five: Adolescent Challenges and Prospects** presents both the difficulties and the positive opportunities that are characteristic of adolescence. *Chapter 11: Challenges* examines the causes, prevalence, and ways of dealing with externalizing problems, such as delinquency and substance use, and internalizing problems, including eating problems, depression, and suicide. *Chapter 12: Positive Prospects* discusses the importance of coping and resilience, examines the internal and external resources that promote thriving and positive development, and considers the question of how adolescents can become happier.

## FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Each chapter includes special features designed to reinforce major themes of the book and make it easier for students to absorb and master the material.

**Applications in the Spotlight** presents concrete, practical suggestions for putting the ideas and findings of adolescent research to use in the family, the classroom, and the community.

### APPLICATIONS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

#### Supporting Parents

Parents and teens do have conflicts during the teen years, even if it is not the time of “Storm and Stress” it was once thought to be. How might the parents of teens get help? Parents of young children are frequently in contact with one another, and may even form close friendships. Parenting advice is frequently sought, or dispensed, even sometimes without a request being made for advice! Parents of teens, however, do not generally plan their child’s play dates anymore, and so may be in less contact with other parents of teens.

The guidelines for behaviour are a bit less clear as well. A toddler should not be allowed to do dangerous things. Teens however, want, and need, to branch out and become more independent. Should you allow your teen to take the transit system to a sketchy area downtown on a Friday night to hang with friends, or not? And if you say no and your teen goes anyway, what should you do?

Many communities offer support and resources to parents who feel overwhelmed by the challenges of parenting, and some of these services are targeted at the parents of teens. One example is the Parent Support Association of

Calgary. Operating for over 30 years, the PSA offers support specifically for the parents of teens, in several ways.

Parents can attend a Foundation Session, which reviews the PSA groups available, the expectations of group members, and the types of skills that can be learned in the groups.

The groups themselves are led by a parent mentor, and are structured so that parents can learn to identify the central challenges they are having as parents, and with the group’s support, start to strategize about how they might approach these issues.

Parents can also attend more intensive Parenting Workshops on a variety of topics, or call in for support from other parents, or to get a referral for professional counselling services.

Research has shown that social support is an important factor in ensuring that parents, especially those under a lot of stress, are able to parent effectively (McConnell, Brietkreuz, & Savage, 2011). The PSA’s parent mentor approach may make it a very approachable source of assistance with parenting teens, and provide the social support that some parents may be missing.

**RESEARCH IN THE SPOTLIGHT****Attachment, Bullies, and the Bullied**

In this chapter we have been examining the role of parenting in the lives of teens. In the next chapter, we will discuss the serious issue of bullying between peers. Is there any link between the relationship between parents and teens and the relationships between teens?

A great deal of research on attachment seems to indicate that there are strong links between the attachment status of the child or teen, and how they interact with others, including peers (Moss, St. Laurent, Dubois-Comtois, & Cyr, 2005). What about the specific behaviour of bullying? So far, research in this area has been contradictory (Coleman, 2003; Troy & Sroufe, 1987), and has not really been focused on attachment to the primary caretaker, nor has it included a look at being a bully and/or a victim of bullying (Walden & Beran, 2010).

Laura W. Walden and Tanya Beran (2010) at the University of Calgary measured attachment and bullying behaviours in a sample of boys and girls in Grades 4, 6, and 8 in a middle-class school. The students were asked to fill out a questionnaire called the Inventory of Parent and

Peer Attachment (IPPA; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). This questionnaire measures how students feel about their trust, communication, and anger in relationships, in this case with their mothers or other primary caregiver. The students were also asked about bullying and victimization (Olewus, 1996).

Results showed that students with good attachment to their mothers, or to another primary caretaker, were much less likely to be bullied, and less likely to bully others. Specifically, lots of communication and trust, and low levels of alienation, were related to less bullying and less being bullied. These relationships were found at all grade levels, and for both boys and girls. The implication of these findings is that parents need to be included in efforts to reduce bullying. In addition to having parents coordinate with the school with regard to supporting bullied students and following through on consequences for the bullies, support can be offered to parents so that they better understand that an improved parent-child relationship may be the best protection for their child from bullies or from becoming a bully.

**Research in the Spotlight** examines in detail a recent study on the chapter topic—the rationale for carrying it out, the methodological concerns, the results, and the implications of those results. This gives students practice in reading and interpreting empirical research while reminding them that our knowledge of adolescence, like adolescence itself, is constantly evolving.

**Chapter Outlines and Learning Objectives** at the beginning of each chapter, to give students a preview of what they will be reading about and what questions to keep in mind as they read.

**Marginal Definitions** of key terms, which are also set off in bold type within the text, listed at the end of each chapter, and compiled into a Glossary in the back of the book.

**Summing Up**, brief descriptions of the content of major sections of chapters, to permit students to review material as they go along.

**Connect the Dots**, thought-provoking exercises linked to the topics under consideration.

**WHAT'S NEXT? EMERGING ADULTHOOD****Cognition in Emerging Adulthood**

Areas of the brain related to cognitive and emotional functioning are still changing during emerging adulthood (Burnett & Blakemore, 2009; Luna, Padmanabhan, & O'Hearn, 2010). In addition, there is evidence that further development takes place in terms of cognitive activities. In particular, there is evidence of a cognitive stage beyond Piaget's formal operations, termed postformal thinking (Salthouse, 2012). This type of thinking is characterized by both the ability to use logic and a related but separate ability to reason in a more pragmatic way. Emerging adults, through life experience or education, have learned that some problems cannot be solved using logic, and instead

start to use dialectical thought in those situations (Basseches, 2005). Each side of the problem may have merit and must be examined as a possibility, and in the end neither is guaranteed to have a better outcome than the other. In addition, as they get older, individuals may rely more on heuristics, or mental short cuts, than on a purely logical process (Albert & Steinberg, 2011), and consider more carefully the influence of context on the problem to be solved (Mascalco & Fischer, 2010). Some researchers have proposed that it is during emerging adulthood that wisdom is obtained, although perhaps not by everyone (Baltes et al., 2006; Sternberg, 2011).

**What's Next? Emerging Adulthood**, a capsule discussion of the research on emerging adulthood in selected topic areas. Relationships with parents and romantic partners, sexual behaviour, cognitive advances, and development of a meaningful work role as part of identity are all highlighted. This gives students, many of whom are just entering their own emerging adulthood phase, a better idea of the issues and challenges they are facing. It also allows them to see connections between the development that occurs in adolescence and the outcomes in adulthood.

**Chapter Summaries** at the end of each chapter that are keyed to the Learning Objectives at the beginning of the chapter.

## SUPPLEMENTS FOR INSTRUCTORS

The following supplements are available to qualified instructors.

### Printable Test Item File

Direct input from the authors forms the basis for the text's MyTest. Multiple-choice and essay questions include both informational and conceptual questions, keyed to page numbers in each chapter. The test bank contains approximately 700 questions—each referenced to the relevant page in the textbook.

### MyTest

([www.PearsonMyTest.com](http://www.PearsonMyTest.com))

Pearson MyTest is a powerful assessment-generation program that helps instructors easily create and print quizzes and exams. Instructors can do this online, allowing flexibility and the ability to efficiently manage assessments at any time. Instructors can easily access existing questions and edit, create, and store using simple drag-and-drop and Word-like controls. Each question comes with information on its level of difficulty and related page number in the text, mapped to the appropriate learning objective. The MyTest is available in electronic format with an integrated suite of test creation tools for Windows and Macintosh. For more information go to [www.PearsonMyTest.com](http://www.PearsonMyTest.com).

### Instructor's Manual

Prepared with direct input from the authors, the Instructor's Manual includes detailed outlines, summaries, learning objectives, suggestions for class discussion, and writing topics for each chapter.

### PowerPoint Presentations

Prepared with direct input from the authors, the PowerPoint slides provide a brief lecture outline for each chapter.

### Image Library

The image library includes all figures and tables from the text.

### peerScholar

Firmly grounded in published research, peerScholar is a powerful online pedagogical tool that helps develop your students' critical and creative thinking skills. peerScholar facilitates this through the process of creation, evaluation, and reflection. Working in stages, students begin by submitting a written assignment. peerScholar then circulates their work for others to review, a process that can be anonymous or not depending on your preference. Students receive peer feedback and evaluations immediately, reinforcing their learning and driving the development of higher-order thinking

skills. Students can then re-submit revised work, again depending on your preference. Contact your Pearson representative to learn more about peerScholar and the research behind it.

## CourseSmart

CourseSmart goes beyond traditional expectations to provide instant, online access to the textbooks and course materials students need. And even as students save money, you can save time and hassle with a digital eTextbook that allows you to search for the most relevant content at the very moment you need it. Whether it's evaluating textbooks or creating lecture notes to help students with difficult concepts, CourseSmart can make life a little easier. See how when you visit [www.coursesmart.com/instructors](http://www.coursesmart.com/instructors).

## SUPPLEMENTS FOR STUDENTS

### MyVirtualTeen

MyVirtualTeen is an interactive web-based simulation that allows you to raise a child from birth to age 18, with a specific focus on the teenage years, and monitor the effects of your parenting decisions over time. This engaging application helps you apply the key concepts that you are learning in your adolescent development class. Visit MyVirtualTeen at [www.myvirtualteen.com](http://www.myvirtualteen.com).

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CourseSmart goes beyond traditional expectations—providing instant, online access to the textbooks and course materials you need at an average savings of 60 percent. With instant access from any computer and the ability to search your text, you'll find the content you need quickly, no matter where you are. And with online tools like highlighting and note-taking, you can save time and study efficiently. See all of the benefits at [www.coursesmart.com/students](http://www.coursesmart.com/students).

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Philip and Karen Smith/Iconica/Getty Images

# Adolescence

## Understanding the Past and the Present, and Planning for the Future

### OUTLINE

#### THEMES AND APPROACHES

Structure of This Book

Learning Strategies

#### WHO IS AN ADOLESCENT?

Two Sorts of Transitions

Phases and Tasks

#### ADOLESCENCE ACROSS HISTORY

Ancient Times

20th-Century Teens

Teens Today

#### ADOLESCENTS IN A GLOBAL AGE

Old, Young, and In Between

A Shrinking Globe

Signals to the Crowd

#### WHERE IS ADOLESCENCE GOING?

Schooling for All?

Moving to the City

Virtuous and Vicious Cycles

The Challenge of HIV/AIDS

Survival and Growth

#### THEORIES ABOUT ADOLESCENCE

Biological and Evolutionary Theories

Psychoanalytic Theories

Cognitive Theories

Learning and Social Cognitive Theories

Social and Anthropological Theories

Ecological and Developmental Systems Theories

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1.1** KNOW...the major themes of the book.
- 1.2** UNDERSTAND...what strategies will help you gain more from using the book.
- 1.3** UNDERSTAND...how normative transitions differ from idiosyncratic transitions.
- 1.4** ANALYZE...the three phases of adolescence and how they are linked to different tasks or goals.
- 1.5** KNOW...the major similarities and differences between adolescence in earlier times and today.
- 1.6** KNOW...the major issues teens face today.
- 1.7** ANALYZE...how the shape of a society's population pyramid affects its adolescents.
- 1.8** KNOW...what is meant by globalization.
- 1.9** UNDERSTAND...why teens find it important to be in on current fashions.
- 1.10** ANALYZE...the benefits and dangers of urbanization.
- 1.11** UNDERSTAND...how virtuous and vicious cycles work.

- 1.12** ANALYZE...how the HIV pandemic has affected adolescents in different parts of the world.
- 1.13** UNDERSTAND...what adolescents need to survive and flourish.
- 1.14** KNOW...what assumptions biological and evolutionary theories make about development.
- 1.15** UNDERSTAND...what psychoanalytic theorists see as the primary tasks of adolescence.
- 1.16** UNDERSTAND...what aspects of adolescent development are the greatest concern of cognitive theories.
- 1.17** UNDERSTAND...where learning and social cognitive theories expect to find the major source of influence on behaviour.
- 1.18** KNOW...the central focus of social and anthropological theories of adolescence.
- 1.19** ANALYZE...how adolescents interact with the contexts and influences that affect them.

This first chapter introduces the book, but it is not really necessary to introduce you to adolescence. After all, adolescence is a subject you know a good deal about already. You went through adolescence yourself, whether recently or not so recently. You watched others—friends, siblings, schoolmates, neighbours—go through it. You took in countless articles, stories, movies, and television shows that focused on the trials, pains, perils, and—now and then—the joys of adolescence.

Now you have decided to study adolescence in a more formal and structured way. You want to find out what researchers and scholars know or theorize about the subject. Some of what you are about to learn will fit with and expand on ideas and impressions you already have. Some will surprise you. And some will make you think about what you already know in a different way.

The English word *adolescent* comes from exactly the same Latin root as the word *adult*: *adolescere*, to grow up. However, there is an important grammatical difference between the two terms. *Adult* comes from the verb form that means something that happened in the past and is done with. Adults, in other words, are in the state of having grown up. The verb form of *adolescent*, on the other hand, indicates a process that is actively going on right now, in the present. Adolescents are moving *toward* adulthood. They are growing up. The dynamism that is such a feature of adolescence, the sense of movement and possibilities yet to be achieved, is captured in the word itself.

In the course of this chapter, one question we take up is how to define adolescence. What sorts of characteristics and changes matter? How can we best describe and understand the transitions adolescents go through? How are the successive phases of adolescence different? We next examine the ways adolescents have been thought of and dealt with in various societies across the centuries. Why did some scholars call the 20th century in North America the *Age of Adolescence*? What about teens today? How have they been affected by the changing structure of the family, the growing influence of peers, and conflicting attitudes about sexuality?

We will also examine some factors that will have a major impact on adolescents in the coming years, not just in Canada but throughout the world. These include population changes, movement from the countryside to the city, migration across national boundaries, and the globalization of industry, entertainment, education, and culture. The increasingly rapid pace of change means that today's preschoolers will reach adolescence in a world that is vastly different from today's world in ways both predictable and unpredictable. What will they need to help them grow up into healthy, constructive adults? And what are the chances that those needs will be met?

Finally, what are the general psychological theories that help us to organize our findings about adolescence?

To get started, we will first look at the major themes of this book, explain how it is organized, and suggest some ways to use it more effectively.

## THEMES AND APPROACHES

As we explore the many aspects of adolescence, you will notice several related themes that help give the material structure and shape.

On the most basic level, we make use of an **ecological systems** approach to adolescence (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Lerner, 2006). As adolescents go through fundamental changes in their biological, cognitive, and self-systems, each of these sets of changes acts on, and is acted on, by the others. For example, the physical changes of puberty affect how children think of themselves. These changes in self-image may affect their diet and exercise patterns, which in turn affect their physical development. This theory is described in more detail later in this chapter.

Of course, teens are not simply individuals and they do not develop in isolation. They are situated within a series of interlocking *social contexts*. These contexts include their parents and family, peers, school, community, perhaps their own ethnocultural orientation, and the larger culture (Ferguson, Kasser, & Jahng, 2011; Jack, 2011). Each of these contexts may be affected by the others and by the relationships among the others. For example, what if people in a specific geographical area are convinced that certain local schools are superior or inferior? These attitudes are likely to be passed along to students in those schools and affect their self-esteem, ambitions, and achievements. Such judgments may also have an impact on the makeup of the student body, the educational expectations of teachers, the level of public funding, and the degree of parental commitment. In turn, these factors may interact to produce superior results in the one case and inferior results in the other, in this way confirming the preconceptions of the community.

The concept of **stage–environment fit** (Eccles, 2004) is also an important tool for understanding adolescence. As adolescents themselves change, so do their relationships with parents, peers, social institutions, and the culture (Eccles & Roeser, 2009). The same parental approach, for example, is likely to meet with very different responses from adolescents aged 13, 15, or 17. Often there is some degree of mismatch between an adolescent’s stage and environment. For instance, just as young teens are starting to seek more autonomy and to look for nonparental adult models, they often shift to schools that typically put more stress on rules and authority and greater distance between students and teachers.

The adolescent experience today is profoundly affected by **cultural diversity** (especially in cities) and **globalization**. Although some aspects of adolescence are universal, or nearly so, many others vary according to a teen’s culture, subculture, or social group. In Canadian society, ethnocultural diversity has become more a norm than an exception. Adolescents everywhere are affected by the clash between their particular cultural ideas and customs on the one hand, and those promoted by an increasingly global information and media culture on the other (Finn, Nybell, & Shook, 2010). This book focuses primarily on adolescents in Western cultures, but not at the expense of neglecting those of other backgrounds.

An understanding of adolescence has important practical **applications**. You may be among the many students who take a course in adolescent psychology with the thought of one day working with adolescents as a teacher, counsellor, provider of social services, or in other ways. You may also think that one day you may be the parent of an adolescent and hope that what you learn now will help you when that time comes. Throughout this book, the concepts and findings we learn about often have real practical implications for teens and those who deal with teens. These are pointed out in the text and explored in greater depth in special boxes called *Applications in the Spotlight*.

As students, we also benefit by becoming **educated consumers** of social science. The media continually trumpet astonishing theories, remarkable discoveries, and supposed facts about adolescence. How can we keep our sense of balance under all this buffeting? One important tool is gaining a broad understanding of the theories and basic findings in the field. This can help us separate what is really new and

**1.1 KNOW...**  
the major themes of the book.

### Ecological systems

The interacting structures both within the adolescent, such as physical, cognitive, and emotional functions, and in the adolescent’s surroundings, such as family, peers, school, and the community.

### Stage–environment fit

The ways developmental changes in an adolescent interrelate with changes in the adolescent’s social environment, such as parental rules and demands.

### Cultural diversity

The variety of customs, beliefs, expectations, and behaviours that are typical of adolescents from different cultural and ethnocultural backgrounds.

### Globalization

The tendency for economic, social, and political events and trends in one part of the world to have an impact on lives in other, distant parts of the world.

### Applications

Ways of taking knowledge about adolescents that is derived from research and putting it to practical use.

### Educated consumers

Those whose understanding of the field of adolescence and of the ways knowledge is gathered allows them to judge the strengths and weaknesses of new findings.

significant from what is simply faddish. Just as important, we need to know how research on adolescence really works. What are the strengths and pitfalls of different methods? When are we on safe ground drawing personal or policy implications from research results?

Much of the research on adolescence, like much of the discussion of adolescence in the media, concentrates on adolescent problems, from drug use, early sexual behaviour, and delinquency to eating disorders, depression, and suicide. It is certainly important to understand these problems and to discover ways to treat or prevent them. It is at least as crucial, however, to learn more about the potential for **positive development**. How can parents, teachers, and community leaders help adolescents become confident, productive, caring, and engaged participants in the life of their family, school, neighbourhood, and society?

## Structure of This Book

The way this book is organized reflects its ecological systems orientation. In Part One, we first take an overview of the history of adolescence and the social factors that affect its present and future. We then examine the principal theories of adolescence. Part Two details developments that adolescents experience in their biological, physical, and cognitive systems.

The four chapters of Part Three move outward from individual adolescents to describe their ecological contexts. While parents and family are the most intimate, adolescence sees a rapid growth in the importance of the peer group as well. The lives of most Canadian adolescents are shaped by school, but many also enter the world of work. Beyond these immediate contexts, the community, the culture, and the media all exert a powerful, and often underestimated, influence.

The physical, cognitive, and social transitions of adolescence bring a number of psychosocial issues into high relief. The chapters in Part Four explore some of the most pressing of these. How does gender affect the personality, behaviour, hopes, and prospects of adolescents? What goes into developing a sense of personal identity and moral values? How do adolescents deal with concerns about intimacy and sexuality?

Part Five, like Part Two, consists of two chapters. The first examines psychosocial problems in adolescence, which include depression, eating disorders, aggression, delinquency, and drug use. How common are they? What are their sources? How can they be treated or prevented? The final chapter looks at the other face of adolescence. Why are some adolescents able to cope with and overcome difficulties that leave others defenceless? What are the roots of optimism and hope? What resources in the home, the school, and the community can help adolescents find the strength to imagine, and to create, a life worth living?

**1.2 UNDERSTAND...**  
what strategies will help you gain more from using the book.

### Positive development

The study of factors that encourage adolescents to develop in a positive direction.

### Active learning

Interactions with new information, for example by rephrasing material or trying to explain it to someone else.

### Deep processing

The association of new information with material that is already in memory, especially material that has personal relevance.

## Learning Strategies

Another approach we take in this textbook is to focus on learning strategies. Research has shown that we learn more and retain it better when we engage in **active learning**, or interacting with new information in some way. Reading an interesting or important passage is good; so is underlining or highlighting the key words or phrases. But pausing to think about what a passage said and then trying to put the contents into your own words is better. Better still is making the effort to tell others about it in a way they will understand. Encourage them to ask you questions. You may be surprised and somewhat humbled by how much you thought you remembered and didn't, but afterward you will retain the material much better.

A related strategy for learning is called **deep processing**, or associating new information with material in memory. When we think about material in more meaningful ways and associate it with information that is already stored in our memory, we remember it better. And the more deeply new material is processed, the more likely it is to be recalled later. One of the most effective forms of deep processing is to link

new information to ourselves. When we engage with new concepts or facts and bring them into relationship with our own personal experience, we give them longer, more complete consideration and organize them more fully. As they become more relevant to us, they also become easier to incorporate into our thinking and beliefs.

Sprinkled throughout this book are suggested exercises entitled *Connect the Dots*. These exercises are designed to encourage active learning and deep processing. When you come to one, stop, consider it, and let your thoughts go in the direction it points. In this way you will think actively and critically about the material. You will begin to draw connections between what you hope to learn and what you already know from your own life experiences.

## WHO IS AN ADOLESCENT?

At first, it may seem odd to even ask who is an adolescent. Don't we all know the answer? Yes, of course, but the closer we look at the matter, the more complicated it becomes. Most observers would agree that adolescence is linked to the biological changes of puberty, but what then? Is a 12-year-old girl who has had her first period an adolescent? How about a 9-year-old girl who has entered her growth spurt and started to develop breasts? Or a 14-year-old boy who still has the size, body contours, and smooth cheeks of a prepubescent child?

Suppose, instead, we turn our attention to social and economic factors. If anything, that only adds to the confusion. What do we call a 10-year-old who works full time and contributes to the economic survival of her family? A child? An adult? How about a 17-year-old who is a parent and a wage earner? Is she or he an adult? Then how about a 22-year-old who goes to school full time, lives at home, and is supported entirely by his or her parents?

If we look to the law for an answer to our question, we may end up even more puzzled than before. In most provinces young people who want to get an introductory driver's licence or permit have to wait until they turn at least 14, or in many cases 16, and it may take several years more to obtain a full driver's licence. Even then they are not old enough to sign a contract to buy a car or take out insurance. They can get married and vote in elections at 18, but in most provinces they will not be able to buy beer legally until they turn 19. On the other hand, some who commit crimes are considered mature enough to be tried and punished as adults before they are old enough to vote or sign contracts.

Is there a way for us to make some sense of these contradictions? Maybe. A first step would be to keep in mind that adolescence is not something "out there" that we



Among preteens, some have already entered adolescence while others are not quite there yet.

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**TABLE 1.1** Some Ways of Defining the Age Boundaries of Adolescence

Orientation	From	To
Chronological age	11 or so	20 or so
Physical	Start of growth spurt	Full adult size
Sexual	Appearance of secondary sex characteristics	Ability to reproduce
Familial	Parents grant more freedom	Achievement of independence
Psychosocial	Beginning of quest for identity	Achievement of a sense of identity
Interpersonal	Shift in influence from family to peers	Achievement of intimacy with peers
Educational	Finish elementary school	Finish formal education
Social	Begin to date, enter work world	Leave home, get a job, enter steady relationship

can chase down, capture, dissect, and describe. Instead, it is a name we use to single out a particular segment of the lifespan. It distinguishes this part from those that come before and after. As a concept or category, *adolescence* helps us identify and think about what happens during these years. And like many of the concepts we use every day, it is much more sharply in focus at its centre. Toward the edges, it starts to get fuzzy. Unless we agree to make some arbitrary rule about where it begins and ends, we have to put up with the ambiguity that comes from overlapping (and sometimes conflicting) definitions. Some examples of these are given in Table 1.1.

**1.3 UNDERSTAND...**  
how normative transitions differ from idiosyncratic transitions.

## Two Sorts of Transitions

Each of the different definitions of adolescence in Table 1.1 represents a particular sort of *transition* that people go through between late childhood and early adulthood. A transition is a period of growth and change that is set off when something disturbs an earlier balance. The “something” may be biological, psychological, cultural, or physical (Riegel, 1976). The transitional phase continues until a new equilibrium is reached. For example, the adolescent growth spurt, which will be discussed in Chapter 2, levels off, or reaches equilibrium, as people reach adult size. They then stay pretty much that size for the rest of their lives. Because even the happiest transitions involve change and instability, they tend to be stressful as well. You may have been terrifically pleased and proud when you graduated from high school. But you may have also had some uncomfortable moments of wondering “What now?” and dreading the possible answers.

Of course, adolescents are not the only ones who have to deal with major transitions; every phase of life has some. The baby goes from total dependency to the relative autonomy of the preschool child. People in early adulthood enter a career, choose a partner, and start a family. Those in middle age adapt to the “empty nest,” the physical changes their increasing years bring, and the stresses of retirement. However, the transitions of adolescence are especially varied and far-reaching. They profoundly affect the physical, cognitive, emotional, sexual, and social realms and reach beyond these as well.

Some of these transitions are **normative**; that is, almost everybody in a particular culture can expect to go through them at more or less the same point in their lifespan. Entering puberty, going on a first date, and graduating from high school are examples of normative transitions for North American adolescents. Other transitions, while just as important, are more particular to the individual, or **idiosyncratic**. A serious illness, a move to a new town, a parental divorce—these do not happen to most adolescents, and if they do happen, it is at times that no one could have predicted in advance.

### Normative transitions

Changes that most adolescents go through at roughly the same point in their development, such as puberty and entering high school.

### Idiosyncratic transitions

Changes that take place at unpredictable points during adolescence, such as a parental divorce or a serious illness.

We should notice that a particular sort of transition may be normative at one stage of life, but idiosyncratic at others. Having to deal with the decline and death of a parent is a normative transition when it happens during middle age (Havighurst, 1972). Losing a parent while still an adolescent, however, would be an idiosyncratic transition. The impact would probably be greater, and would certainly be quite different, than if the loss had occurred at what is usually thought of as the normal point in the lifespan.

Even when a transition is normative for a particular stage, its timing can affect its impact. For example, in Chapter 2 we look at what happens when children enter puberty earlier or later than their peers. Another area where the timing of normative transitions alters their effects involves the different ways the school years can be structured. What difference does it make whether students leave elementary school after Grade 5 for middle school, stay another year before going into junior high, or continue through Grade 8 and go directly into high school? As we will see in Chapter 6, the way these transitions are timed has important effects on both self-esteem and academic performance (Eccles & Roeser, 2003; Seidman, Aber, & French, 2003; Simmons & Blyth, 1987).

## Phases and Tasks

When we consider the question “Who is an adolescent?” we should also look at the phases and tasks adolescents go through. Most Canadian students have a lot in common, whether they are in Grade 7 or 10 or in their first year of college or university. They are probably in school, unmarried, and financially dependent on their families. They use language, especially current slang expressions, in similar ways. They are familiar with the same music groups, clothing brands, and snack foods (though their opinions of them may vary). And they are all labelled, and generally treated, as adolescents.

In other ways, of course, they differ widely. This shows up clearly whether we look at physical size, strength, and endurance; at relationships with peers and family members; at personal concerns; or at a long list of other characteristics. Those at the younger end are still close to childhood, while those at the older end are nearly adults.

Because of these differences, those who study adolescence usually see the period as having different phases or stages. **Early adolescence** lasts from around 11 to 14. **Middle adolescence** goes from about 15 to 18. **Late adolescence** extends from around 19 to 22 or later. Some researchers see this last phase as merging into another stage called youth (Keniston, 1970) or emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2011). In our society and many other technological societies, these phases fit closely with the division of education into middle or junior high school, high school, and college or university.

According to Robert Havighurst (1972), every period of the life cycle in a given culture brings its own specific developmental tasks. These are particular skills, attitudes, and social functions that people are expected to acquire or grow into at that point in their lives. Developmental tasks are set partly by the course of physical and psychological development and partly by society’s demands.

During early adolescence, both the body and the mind go through rapid and dramatic changes. The most important **developmental tasks** involve adapting to these changes and the new social roles they bring, as well as accepting and learning to use one’s new physique. In middle adolescence, the focus shifts to achieving psychological independence from parents, developing the ability to have close friendships, and working toward meaningful intimate, possibly sexual, relationships. The developmental tasks of late adolescence include preparing for marriage and family life, considering an economic career, and acquiring a mature set of values. These preparations help the person answer the crucial questions, “Who am I? What will I do with my life?” (Arnett, 2011; Kroger, Marinussen, & Marciea, 2010).

**1.4 ANALYZE...**  
the three phases of adolescence and how they are linked to different tasks or goals.

### CONNECT the Dots...

Make a list of important transitions you remember from your own adolescence. Which ones were normative and which were idiosyncratic? Which of the normative transitions took place at about the same age for you as for your friends and classmates, and which were earlier or later? How do you think the timing affected the way you experienced the transitions?

#### Early adolescence

The period from ages 11 to 14 that roughly coincides with the middle or junior high school years.

#### Middle adolescence

The period from ages 15 to 18 that roughly coincides with the high school years.

#### Late adolescence

The period from ages 19 to 22 that roughly coincides with the college or university years, often referred to as emerging adulthood.

#### Developmental tasks

The skills, attitudes, and social functions that a culture expects members to acquire at a particular point in their lives.