

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.

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Luc Goossens
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1

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 increasingly 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 reshaped 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 fash-

ion) 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).

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2

Theories of adolescence

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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