

Introduction

Perspectives on Adolescents and Their Families

There is a great deal of interest, ambivalence, and confusion about today's adolescents and their role and place in contemporary society. Social commentators are perennially trying to understand "what makes adolescents tick," as a 2008 cover story in *Time Magazine* illustrates (Wallis, 2008, September 26). This question has been answered in many ways, in part due to scientific advances in knowledge, but also as a reflection of the various preoccupations of different eras. At different times, explanations for teenagers' behavior have focused on teenagers' character (or lack thereof), the negative influences of their peers, and raging hormones. Currently, as showcased in the *Time Magazine* article, explanations are being sought in adolescent brain functioning. The claim is that adolescents misbehave because their brains are not yet mature. But why does adolescent behavior raise these questions? After all, we would not expect to see a cover story focusing on "what makes adults tick." The question highlights a societal unease about the very nature of adolescence.

Popular Views of Adolescence

Some public opinion surveys reveal that prevailing attitudes towards teenagers are largely negative. Public Agenda, a national public interest research organization, conducted a multi-year national survey a decade ago to examine the American public's attitudes regarding the nation's youth. Duffet, Johnson, and Farkas (1999) reported that "[m]ost Americans are deeply disappointed with 'kids these days.'" More than seven in ten adults resort to words such as 'rude,' 'irresponsible,' and 'wild' to describe today's teens, and more than half also describe young children disapprovingly" (p. 3). According to Public Agenda's findings,

both parents and the general public agree in these observations. Less than 15% of randomly sampled adults participating in this survey viewed positive characteristics as good descriptors for today's youth. Moreover, a surprising 58% of the general public and 57% of the parents surveyed agreed with the statement that "today's children will make America a worse place or will make little difference" (Duffet et al., 1999, p. 3).

Yet, despite these negative findings, the survey also found that most Americans acknowledged that it is much harder to be a parent now than before. Nearly 70% of the adults sampled viewed abuse of drugs or alcohol and too much sex and violence on TV as very serious problems facing today's youth. In 1999, nearly half of the adults surveyed blamed the problems that teenagers face as due to irresponsible parents who fail to do their job. A smaller percentage – less than a third – blamed the fact that there are perilous circumstances for today's youth on social and economic pressures on parents. This represented an increase from the previous survey, conducted 2 years prior, in the proportion of Americans willing to hold parents rather than broader social and economic circumstances responsible for the situation of American youth.

Some prominent commentators and moral educators also have promoted negative perceptions of adolescents. For instance, the former United States Secretary of Education William Bennett (1992, 2001) argues that there is a rising tide of juvenile delinquency, homosexuality, adolescent drug and alcohol use, and teenage pregnancy and child bearing that reflects a breakdown in the moral fabric of society. No matter that current statistics do not bear this out. (In fact, for the past decade, rates of teenage child bearing and juvenile delinquency have been on the decline.) In Bennett's view, as well as in that of some other prominent moral educators (Lickona, 1991, 2004), adolescents are rejecting parents' moral values and resisting adult authority. In their opinion this has led to widespread societal moral decay.

Another way to explore whether parents are failing in their parental roles is to examine the advice child-rearing experts offer. Parent advice books both reflect and shape the way adolescents and their growth and development are perceived. Americans are enamored with self-help books. Bookstores devote voluminous shelf space to books by child-rearing experts dispensing advice on parenting. The findings of psychological research studies and of large opinion surveys are echoed in child-rearing books. Books devoted to the special perils of raising a teenager typically are located apart from the volumes devoted to rearing infants and younger children. This physical separation is paralleled by marked differences in the tenor of the titles. Books geared towards parents of newborns and infants generally convey the joy and optimism that parents feel at bringing a new baby into the family. Of course, there are many books reflecting the difficulties of parenting infants and explaining how to cope with lack of sleep, cranky babies and the like, but the overall tone of the books imparts a view of parenting a young child as a happy and rewarding experience, of the role of parents as facilitating

their children's creativity and development, and of babies as enjoyable, adaptive, and responsive.

The advice books for parents of children in middle childhood are more sober and straightforward. The majority of titles reflect a greater emphasis on how to discipline children and on how to manage their behavior effectively, as well as on how to instill self-esteem, good moral character and values, and positive attitudes. The books suggest that parenting during middle childhood is serious business, requiring effective and appropriate disciplinary techniques and behavior management strategies.

But child-rearing books on adolescence reflect a cultural anxiety that is not apparent in the books providing advice about parenting younger children. Whereas some of these books focus on more positive themes, a majority of the advice books on parenting teenagers portray adolescents as characteristically willful, unresponsive, and disrespectful. At the same time parents are depicted as bewildered, stressed, and overwhelmed. Both the tone and the titles depart from those of books about earlier ages, even when the same expert writes about different developmental periods. Thus one expert, who offers "magic hints for effective discipline" during middle childhood, views adolescence as something parents need to survive, as the title suggests: *Surviving your adolescents: How to manage and let go of your 13–18 year olds* (Phelan, 1998). And many more examples abound. The titles are catchy: *Teenagers! A bewildered parent's guide* (Caldwell, 1996); *Get out of my life – but first would you drive me and Cheryl to the mall? A parent's guide to the new teenager* (Wolf, 2002), *How to survive your teenager* (Gluck & Rosenfeld, 2005), and *"I'm not mad, I just hate you!" – A new understanding of mother daughter conflict* (Cohen-Sandler & Silver, 2000). Indeed, adolescence today has been considered so problematic that even one's pet's adolescence is to be feared – consider the recent addition to the canon, *Surviving your dog's adolescence: A positive training program* (Benjamin, 1993). But the sentiments these books convey about parenting an adolescent or engaging in a relationship with an adolescent are decidedly negative, even towards "normal," run-of-the-mill teenagers and their everyday problems. Why is there such a drastic shift in attitude, from the unconditional love and bonding reflected in the advice books to parents of babies to the ambivalence and hostility about parenting and parent–adolescent relationships expressed in these titles?

Of course, titles sell books, and, to some extent, the anxiety expressed in these titles, no matter how cute they are, may be "pitched" to match the prevailing beliefs about parenting and adolescence. But I believe these titles reflect more than shrewd marketing. If these books did not appeal to parents' concerns, the books would not sell. They would quickly disappear. And there is a market for such books, as their proliferation suggests. Beyond the clever titles, the contents of these books dwell on similar themes. They cover topics such as "how to bridge the gap," "emotional blackmail," "a different planet," "conflict," and "controlling your teenager."

There is a smaller but parallel set of advice books by child-rearing experts, which are geared to the teenage audience. Again, the titles are instructive. They are meant to convey the impression that parents' behavior is inscrutable and that parents are not listening to teenagers. Consider the following: *Teenage survival manual: Why parents act that way and other mysteries of mind and matter* (Coombs, 1998), and *Why can't we talk? What teens would share if parents would listen: A book for teens* (Trujillo, 2000). Are these titles accurate reflections of adolescents' views of their parents and of the adult world?

Adolescents' Views of Adolescence

When American teenagers are asked to characterize the general nature of adolescent-parent relationships, their responses are similar to those of adults. For instance, 60% of the teens surveyed in the Public Agenda national opinion poll – as compared to 58% of the general public and 57% of parents – also agreed with the statement that “today's children will make America a worse place or will make little difference.”

Surveying a sample of college youth, Grayson Holmbeck and John Hill (1988) found that, prior to taking a psychology course on the psychology of adolescence, most students strongly believed that adolescence is typically a time of storm and stress. More than half of them endorsed, as being often or more frequently true, views such as that adolescents have identity crises, that adolescents are rebellious, that adolescents frequently fight with their parents, that adolescents prefer to talk to peers rather than parents, and that adolescence is a stormy and stressful time. Indeed, this last item was endorsed as being often or more frequently true by nearly three quarters of the sample studied by Holmbeck and Hill (and more so by girls than by boys). They were asked about the typical frequency of fights with parents over trivial issues (such as how to dress, what kind of music to listen to, cleaning one's room, spending money, and doing homework) and over nontrivial issues (such as attitudes, basic and religious values, educational and occupational plans, and respect for parents). Students reported that the typical teenager has about seven fights per month with parents over each nontrivial issue and over nine fights per month with parents over each trivial issue. Therefore the participants in this survey believed that the average teenager has over 40 fights per week across the different issues sampled! And these were students who were barely out of adolescence themselves.

Despite this situation, students typically did not believe that parents are disappointed in their adolescent offspring, or that children do not cooperate with their parents. They also rejected the notion that there is a generation gap between parents and children. These findings led the researchers to conclude that college students tend to view adolescence as a developmental period characterized by

disruptions in relationships with parents rather than by a complete rejection of parents. Among the youth being queried, the perceptions were that college students viewed adolescence as a time typified by problems of identity, by a tendency to argue with parents, and by the rising influence of peers. This picture of adolescence as a relatively calm developmental period, characterized by generally positive relationships with parents, predominated over the view that adolescence typically involves oppositionalism and noncompliance. As we shall see in Chapter 2, this accords well with the conclusions drawn from recent psychological research to the effect that, when families are warm and close, moderate levels of conflict can have positive functions for adolescents' development.

Other research shows that, if adolescents and parents expect to have more "storm and stress" during adolescence, then this is what they experience (Buchanan & Hughes, 2009). When African American and European American 11- and 12-year-olds expected to be more involved in risk-taking and rebellious behavior during adolescence, they reported more of these behaviors in the next year than if they had not had these expectations. Likewise, early adolescents who expected to become more alienated from parents reported greater alienation later on. One year later, they reported less close and more conflictual relationships with their parents. They also were more susceptible to peer influence. The same was true for mothers; their perceptions became reality. Children and mothers who expected behaviors to be consistent with the stereotypes of adolescence as a period of storm and stress were more likely to experience those behaviors as the child transitioned to adolescence. This could reflect the fact that a perceptual bias towards the view that storm and stress behaviors are the norm stands a good chance of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Indeed, in her earlier research, Buchanan (2003; Whiteman & Buchanan, 2002) found that general expectations about storm and stress had an influence on adolescents' behavior above and beyond the specific characteristics of the child. To some extent, adolescents behaved in ways that were consistent with their own and their mothers' earlier expectations.

Recently, sociologist Reginald Bibby (2009) reported the results of a decades-long large-scale survey study of 15- to 19-year-old Canadian youth. Every 8 years for over 30 years, he surveyed different cohorts of teenagers on a range of topics that included values, sexuality, their troubles, and global issues. He also surveyed them about their attitudes towards their parents. He found that Canadian youth today reported stronger ties to their parents than any cohort in the past 30 years. The picture that emerged is that adolescence is a time of relative calm and respect for parents. Relatively fewer adolescents than in earlier cohorts (although still over 50%) thought that their parents misunderstood them. Reports of squabbling with parents, although still substantial, also decreased by comparison with findings from earlier cohorts. Bibby's interpretation was that today's parents are doing a better job of parenting. They have become better at balancing careers and families than earlier generations of parents were. They make more time for their children, and their teenagers are happier because of this.

But others have criticized Bibby's "good news" interpretation of these findings. Lisa Belkin, a parenting blogger for the *New York Times*, quotes others, who suggest that today's parents are pushovers (Belkin, 2009, May 14). Belkin believes that, instead of being more competent, parents are more indulgent than earlier generations of parents. They give in to every whim. Teenagers may be happier and enjoy their parents' company more because parents are not doing their job. They are not parenting their children effectively and not holding them to reasonable standards. The emergence of "helicopter parents" is another manifestation of this phenomenon. It provides further support for this more negative interpretation of Bibby's results. Helicopter parenting refers to parents who pay extremely close attention to the successes and failures of their children (typically, college students) and attempt to buffer them from negative experiences. Helicopter parents do not let their children grow up and handle difficult experiences on their own. Instead, these parents inappropriately continue to manage their children's lives right through college.

Anthropological Surveys of Adolescence and Parent-Adolescent Relationships

Reports of conflict and disagreements in parent-adolescent relationships are not limited to Americans, nor are they limited to industrialized countries. Schlegel and Barry (1991) drew on the standard cross-cultural sample of 186 pre-industrial societies worldwide (Murdock & White, 1969; Murdock & Wilson, 1980) to draw conclusions about the variations in adolescent-parent relationships. The societies included in the sample were selected to be broadly representative, and the samples ranged widely in terms of their geographic location, type of subsistence technique and social organization, and level of modernization. Cultures that had a great deal of close contact with other cultures were excluded, so that the effects of cultural diffusion could be minimized. Schlegel and Barry coded these largely ethnographic accounts for different facets of adolescent-parent relationships, which included amount of contact (for instance the proportion of waking time spent together), intimacy, and adolescent-parent conflict. They also examined many other issues pertinent to an understanding of adolescence across cultures.

Several aspects of their findings are illuminating. First, with the exception of girls in one of the societies, all of the cultures in the standard ethnographic sample distinguished a social phase of life for both boys and girls that is distinct from childhood and adulthood. Schlegel (2009) notes that social adolescence has a biological basis, its onset being signaled by the physical signs of puberty. However, the expectations for young people's behavior and the way they are treated during this period differ from the behavior and treatment of younger children and adults. This led her to conclude that a distinct social stage of adolescence, which is sepa-

rate from both childhood and adulthood, is a constant across cultures for both boys and girls. Schlegel notes: "Its absence rather than its presence requires explanation" (p. 574). Many but not all of the cultures had a specific label for this developmental period. But, according to Schlegel, the absence of a specific term does not negate the social reality of adolescence.

Second, Schlegel and Barry concluded that, overall, the ethnographies indicated that adolescents' relations with family members are generally harmonious – a conclusion that can be drawn about contemporary American families as well (Laursen & Collins, 2009; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). Conflict between generations was found to be widespread, but generally mild in intensity. Again, these findings accord well with what is generally known about conflict in contemporary American families with adolescents. The amount of obedience, deference, or subordination in parent–child relationships in different societies was not associated with either intimacy or the extent of conflict with mothers or fathers.

Nuclear-family households, where husbands and wives live with their unmarried offspring, are the norm in Western societies. But they are not the preferred form in much of the pre-industrial world. Extended family arrangements, where several married couples live together (most typically, married parents and two or more of their adult, married sons and their wives, plus all unmarried children), are more common among tribal people. Households consisting of married parents and an adult child are more common in peasant societies. Schlegel and Barry (1991) had expected to find that there would be less conflict in larger households than in nuclear ones. This is because, in the former, there may be a need to suppress conflict in order to maintain harmony and the father's authority. But this was not the case. Across the wide array of the societies they studied, the type of family structure was not associated with the amount of conflict they experienced.

Schlegel and Barry drew distinctions between antagonism and conflict. Conflict "can often be petty, the bickering or mild disobedience that indicates discordance but not necessarily fear or dislike" (1991, p. 61). In contrast, antagonism does imply fear and dislike and may arise because of different interests of adolescents and parents (for instance in the case of inheritance of property or succession). Specifically addressing the issue of parent–adolescent conflict, Schlegel and Barry wrote:

The impression one gets from reading many ethnographies is that conflict and antagonism between adolescents and parents in most traditional societies are not, in fact, serious problems. Adolescents do not struggle to individuate themselves from the family to the degree that Western young people do: their dependency on their families, or their spouses', will continue after they reach adulthood, and much of their economic well-being is likely to come from their contribution to group effort rather than from independent action. Nevertheless, conflict and antagonism can arise, so predictably as to be part of the cultural pattern. (Schlegel and Barry, 1991, p. 62)

This cultural pattern varied according to the social organization, including the means of production and control over property. This factor, in turn, determines the extent to which adolescents are required to become independent from their families. Schlegel and Barry's analysis suggested that individuals who move out of their parents' homes, who, in adulthood, are no longer economically dependent on their parents, and who have an extended period of adolescence before they are economically and socially independent experience more conflict with parents. But everyday and often petty disagreements appear to be an inescapable feature of adolescence across a wide variety of cultures. Disagreements and squabbling are not just a characteristic of adolescents and parents in modern North American families; they are found worldwide, and in very different types of families living in diverse circumstances. In this book, I describe adolescent-parent relationships, including conflict, in Western (primarily North American) families and in families from other, non-Western cultures.

Historical Perspectives on Adolescence

Earlier on I noted that adolescents' negative behavior towards their elders has been seen as reflecting a decline in parental authority. This attribution is nothing new. Laursen and Collins (2009) describe Plato's presentation of Socrates' lament about the youth of their day: "They have bad manners, contempt for authority: they show disrespect for their elders and love chatter in place of exercise." More than 2,000 years later, a child development expert formulated a similar concern:

It must be confessed that an irreverent, unruly spirit has come to be a prevalent, an outrageous evil among the young people of our land [...] Some of the good old people make facetious complaint on this [...] "There is as much family government now as there used to be in our young days," they say, "only it has changed hands."
(Cited in Demos & Demos, 1969)

Along with the words attributed to Socrates, this observer's sentiments (if not the language) is very similar to what current commentators like William Bennett are saying about today's youth. Yet this quotation is not from a modern observer. It is a typical example from a child-rearing manual from the period between 1825 and 1859. According to Demos and Demos, these manuals typically stressed the disobedience, licentiousness, and indulgence of youth. A recent *New York Times* article by Parker-Pope (2009, January 26) addressed the same issues. In fact, the point of Parker-Pope's article was that, in contrast to widespread public perception, teenage promiscuity is on the decline. In a *New York Times* blog following the appearance of this article, Judith Warner (2009, January 29) noted that two sociologists interviewed for Parker-Pope's article had to struggle hard to get

people “out of their ‘moral panic’ mindset, and make them understand that teens are not ‘in a downward spiral’ or ‘out of control.’ ‘They just don’t believe you. You might as well be telling them the earth is flat,’ the sociologists noted.”

The Current Book

As these examples suggest, our feelings about adolescents have been shared by many generations of adults, going back to the ancient Greeks and extending across many different (and diverse) cultures. Why is it that we struggle so hard to understand adolescents? Why is it that they pose such a conundrum for adults of each generation? The answers to these questions are complex and can be answered in many different ways. In this book I provide one set of answers, from the lens of a developmental and constructivist perspective on adolescents’ social and psychological development. I consider the mutual influences between parents and adolescents as adolescents move towards adulthood. I draw on anthropological, historical, and sociological sources, but my focus is on detailed psychological analyses of adolescents and their parents. In numerous studies conducted over the past 25 years, my students, colleagues, and I have researched different aspects of adolescent–parent relationships. We listened to the voices of parents and adolescents as they discussed their relationships with each other. We also mulled through piles of questionnaires and watched adolescents and parents as they interacted together, both in my university lab and on their sofas and around their kitchen tables in their homes. We investigated both beliefs about parenting and parenting practices in a wide variety of families. Much of the research discussed in this book focuses on North American families of various ethnicities, but I also draw on a large corpus of research (my own and others’) consisting of families from other cultures. Issues of culture and ethnicity are discussed extensively here.

Part of my focus is on the kinds of issues that predominate in parenting books – the disagreements, squabbles, and conflicts that are common in the lives of adolescents and their parents. Why concentrate on some of the difficulties of adolescent–parent relationships? Does examining some of the frustrating and thorny aspects of social life perpetuate stereotypes of adolescence as a challenging developmental period? After all, a number of influential psychologists have called for a new science of positive psychology, which advocates a step away from “repairing the worst things in life” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5), to increased focus on “the study of strength and virtue” (p. 7). Does paying attention to the sometimes rocky road to autonomy and adulthood reflect an unwarranted emphasis on negatives, on the difficulties of raising adolescents? Why not deal with the positive sides of adolescence? In a similar vein, some feminist psychologists have asserted that developmental psychologists’ tendency to focus on the negative – on aggression, conflict, separation, and strife – betrays male domination

in psychology. They argue that a more feminine orientation would focus on the positive aspects of human relationships, including strivings for peace, harmony, compassion, and cohesion.

In my view, we must apply ourselves to both. We must focus on the positive, negative, and grey areas of adolescent–parent relationships, because simple dichotomies do not do justice to the full range of social life – either for the adolescents or for the important adults in their lives. Social life is complex and often convoluted. Interpersonal relationships may entail intense feelings of connection and evidence of cooperation, as well as conflict and disagreements. Autonomy exists – and thrives – in the context of relationships with others. (And I will argue in Chapters 6 and 7 that autonomy is not only a developmental task in Western or individualistic cultures, but is a salient developmental task for youth worldwide.) These conflicting positive and negative feelings and goals can occur in the same relationships at different times, as well as – in varying degrees – in different relationships. And they can be inextricably intertwined in ongoing interactions. For instance, observational and discourse analyses of young children’s social interactions have revealed that play that is cooperative and friendly may lead to momentary conflicts over the possession of toys, which in turn involve substantive disagreements over fairness and rights. Such disagreements often are fleeting and may be resolved without intervention from adults. Thus conflict and cooperation may be evident in interactions with the same participants. Likewise, although conflict, oppositions, and disagreements may elicit strong emotions, they do not elicit only negative ones. Various researchers (Dunn, 2006; Shantz & Hartup, 1992) have noted that, although conflicts may be bound up with feelings of anger, fear, or sadness, they may also involve feelings of excitement, satisfaction, or even glee.

In addition, different participants may have very different responses to the same social interaction and, sometimes, not in the way we might anticipate. Laurence Steinberg (2001) conjectures that parents are more bothered by the squabbling that takes place with their offspring during adolescence, and more likely to hold on to their negative emotions after a conflictive interaction, than teenagers are. As he notes, “[t]he popular image of the individual sulking in the wake of a family argument may be a more accurate portrayal of the emotional state of the parent than the teenager” (p. 5).

And, although disagreements and squabbling do seem to be a relatively regular feature of adolescent–parent relationships, it is not the defining feature. The national public opinion survey conducted by Public Agenda, mentioned earlier, also found that the overwhelming majority of the teenagers surveyed reported that they trust their parents to be there when they need them and that they have other grownups besides their parents to go to if they need to talk to an adult. This is very similar to the results of more detailed psychological research asking similar questions, which will be discussed in the next chapter. When asked about their own experiences and feelings, teenagers are connected in important ways to the adults in their lives.

Studying adolescent–parent relationships also sheds light on wider issues of concern to social scientists. It provides broader insights into child development and into the processes that facilitate it. For many years, developmental scientists advanced models of social development that provided a “top down” view of child socialization. Children’s development has been described as the acquisition of cultural norms and standards. Parents teach children the norms, values, and expectations of their culture, which are acquired in successive elaborations through parental molding. This process allows for the “reproduction” of culture in succeeding generations. This view suggests that adolescent–parent disagreements are evidence of incomplete socialization – a lack of compliance to parental wishes and a failure to endorse parental values.

This top down model provides a limited view of adolescent–parent relationships and of children’s social development more generally. It does not reflect the current thinking of most developmental scientists. The perspective taken in this book reflects a different perspective, one that is embedded in a more interactive and reciprocal view of adolescent social development. My interest is in the different and often conflicting meanings that adolescents and parents construct from their social interactions. These meanings are part and parcel of the different ways in which individuals create their realities and come to understand their social worlds. They can be understood in terms of the different types of social knowledge that adolescents and parents bring to bear on their day-to-day interactions. This perspective is described in detail in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. It is elaborated in the context of adolescent–parent relationships, but we shall dwell on the broader issues of social development as well.

Before delving in, some definitions are in order. Much has been written about the complexities of defining adolescence. Although the notion seems straightforward, there are ongoing debates about when adolescence actually begins. And it is even more challenging to say with precision where it ends. Adolescence has been defined biologically as the period encompassing the onset of puberty and going on until individuals are capable of sexual reproduction. It has also been defined sociologically as the period when individuals begin training for adult work and family roles. According to this definition, adolescence ends when individuals fully attain adult status and privileges. There are also legal markers of the onset and termination of adolescence (that is, for the attainment of juvenile status, and then of adult status). All of these definitions and specifications are useful to some extent, but they also have limitations, particularly in considering when adolescence concludes. For instance, adolescents are capable of sexual reproduction (and indeed they are at the peak of their fertility and biological readiness for child bearing) well before most of us would feel comfortable about concluding that adolescence has ended. And, increasingly, adoption of adult work and of family roles is delayed well past the twenties and even into the thirties for some youth.

Therefore, along with many other researchers, I adopt a simple chronological definition of adolescence as roughly the period spanning the second decade of life.

A great deal of physical, psychological, and social change occurs during these years, however. Psychologists and practitioners have found it useful to divide this period further, into different phases. In this book I follow those conventions. I refer to ages 11 to 13 as early adolescence. The phrase “middle adolescence” refers here to ages 14 to 17, whereas “late adolescence” refers to ages between 18 and 21. For American readers, this corresponds roughly to adolescents’ transitions through different educational institutions (that is, middle school, high school, and, for those going on in higher education, college).

Increasingly, researchers have come to refer to the early and mid-twenties as emerging adulthood. While this is by no means a universal phase of life, for many youth it is the period when transitions to adulthood occur. Schlegel (2009) notes that many cultures worldwide denote a similar second social stage beyond adolescence, often referred to as youth, which provides a transitional link on the route to full adulthood. With these definitions in mind, we begin in the following chapter with a discussion of how adolescent–parent relationships have been viewed historically from the lens of developmental psychology.