

ADOLESCENCE



LAURENCE STEINBERG
THIRD EDITION

Third Edition

ADOLESCENCE

Laurence Steinberg

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*To
the Memory of
John P. Hill (1936-1988)*

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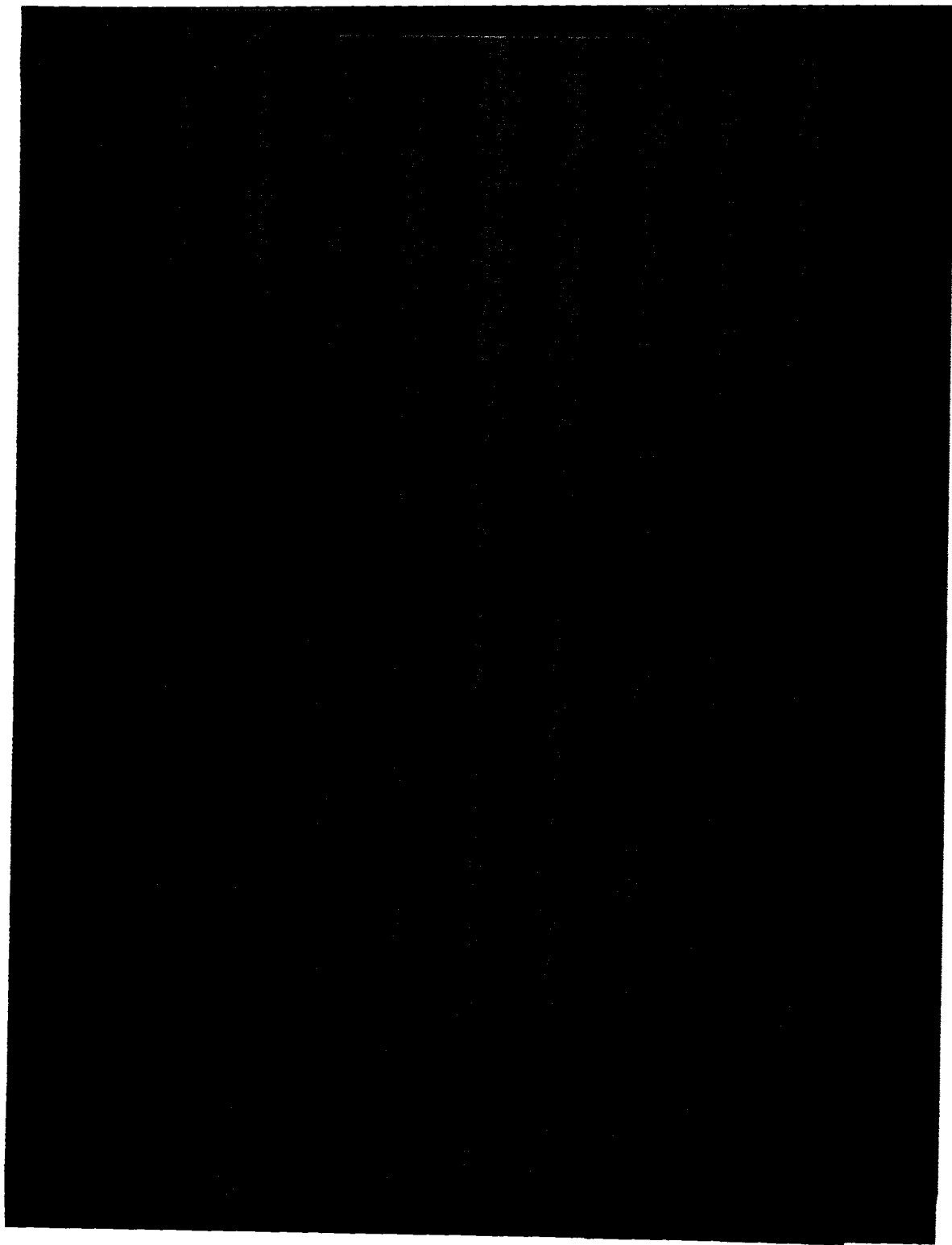
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Preface

■ he first time I was asked to teach a semester-long course in adolescent development in 1976 my graduate advisor—who at that time had been teaching adolescent development for ten years—took me aside. “Getting them to learn the stuff is easy,” John said, smiling. “Unfortunately, you’ll only have about three weeks to do it. It’ll take you ten weeks just to get them to *unlearn* all the junk they’re sure is true.”

He was right. I would present study after study documenting that turmoil isn’t the norm for most adolescents, that most teenagers have relatively good relationships with their parents, that adolescence isn’t an inherently stressful period, and so on, and my students would nod diligently. But five minutes later someone would tell the class about his or her cousin Billy, who had either run away from home, attempted to set his parents’ bedroom on fire, or refused to say a word to either his mother or his father for eight years.

As most instructors discover, teaching adolescent development is both exhilarating and exasperating. Every student comes into class an expert; for many of them, adolescence wasn’t very long ago. No good instructor wants to squelch the interest and curiosity most students bring with them when they first come into a class. But no conscientious teacher wants to see students leave with little more than the preconceptions they came in with and an even firmer conviction that social scientists who study human development are out of touch with the “real” world.

Urie Bronfenbrenner once wrote that the science of child development had found itself caught between “a rock and a soft place”—between rigor and relevance. Teachers of adolescent development find themselves in the same boat. How do you present scientific research on adolescent development in ways students find interesting, believable, relevant, and worth remembering when the term is over? I hope this book will help.

About the Third Edition

About the time of the publication of the first edition of *Adolescence*, the study of development during the second decade of the life cycle suddenly became a hot topic. New journals, devoted exclusively to the study of adolescence, began publication; established journals in the field of child and adolescent development

became deluged with submissions; more and more well-trained scholars specializing in the study of adolescent development appeared on the scene. During the four years between the publication of the first and second editions of this text, our understanding of adolescent development expanded dramatically. This expansion continued—even accelerated—between the publication of the second and third editions.

The third edition of this textbook reflects this new and more substantial knowledge base. Although the book's original organization has been retained, the material in each chapter has been significantly updated and revised. More than 400 new studies have been cited.

In some areas of inquiry, issues that were unresolved at the time of the earlier editions have been settled by newer and more definitive studies. In many cases, conclusions that had been tentatively accepted by the field were abandoned in favor of more contemporary views. For instance, when the first edition went to press, most scholars conceived of various aspects of problem behavior—drug use, unprotected sex, delinquency, for example—as being more or less independent phenomena, and theorists went out of their way to treat these issues under separate headings. By the time of the second edition, however, our theories of adolescent problem behavior had changed substantially, because the weight of the evidence began to indicate that the various problem behaviors associated with adolescence are indeed highly interrelated. New theories linking these problem areas to one another necessitated discussing them in a unified, coherent fashion. Accordingly, *Adolescence* was revised to reflect this change in perspective, and Chapter 13, “Psychosocial Problems in Adolescence,” devoted entirely to psychosocial problems was added. This chapter has been retained and substantially updated in the third edition.

In yet other areas, our knowledge has expanded so dramatically that several altogether new sections were added to the text. Readers will find expanded sections on hormonal influences on behavior, physical health, information processing, adolescent risk-taking, noncollege-bound adolescents (sometimes referred to as the “Forgotten Half”), the impact of divorce and remarriage, peer crowds, social competence training, student engagement, adolescent leisure activities, ethnic identity, individuation and ego development, attachment, AIDS, achievement attributions, eating disorders, and adolescent depression. In addition, the expansion of knowledge during the past decade about adolescents from minority groups has permitted increased coverage of the ways in which the course of development during adolescence is affected by ethnicity and culture. These additions, corrections, and expansions are natural responses to the development of new knowledge in a dynamic and growing scientific field.

This edition of *Adolescence* retains a feature that ran throughout the last edition. A box in each chapter considers in detail whether a particular pattern of adolescent development is different for boys and girls. I emphasize the word “whether” here, for in many instances the scientific evidence suggests that the similarities between the sexes are far more striking than the differences. Some

of the topics I examine are whether there are sex differences in the impact of early pubertal maturation, in cognitive abilities, in rates of depression, in relations with mothers and fathers, and in the nature of the transition into adulthood.

Adolescent Development in Context

If there is a guiding theme to *Adolescence*, it is this: adolescent development cannot be understood apart from the context in which young people grow up. Identity crises, generation gaps, and peer pressure may be features of adolescent life in contemporary society, but their prevalence has more to do with the nature of our society than with the nature of adolescence as a period in the life cycle. In order to understand how adolescents develop in contemporary society, students need first to understand the world in which adolescents live and how that world affects their behavior and social relationships. I have therefore devoted a good deal of attention in this book to the contexts in which adolescents live—families, peer groups, schools, and work settings—to how these contexts are changing, and to how these changes are changing the nature of adolescence.

Organization

The overall organization of this book has not changed since the last edition. Specifically, the chapters on psychosocial development during adolescence are separate from those on the context of adolescence. In this way, the psychosocial concerns of adolescence—identity, autonomy, intimacy, sexuality, and achievement—are presented as central developmental concerns that surface across, and are affected by, different settings.

This book contains an introduction and thirteen chapters, which are grouped into three parts: the *fundamental biological, cognitive, and social changes of the period* (Part One); the *contexts of adolescence* (Part Two); and *psychosocial development during the adolescent years* (Part Three). The introduction presents a model for studying adolescence developed by the late John Hill that serves as the organizational framework for the text. I have found the framework to be extremely helpful in teaching adolescent development, and I highly recommend using it. However, if the model does not fit with your course outline or your own perspective on adolescence, it is possible to use the text without using the framework. Each chapter is self-contained, so it is not necessary to assign chapters in the sequence in which they are ordered in the text. However, if you choose to use the model presented in the introduction, it may be helpful to follow the text organization.

Theory and Methods

One of the things you will notice about *Adolescence* when you thumb through the contents is that the ubiquitous chapters on “theories of adolescence,” and “research methods” are missing. The chapter titles are indeed missing, but the material isn’t. After teaching adolescence for many years, I am convinced that students seldom remember a word of the chapters on theory and methods because the information in them is presented out of context. Therefore, although there is plenty of theory in this text, it is presented when it is most relevant, in a way that shows students how research and theory are related. At the beginning of the chapter on intimacy, for example, Sullivan’s perspective on intimacy (and on psychosocial development in general) is presented, and then the relevant research is examined. Similarly, the research methods and tools employed in the study of adolescence are discussed in the context of specific studies that illustrate the powers—or pitfalls—of certain strategies. My approach has been to blend theory, research, and practical applications in a way that shows students how the three depend on each other. However, for students unfamiliar with theories in developmental psychology, I have included an Appendix that gives an overview of this material.

Acknowledgments

Revising a textbook at a time when so much new information is available is a challenge that requires much assistance. Over the years my students have suggested many ways in which the text might be improved, and I have learned a great deal from listening to them. I am especially grateful to Jill Wittmer, who ably tracked down much of the new research published in the four years between editions; and to several colleagues, including Ganie DeHart, State University of New York at Geneseo; Karen G. Howe, Trenton State College; Patricia A. Jarvis, Illinois State University; Narina Nunez Nightingale, University of Wyoming; Robert E. Schell, State University of New York at Oswego; O. Suthern Sims, Jr., Mercer University, Georgia; Peg Hull Smith, University of Toledo; and Dennis Thompson, Georgia State University, who carefully reviewed the third edition and suggested a variety of ways in which the text might be revised. I also wish to thank my colleagues at McGraw-Hill, Barry Fetterolf, Renee Leonard, and Jane Vaicunas, who helped develop the book. I am also grateful to the many colleagues across the country who took the time to write during the past seven years with comments and suggestions based on their first-hand experiences using *Adolescence* in the classroom.

Finally, thanks, as always, to Wendy and Benjamin.

Laurence Steinberg

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