WOULDN’T YOU LIKE TO KNOW . . .

- When does adolescence begin and end?
- How is the American adolescent population changing?
- Is your state losing or gaining in adolescent population?
- Who invented the Internet and why?
- Can you expect to put in more or fewer hours on the job than your parents do?
- Are you more or less likely to get married than people of your parents’ generation?
- What are three negative effects of the sexual revolution?
- Are you more or less likely to be a victim of a violent crime than you were 10 or 20 years ago?
The Social Context of Adolescence

Approaches to Studying Adolescents
The Changing Face of American Adolescence

Our Evolving Society
CROSS-CULTURAL CONCERNS  The Major Crises Facing the World’s Adolescents

The Evolving Prolongation of Adolescence

Evolving Communication and Information Technologies
The Internet  •  Cell Phones

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The Evolving Sexual Landscape
Positive Effects of the Sexual Revolution  •  Negative Effects of the Sexual Revolution

Evolving Safety Concerns
Violent Crime
RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT  Computer Games
Violence in Society  •  Violence in the Home  •  Violence in Schools  •  Violent Deaths

Understanding Adolescence: Research Methods
Correlations  •  True vs. Quasi-Experiments  •  Research Designs That Measure Developmental Change
RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT  Teens Who Kill Family Members
The word adolescence comes from the Latin verb adolescere, which means “to grow” or “to grow to maturity.” Adolescence is the period of growth between childhood and adulthood. The transition from one stage to the other is gradual and uncertain, and although the time span is not the same for every person, most adolescents eventually become mature adults. In this sense, adolescence is likened to a bridge between childhood and adulthood over which individuals must pass before they take their places as full-grown, responsible adults.

Most people place the beginning of adolescence at the time at which children begin to physically mature into individuals capable of reproduction—that is, when they begin to sexually mature. People call this “hitting puberty.” Actually, this is a misnomer, since puberty actually means to be physically capable of procreating, and the physical changes that are associated with “hitting puberty” begin quite a few years before children become fertile. In any case, most children reach puberty when they are between ages 11 and 13, and this is considered the lower boundary of adolescence. (By the way, in Latin, the word puberty means “to grow hair,” which is a great descriptor of this maturation process!)

The upper boundary of adolescence is less clear. Different criteria can be used, and none are universally agreed upon. Some people believe that adolescence ends once physical maturity is reached. Others believe that it ends once an individual attains full legal status and can thereby vote, drink alcohol if desired, be drafted, get married, and so on. (A problem with this designation is that these legal markers do not occur at the same age: in most states, you can freely marry at 18 but are prohibited from freely drinking alcohol until 21.) Another, more vague criterion puts the end of adolescence at the age when most others treat the individual as an adult, according him or her respect and independence in decision making.

Adolescents themselves tend to focus on achieving emotional independence from their parents and taking responsibility for their own actions (Arnett, 1997). Most adults tend to think of adolescence as ending with a combination of attaining financial independence, emotional independence, and a change in focus onto issues that are less related to adolescence and more related to adulthood. Therefore, in this text, we consider full-time college students as adolescents and discuss them periodically.

Adolescence, then, is not monolithic and uniform. There is a tremendous difference between an insecure, gangly, 12-year-old middle school student and a fully grown, confident, 20-year-old college sophomore. Because of this, we distinguish early adolescence from middle adolescence and late adolescence. Early adolescence refers to individuals who are about ages 11 to 14, and middle adolescence refers to those who are ages 15 to 17. We use the term late adolescence to mean those adolescents who are 18 or older, with full recognition that some 18-, 19-, and 20-year-olds are truly adults. Adults are (theoretically) mature in all ways—physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually, and spiritually—whereas adolescents still have significant growth to achieve in some areas.

When do adolescents believe they fully become adults? Some think they have to wait too many years to “get into the club.” Whereas many middle-aged and elderly adults say they feel younger than they really are and young adults typically “feel their age,” adolescents most commonly feel older and more mature than their chronological age (Galambose, Kolaric, Sears, et al., 1999). Since their parents and teachers usually do not share this assessment, however, many adolescents chafe under what they perceive to be excessive control by the adults around them.

Two other words that we use frequently in this text are teenager and its shortened form, teen. Both of these terms, strictly speaking, mean someone in the teen years: ages 13 to 19. The word teenager is of fairly recent origin. It first appeared in the Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature in the 1943–1945 issue. However, because children (especially girls) sometimes mature physically before age 13, there are some discrepancies. An 11-year-old girl may look and act like a teenager, but a 15-year-old boy, if not yet sexually mature, may still act and look like a child. In this text, the words teenager, teen, and adolescent are used interchangeably.

The word juvenile is generally used in a legal sense to signify one who is not yet considered an adult in the eyes of the law—in most states, anyone up to age 18. The legal rights of 18-year-olds are confusing, however, for they vary from state to state. The Twenty-sixth Amendment gave 18-year-olds the right to vote, and in some areas, they are called for jury duty. They may obtain credit in their own names at some stores and banks; at others, they have to obtain cosigners. Many landlords still require the parents of 18-year-olds to cosign leases.

Finally, for variety’s sake, we also frequently use the words youth or youths. These two terms are used synonymously with adolescent(s).
Approaches to Studying Adolescents

There are numerous approaches to the study of adolescents. In Chapter 2, we review the work of many of the most influential thinkers who studied and wrote about this age group. In some cases these perspectives are complementary, in that they fundamentally agree with one another or address different, non-overlapping issues. In other instances, the researchers’ ideas are in stark conflict with each other. These disagreements stem from the fact that these researchers were writing at different points in time and, hence, had different knowledge sets from which to work. They also had different backgrounds and theoretical orientations.

The approach taken in this book is an eclectic approach to the study of adolescents. That is, the approach is interdisciplinary, emphasizing not one aspect of adolescent development but all of them, recognizing that no single discipline has a monopoly on the truth. As such, the contributions of biologists, psychologists, educators, sociologists, economists, anthropologists, and medical personnel are all important. If we are to get a complete view of adolescence, we must stand in different places and look at adolescents from different perspectives.

The first standpoint presented is a sociological, cultural one. Much of this chapter discusses some of the current cultural conditions that are affecting today’s youths. Since American adolescents are a diverse group, Chapter 3 examines some of the most important contributors to this diversity: socioeconomic status and ethnicity. It also discusses the unique experiences of immigrant adolescents.

Next is the biological approach, which focuses on the process of sexual maturation and physical growth that takes place during puberty. It involves the maturational changes; and functions of the male and female organs; the development of secondary sexual characteristics; neurological development; and the growth trends in height, weight, and body composition that take place during adolescence. As their bodies change, adolescents develop new concerns about their nutrition, size, and physical attractiveness. In short, they are not always pleased with what is happening to their bodies. We focus on the biological approach in Chapter 4.

This is followed by a chapter devoted to the cognitive approach to the study of adolescence. It deals with both the qualitative changes that take place in the way adolescents think and reason and the quantitative changes that take place in attention, memory, and intelligence. Of concern also is the effect that these cognitive changes have on the adolescent’s personality and behavior. Researchers interested in cognition study topics such as learning, problem solving, decision making, and IQ. We take up the cognitive approach in Chapter 5.

The fourth perspective in the study of adolescence is the psychosexual approach, which deals with the development of emotions and of the self, including the development of self-concept, gender roles, and identity. It is concerned also with mental health and the effects of stress on the adolescent. During adolescence, individuals must integrate newfound sexual feelings into their self-concept and learn to manage their sexuality. Many begin thinking about their ethnic heritage in new and more meaningful ways and begin to develop a mature ethical code. We examine the psychosexual approach in Chapters 6 and 7.

The fifth way to view adolescents is to examine them in the context of their social relationships. We do this in Chapters 8 through 11. Chapters 8 and 9 are concerned with the ways that teenagers interact with members of their families. We look at parent-adolescent communication and conflicts, sibling relationships, and parenting styles. The effects of different family constellations—single-parent families, blended families, and adoptive families—are also considered. Chapter 10 deals with peer, friendship, and romantic relationships and the peer subculture as a whole. Topics such as conformity, fads, and cliques are discussed. Finally, sexual behavior is discussed in Chapter 11.

Some of the most important connections that adolescents have with the broader social world are introduced in Chapters 12 and 13. Adolescents spend many of their waking hours in school, interacting with teachers and administrators as well as peers. The school is the institution that provides adolescents with many of the skills they need to function as independent adults, including social and job-related skills. The special needs of school dropouts are also considered here. Often, while in school, and certainly after they graduate, most adolescents are employed. Pathways to career decisions, career education, the costs and benefits of youth employment, and youth unemployment are discussed in Chapter 13.

The text’s penultimate section deals with many of the serious problems faced by today’s adolescents: suicide, delinquency, eating disorders, running away from home, and substance abuse. (Another serious concern, teenage pregnancy, is discussed with sexuality in

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**Note:**

- **adolescence** the period of growth from childhood to maturity.
- **puberty** the developmental stage at which one becomes capable of reproduction.
- **teenager** in a strict sense, includes only the teen years: ages 13 to 19.
- **juvenile** one who is not yet considered an adult in the eyes of the law.
- **youth(s)** a term that will be used synonymously with “adolescent(s).”
Chapter 11.) Although certainly not all adolescents encounter these problems, surprisingly high percentages do. And even if they do not experience these problems themselves, they almost certainly know someone who does. Thus, a text on adolescent psychology would not be complete without an examination of the causes, symptoms, and treatments of these problems.

Finally, in order to provide a sense of closure, the text ends with an epilogue. In that chapter, the discussion begins with what we have learned about helping adolescents successfully negotiate this stage of life. The epilogue also contains a description of “what comes next.” Emerging adulthood, the stage that describes individuals who are in some ways between adolescence and adulthood, is presented. Emerging adulthood has become an increasingly more common bridge stage between adolescence and young adulthood in modern times and is now normative enough that it deserves discussion since it, not young adulthood proper, will be the next phase of life for many adolescents. We then conclude by talking about the differences between adolescence, emerging adulthood, and young adulthood.

The Changing Face of American Adolescence

Because of fluctuations in immigration rates and birthrates, the absolute size of the juvenile population in the United States is continuously changing. Between the late 1960s and the mid-1980s, the number of Americans ages 14 to 24 steadily declined. Since that time, it has been slowly but steadily increasing. In 1990, there were 40 million Americans in this age range. If the forecasts are accurate, this slow but steady increase will continue at least through 2050, such that there will be about 58 million American 14- to 24-year-olds at that time (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2008a). This represents a 25 percent increase in the juvenile population between 2000 and 2050 (see Figure 1.1).

Although this change seems large, it is actually small in comparison to the increases in some other age groups. The change in the number of elderly individuals—those over the age of 65—in particular, has been and will be greater. Therefore, over the next 30 or 40 years, adolescents will make up a slightly smaller fraction of the U.S. population, despite their increase in absolute numbers. In 2010, those aged 14 to 24 accounted for 15.8 percent of the American population; in 2050, it is estimated that they will comprise 14.6 percent of the population.

Again, as a result of different immigration rates and birthrates, the racial and ethnic makeup of American adolescents is also changing. During the next 25 years, the relative increases in the numbers of Asian American, African American, Hispanic American, and Native American juveniles will greatly outstrip the number of non-Hispanic Caucasian juveniles. The American adolescent population is becoming increasingly multiracial and multiethnic. (Adolescent diversity is discussed in Chapter 3.)

Juveniles and their families are also on the move. Whereas many states have experienced significant increases in their juvenile populations, numerous others have shown declines (see Figure 1.2). These changes reflect the overall movement of the U.S. population away from the north-central and northeastern states to the western and southern states.

ANSWERS WOULDN’T YOU LIKE TO KNOW . . .

How is the American adolescent population changing?

Although there are increasingly more adolescents in the United States, they now make up a smaller proportion of the total population because people are living longer and the birthrate is dropping. The racial/ethnic makeup of American adolescents is also changing. More and more are of African, Hispanic, or Asian descent.
Our Evolving Society

The society in which adolescents grow up has an important influence on their development, relationships, adjustments, and problems. The expectations of society mold their personalities, influence their roles, and guide their futures. The structure of the society either helps them fulfill their needs or creates problems for them by stimulating tension and frustration. Because adolescents are social beings who are part of a larger culture, we need to understand this social order and some of the ways it influences them.

Certainly, much of the adolescent experience is reasonably constant. After all, for eons individuals have had to cope with reaching puberty and all that goes with it. But not everything about being an adolescent is so predictable. The world is constantly changing—sometimes quite rapidly and sometimes more gradually. Today's adolescents are facing a number of new conditions that are different from those faced by past generations. Some of these conditions are the result of gradual evolution and thus outgrowths of what has come before; others would have been unanticipated even 50 years ago. These societal changes are interrelated, each change playing off of and influencing the others.

Because of these sometimes rapid changes and singular events, different historical groups, or cohorts, of adolescents have had different characteristics. It is easier to speak definitively about those cohorts from the past than about more current ones, as there is not yet enough historical distance to know absolutely what events and issues will have been most important in shaping present-day and near-present-day adolescents. The following are the descriptors most frequently given to the major adolescent cohorts since the early 1900s.

The Lost Generation: These individuals were adolescents or young adults during or just after World War I and hence were born between the mid-1880s and 1900. They were traumatized by the large number of casualties caused by the war and disdainful of their parents' Victorian ideas about morality and propriety.

The G.I. Generation: This is the generation of Americans who were children during the Great Depression and adolescents or young adults during World War II. An enormous percentage of young men either enlisted or were drafted into the armed services, and many young women enlisted as well. The women who remained in the United States took on many formerly male occupations. (A popular song of the day was “Rosie the Riveter.”

Is your state losing or gaining in adolescent population?

Check Figure 1.2 to see if your home state is gaining or losing in adolescent population. If you live in the West, it is likely gaining; if you live in the Midwest or the Northeast, it is likely losing.

cohort a group of individuals who are born at approximately the same time and who share traits because they experienced the same historical events.
“Rosie” was even immortalized in a trendy poster of the day showing a muscular woman with her hair in a bandana flexing her bicep. Our country had been attacked, and patriotism ruled the day.

The Silent Generation: Born between 1925 and 1940—too late to serve in World War II and too early to be unconventional and antiauthoritarian—this group is characterized as conservative and traditionalist. However, it should be recognized that many of the heroes and icons of the more free-wheeling groups that came after—such as the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., John Lennon, and Jerry Garcia—were actually members of this cohort.

The Baby Boomers: This group was born after World War II, when the soldiers came home and began their adult civilian lives. They are the children of the G.I. generation. Boomers are a large cohort because of the unusually

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**CROSS-CULTURAL CONCERNS**

THE MAJOR CRISIS FACING THE WORLD’S ADOLESCENTS

According to the United Nations Population Fund, the largest adolescent generation in all of history—1.5 billion individuals—is coming of age. The most pressing global needs of this group include the promotion of gender equality and universal access to education, health services, and reproductive and sexual health information. Meeting these goals will not only improve the lives of the youth themselves but will also help stem the AIDS pandemic and reduce worldwide poverty. (More than half of the world’s youth live on less than $2/day.) Even though some of the issues faced by adolescents in other nations are different from those faced by American youth, some are eerily similar. For example, it is a global, not an American, concern that adolescents are leaning too much upon peers and the media for advice on how to survive in the “new” world they are facing rather than relying upon tradition.

Gender inequality is one pervasive theme; female adolescents face discrimination in much of the world. In many societies, families do not invest as much in their daughters’ health or education as they do in their sons’. In many geographic areas, females are not allowed to own property. Because of poverty and a lack of employment opportunities, girls and women are vulnerable to sexually exploitive practices such as child marriage, sexual coercion, and sexual trafficking. Child brides almost never continue their education and, because of the large age difference between themselves and their husbands, have subordinate positions in the household and are usually not allowed to socialize outside the family. They have little opportunity to leave abusive husbands. In societies in which women have few rights and little social standing, sexual coercion is commonplace and females are held responsible for its occurrence. Annually, between 700,000 and 4,000,000 adolescent girls are forced into the sex trade and have bleak existences filled with degradation and illness.

Because premarital sexual activity has become more commonplace around the globe, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) have become diseases of the young. Half of all new cases of AIDS occur among people between the ages of 15 and 24; this translates to 6,000 young people each day becoming infected, most of them female. The highest rates are in sub-Saharan Africa. Another way that the AIDS epidemic has affected adolescents is that many have lost family members to the virus. If a family member is ill, it is likely that a child (usually a daughter) will have to drop out of school to care for the family member. If a child or adolescent is left an orphan, he or she often must turn to theft or prostitution to survive.

It is important to provide reproductive health information to adolescents to help prevent the spread of STDs. Schools cannot be relied on to provide this information since many youth in developing nations do not attend classes. Different countries have tried different approaches, often using the mass media to get the message out. The most common themes involve abstinence, faithfulness to a single partner, and condom use.

These practices would also, of course, help reduce the number of adolescent pregnancies. Early pregnancy is a serious health risk for young adolescent girls. It is the leading cause of death for young women ages 15 to 19 worldwide. Most of these deaths are due to complications from labor and delivery, but a significant minority are due to botched abortions. Some young adolescents who survive childbirth are permanently disabled from the experience.

The good news is that issues of adolescent well-being are being taken seriously. The biggest problems have been identified, steps are being taken, and globally progress is being made to improve adolescent outcomes. Real strides have been made in the past decade.

The Evolving Prolongation of Adolescence

Since the 1970s, individuals’ full entrance into adulthood has been more and more delayed, as youth have taken longer to complete their education, settle on a career, move out of their parents’ home, marry, and have children (Arnett, 2000). In other words, adolescence has expanded and become increasingly prolonged. It is not unusual to be at least partly financially dependent upon one’s parents well into one’s twenties or to marry when close to 30. With this delay has also come not only a pushing back of significant life events but also a disruption of the lockstep sequence in which these events have traditionally occurred (Fussell, 2002). For example, it is less likely that a female will have a child prior to marriage if she marries at 19 instead of at 27. Also, someone who completes his or her education at age 20 is less likely to work at a full-time job before leaving school than someone who keeps working toward a degree until he or she is 28.

Many reasons can explain this prolongation: more skills are needed to get a good job; there is increased societal permissiveness toward premarital sexual activity; inexpensive, effective birth control is available; parents are more willing to continue to support their children for longer; and so on. Some youths’ maturity and lifestyle really does remain largely “adolescent” for quite some time; others move into a “betwixt and between” state termed emerging adulthood, in which they lead a life midway between that of adolescents and young adults. Emerging adulthood is discussed in the epilogue of this text.

Evolving Communication and Information Technologies

Adolescents today live in a society undergoing rapid technological changes. Probably no other society has so revered technological innovation while placing so little restraint on it than that of the United States. During the past 100 or so years, Americans have witnessed unprecedented advances: the introduction of radio, television, automobiles, airplanes, nuclear energy, robots, and satellite communication.

Of all these changes, perhaps none has had as profound an effect as the introduction of the computer. The first computers were less powerful than today’s personal computers.
The Internet

One of the most important reasons for using the computer is the Internet. The military researchers who created the Internet needed a safe way to store and communicate sensitive government information in the event of a nuclear war. The solution was a network that lacked a central computer to store its billions of bytes of information or to direct the actions of remote computers. Each computer site on the network stands alone but is also interconnected to the others. Thus, the destruction of one site (in the event of war) would not prevent the free interchange of information or destroy the data stored at other sites. Today, the result is a decentralized network of data stored on thousands of computers that make up the network and speak a common language. If a particular computer breaks, the rest of the computers connected to the network can use any number of other connections to maintain their links.

Estimates put more than 1.5 billion users on the Internet worldwide (Internet World Stats, 2009). The Internet is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It’s a way to meet people, find adventure, share ideas and experiences; look for a job, a date, or a mate; ask questions; or give advice. The information resources of thousands of universities, government agencies, and researchers are at your fingertips. It’s like a shopping mall that never closes where you can shop for everything from automobiles to food. It’s cyberspace: the final frontier. Cyberspace has no borders or defined boundaries; it is a system to which you can go to meet people, communicate, learn, explore, and get information. Cyberspace is the place for those who connect to one another electronically to share their thoughts and feelings. Once online, you can have private and group conversations, join in lively discussions with nationally known experts, play online games, browse through the articles of hundreds of periodicals and online magazines, read movie reviews, make flight or hotel reservations, or track investments with the latest stock market quotes and investment advice.

About 60 percent of American teens say that they connect to the Internet at least once per day; about one-third say they get on several times per day (Lenhart, Madden, MacGill, et al., 2007). Almost all use the Web at least occasionally. The most common reasons adolescents get on the Web is to find information, communicate with others (via social-networking sites, instant messaging, or e-mails), visit entertainment sites, and play games.

Since only 16 percent of the world’s Internet users live in North America (Internet World Stats, 2009), and youth are generally technologically savvy, it is apparent that the Internet provides adolescents from around the world the opportunity to interact with one another directly or indirectly. They can visit the same Web sites, download the same music and films, compete at online gaming sites, watch each other on YouTube, and so on. Because of these interactions, some researchers believe that the Web is contributing to a global youth culture, with universal tastes and values (e.g., United Nations, 2005).

As is obvious from the Internet’s explosive growth, there is much good to be gained from spending time online. The sheer quantity of available information is staggering: you can learn about almost anything. It is like having a fantastic library at your fingertips, one in which you can check out any books, pictures, or sound clips you’d like. You can take virtual tours of the world’s great museums and watch and listen to video clips of policy makers announcing important decisions. (Of course, the information on the Web is of uneven quality, and users must learn how to judge the accuracy of sites and weigh the value of the information they find.) This informational benefit is especially important to more isolated individuals who otherwise might not have access to educational materials. The Internet also lets you inexpensively keep in touch with others, even those far away. For example, posting pictures to your Web page is a way to let your friends see what you did on your vacation or what your new girlfriend or boyfriend looks like. The Web allows you to purchase esoteric items that might not be available in your community, or listen to a live-stream radio program from a city on another continent.

There are, however, a number of potential downsides to Internet use.

Potential Hazards of Internet Use

One unfortunate downside to the Internet is that it makes a wide variety of inappropriate materials readily available to children and adolescents. For instance, one can find sexually explicit materials such as photographs and videos of singles, couples, and groups...
involved in various sex acts. Some photographic and artistic materials contain examples of bestiality and pedophilia. Fictional and nonfictional accounts of sexual encounters may include incest or sadism. Users can find personal ads of individuals seeking partners for one-night stands. Catalogs for sexual devices and clothing as well as advertisements for pay-for-service organizations ranging from phone sex to escort services are also offered.

There's nothing on the Internet that isn't available in other places, but the Internet is not as controllable and thus online materials are more accessible to adolescents and children than from most other sources. Furthermore, sometimes even searches intended to visit only innocuous sites result in matches that contain graphic and explicit materials. Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor (2007) found that one-third of the adolescents they sampled had been exposed to Web-based pornography, even when they were not looking to do so, an increase from only a few years before, and 20 percent had received a sexual solicitation online (Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Wolak, 2005).

Violent and destructive materials are also found on the Internet, including recipes for bombs and other destructive devices. The Internet may also contain posts encouraging drug use, self-mutilation, or eating-disordered behavior. Radical activist groups provide materials on the Internet. Such materials may come from neo-Nazi groups or state militia organizations or include information on gang-related activity.

Parents and lawmakers have sought to pass legislation that will help protect children from these kinds of materials. The Communications Decency Act was passed into law in February 1996. Within days, several civil rights organizations challenged the law on the grounds that it violated the First Amendment. A U.S. federal court in New York overturned the law, and on June 26, 1997, the U.S. Supreme Court, in a 7–2 decision, concurred that it violated the right of free speech and upheld the lower court's finding. A second version of the law, the Child Online Protection Act, was passed in 1998 but was also struck down by the Supreme Court in 2004. A much narrower statute, the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), was passed by Congress in 2000. It was directed not at Internet site producers, but at libraries and public schools. It directed these institutions to ensure that children would not be exposed to “harmful” material if the institutions wished to continue receiving federal funds; what is “harmful” would be determined by local community standards. The act was jointly challenged by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the American Library Association, although in 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the law. Libraries and schools have complied with the law by installing blocking software, which they are permitted to remove for adult users who request that they do so (American Library Association, 2006).

Another potential risk of Internet use stems from the fact that communication can be anonymous. People can invent screen names for themselves that give little clue to their true identities. You can present yourself any way you wish on the Web: you can develop multiple screen personalities with different races and genders and describe your appearance in an untruthful fashion. Many Internet users develop multiple “virtual selves” (Anderson, 2002), and the impact of doing so on the development of a teen's true identity is unclear at this time.
A final issue is that differential access to the Internet will increase the divide between rich and poor (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1999). Lack of familiarity with computers, networking, and information accessing will put lower-income adolescents further behind their middle-class peers and could make it even more difficult for them to get high-paying jobs.

**Cell Phones**

More than three-quarters of American teenagers own their own cell phone (Nielsen, 2009), and the percentage has been growing each year. Adolescents use these phones to call and send text messages to their friends, staying in near constant contact in a way never before possible. It has changed the nature of social relationships in several ways. For example, cell phones (with friends’ circles and unlimited texting plans) allow friends to communicate readily even when they are physically separated, even by a substantial distance. This might, for instance, make it more likely that a college student keeps in close touch with friends from high school. In addition, get-togethers can be more spontaneous and fluid if you can check on a friend’s availability at the last minute or cancel because you are running late. There is less need to plan ahead than there was in the past.

Cell phones have also influenced family relations. Just as adolescents can keep in closer touch with their friends, they can also keep in closer contact with their parents and siblings. And, their parents can more closely monitor them. As a result of the security that comes (on both sides) from a teen’s having a means of calling for help if it is needed, many parents say they are granting their adolescent child more freedom than they would if he or she did not possess a cell (Ribak, 2009).

**Evolving World of Work and Consumption**

The United States is a rather materialistic society. Most individuals believe that it is important to own a nice home and to have many possessions in order to lead a good life. Materialism often increases when children become adolescents and then declines as they move through adolescence (Chaplin & John, 2007). Many adolescents, especially early and middle adolescents, are very concerned about wearing the right clothes or having the right possessions so that they fit in. Given this acquisitive ethic and the corresponding drive to accommodate ever-increasing consumer needs, the employment situation in this country continues to evolve in ways that will affect today’s youth.

**Longer Workdays**

Americans keep putting in more and more hours at work; nevertheless, some of them are in hard financial straits. Others are forced to work overtime by their employers. Yet others desire a higher standard of living than they can afford working one 40-hour-a-week job. The recent past has seen increases in the number of workers who hold two jobs—usually one full-time job and a secondary part-time job—as well as increases in the amount of overtime put in by workers with single jobs. Americans spend more time working than most of their European counterparts; in fact, most Europeans spend less time working now than they did in 1970, whereas Americans spend about 20 percent more time working (Office of Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004). We work longer hours each week than most Europeans and we take less vacation time.

The Internet has further lengthened the average American’s workday. Twenty-one percent of American workers now say that they “take their jobs home” and participate in business activities while at home (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). A significant part of this is due to the fact that people with a PC, laptop, or BlackBerry can check their e-mails while at home (or in a restaurant, or standing in line . . . ) and then reply. There is thus less distinction between work and leisure time than ever before.

Obviously, working these long hours cuts down on the amount of time workers can spend with their families and children. In addition, the frequent interruption of taking phone calls and checking e-mails, even when at dinner or on family outings, often decreases the quality of that time as well.

**Working Women**

Another indicator of Americans’ attempting to keep up with the high cost of living is the increase in the number of women, even women with young children, who are working outside the home. In 2007, 59 percent of women worked outside the home. Some 71 percent of women with children ages 6 to 17 were employed, as were 63 percent of all women with children younger than age 6. Single mothers were even more likely to be employed than married mothers: 76 percent vs. 69 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009b). If you look

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**ANSWERS WOULDN’T YOU LIKE TO KNOW . . .**

Can you expect to put in more or fewer hours on the job than your parents do?

If current trends continue, you will likely spend more hours on the job than your parents do or your grandparents did. (So much for technology ensuring increased leisure!)
closely at the numbers, you will see that mothers are actually more likely to work than women who are not mothers. (This is in part due to the high costs associated with raising children.)

Increasing employment among mothers has intensified the demand for child care. In some cases, the adolescents or older children in the family are expected to take over child-rearing duties while their parents are at work. It also means that women are less likely to be home to supervise and monitor their adolescent children in the late afternoons and early evenings. Finally, these women are providing role models for their daughters, who will most likely go on to work outside the home when they become adults as well.

Adolescent Employment

One reason that Americans work longer hours than Europeans is that vastly more American adolescents are employed than European adolescents. The proportion of high school students who work has been rising rapidly and steadily. Generally speaking, working students have had the support of parents, teachers, and social scientists. The conventional wisdom argues that employment is good for students. With the blessing of society, then, American youths have gone to work. Nearly 3 million 15- to 17-year-olds are employed during the school year, and 4 million are employed during the summer months. These adolescents work an average of 17 hours per week while school is in session and 29 hours per week during the summer (Herman, 2000; Stringer, 2003).

Many experts, however, are beginning to believe that many adolescents are devoting too much time to their jobs and not enough to school (e.g., Marsh & Kleitman, 2005). Furthermore, most “waste” the money they earn on unimportant items such as concert tickets, fast food, and DVDs. These spending patterns feed materialism and do not help prepare adolescents for adult self-sufficiency.

The effects of adolescent employment are fully reviewed in Chapter 13, but for now, suffice it to say that credible data suggest that working after school is associated with lowered school achievement and with increased delinquency and substance abuse rates (e.g., Lee & Staff, 2007). Employed teenagers are also less likely than their nonworking peers to get adequate sleep and sufficient exercise. Most adolescents who work may be somewhat at risk for negative outcomes, but this is particularly true of those adolescents who work long hours.

Adolescent Consumption

Teens work in such large numbers because they feel the need to earn money. The mass media are partly responsible for creating a generation of consuming adolescents. Today’s children have been surrounded, as no other generation before, by messages in magazines, on the radio, and on television (not to mention pop-ups on their computers) urging the purchase of the newest antiperspirant, breakfast food, or shampoo. More than 99 percent of U.S. households own televisions, and more than two-thirds of adolescents have television sets in their bedrooms (Rideout, Roberts, & Foehr, 2005).
Today’s youths constitute a huge consumers’ market. The increasing wealth of this age group has caused more and more businesses to cater directly to youths. Clothes, cosmetics, DVDs, sunglasses, grooming aids, sports equipment, electronic goods, and thousands of other items are given the hard sell to attract the dollars of adolescents.

Adolescent buying power has been growing at an enormous rate. Adolescents are not only earning more money themselves because they are working more, but parents are increasingly giving them cash. Most of their money (about one-third) goes for clothing, accessories, and food (Coinstar, 2003). Adolescent girls spend more time shopping than either adult women or men: the average teenage girl goes to a mall 54 times a year and spends 90 minutes per visit, 40 percent more time than other shoppers (Voight, 1999). Furthermore, adolescents are exercising more and more influence in regard to family purchases. American teens directed the spending of $190 billion in 2006, a 25 percent increase since 2001 (MarketResearch.com, 2006).

Families that have not been able to keep up with the struggle for money, status, and prestige seem poorer than ever. As a result, adolescents in those families often feel rejected. Youths who come from extremely poor families are more likely to be nonjoiners in school activities, are seldom elected to positions of prestige, and often seek status through antisocial behavior (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2005). These youths struggle for identity and sometimes become problems because they find an identity that middle-class society rejects.

### Evolving Educational Imperatives

Expanding technology and social complexity have increased the need for higher education and thus lengthened the period of adolescent dependency. It is vital that adolescents graduate from high school and even college if they are to get well-paying jobs. If American adolescents wish to be economically competitive with their peers in other nations, they must spend more days and years in school, put in more hours doing homework, and tackle more complex information. It is essential that they devote more time to learning new technological skills.

This increased need for education has contributed to the lengthened period of dependency on parents. In 2008, more than two-thirds (69 percent) of unmarried men between ages 18 and 24 lived at home with one or both parents; more than 63 percent of unmarried 18- to 24-year-old women did as well (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009b). The result has been the delay of full independence for these young people.

### Educational Attainment

Considerable progress has been made in educating U.S. students through high school age. In 2007, 85 percent of the population age 25 and older had completed at least four years of high school. This figure represents 89 percent of non-Hispanic Whites, 80 percent of African Americans, and 60 percent of Latinos (Crissey, 2009). The percentage of students who complete high school has doubled in the past 40 years. The number of students earning college degrees has not kept pace, however. In 2007, 28 percent of people age 25 and older had completed four or more years of college. This number represents 30 percent of non-Hispanic Whites but only 17 percent of African Americans and about 13 percent of Latinos. (A full 50 percent of Asian Americans have earned at least a bachelor’s degree.) Still, the percentage of students of all races who have completed four years or more of college has tripled since 1960. (See Figure 1.3). There is still a long way to go, however.

Part of the problem of raising higher educational levels is the rapid increase in costs. Although the amount of financial aid available in the forms of grants and loans has also increased, it has not kept pace with tuition. The cost of a college education is rising faster than the standard of living. Many students are burdened with repaying huge loans years after they graduate from college.

### Embracing the New Technology

One of the most exciting changes in education is happening as teachers become more experienced with computers and the Internet and introduce new uses for them. Educators across the nation continue to embrace the new electronic technologies. Many are developing dynamic lesson plans that include significant uses of online resources. In addition to using computers for research, many teachers employ computers in science classrooms as test equipment, in foreign-language labs for interactive work with students in other countries, in virtual field trips to the countries students are studying, in art classes to create 3-D images and videos, and in math labs to model complex mathematical equations. Students can send e-mail messages worldwide in minutes to correspond with those in other lands. In Internet chat rooms, individuals can participate in live, interactive discussions via the keyboard; video conferencing over the Web lets people speak face-to-face even when separated by a continent. The changes that
have been made in education over the past 30 years have been significant and inspiring, but none will likely have more effect on educational processes than classroom computers.

**Innovations in Career Education**

Another educational trend that will affect adolescents is an increasing awareness of the need for career preparation while in high school. Not all students graduate from high school, and of those who do, many do not go on to college. As good-paying jobs require ever more specialized skills, schools are positioning themselves to provide those skills to students.

At the present time, American schools still do far less to facilitate graduates’ entrance into the working world than do the schools in many European nations (Kerckhoff, 2002). However, increased opportunities for apprenticeships, as well as other innovations, may someday close that gap. (These new approaches are discussed more fully in Chapter 13.)

**FIGURE 1.3 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY AGE 25: 1960–2008**

Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey Historical Tables.

![Educational Attainment by Age 25: 1960–2008](image)

**The Evolving Family**

**Changes in the Likelihood of Marriage and Parenthood**

The likelihood of getting married and/or becoming a parent has changed over the past few decades. The marriage rate has declined, the age at which people marry has gone up, and the number of children per family has decreased. As shown in Figure 1.4, more and more adults are electing to remain single than was true in the past. Today's adolescents are more likely to remain single for quite a few more years than either their parents or their grandparents, if they marry at all.

**Age at Marriage**

Even when individuals choose to marry, they are waiting longer before doing so. The median age of marriage for men in 1970 was 23.2; in 2008, it was 27.4. The median age of marriage for women in 1970 was 20.8; in 2008, it was 27.6 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009).
ANSWERS WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO KNOW . . .

Are you more or less likely to get married than people of your parents’ generation?

Fewer individuals are marrying than in the past, and they are waiting longer before they do so.

Furthermore, the gap in median age of marriage for men and women has narrowed substantially.

The reasons for the trend to delay marriage include an increase in permissiveness toward premarital sex, more need and opportunities for higher education, decreased negative attitudes toward singlehood, and an increase in nonmarital cohabitation. This trend is significant because those who wait until their mid- to late-twenties to marry have a greater chance of marital success than those who wed earlier. The delay of marriage has also resulted in a marked increase in unmarried young adults in the population. More than one-third of the men and one-fourth of the women in the United States have not married by age 30.

In any case, even those adolescents who do eventually marry (which are the majority of them) will spend more years as single adults than those in previous generations. They will spend more years living alone, with their parents, with nonmarital partners, or with platonic roommates than those in earlier cohorts.
Family Size
Declining birthrates since 1965 have resulted in smaller families. The average number of people per household was 3.67 in 1960, 3.19 in 1985, and 2.56 in 2008. More than half of families in 2008 had no children of their own younger than age 18 at home. An additional 20 percent of families had only one child of their own at home who was younger than age 18. These figures seem almost incredible: more than 70 percent of U.S. families had one or no children younger than age 18 living at home. The fact is that women in the United States are having fewer children. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the average married woman had five children. Today, the average number of total births to an ever-married woman between ages 15 and 55 has declined to 1.8 (Dye, 2005). Marital delay and smaller family size go hand in hand since couples tend to have fewer children if they wait until they are older to wed.

Adolescents who come from smaller families enjoy several advantages. Their parents are more likely to give ample attention and care to each child. Adolescents who come from small families also have a greater opportunity to continue higher education, since parents' resources are not as stretched as they would be with additional children. On the other hand, they have fewer siblings with whom to interact.

Changes in Family Dynamics
Not only has the likelihood of marriage changed, but also the expectations that individuals bring to marriage. For example, adolescents today have grown up in a time when the fulfillment of romantic love and companionship—not economic necessity—are considered to be the primary reasons to get married. In some ways, this emphasis on personal relationships has placed more of a burden on the family unit. When people establish a family for love, companionship, and emotional security but do not find this fulfillment, they become disappointed and experience feelings of failure and frustration. This is one reason for the high rate of divorce in the United States. Rather than stay together for the sake of the family, couples often separate if their personal needs and expectations are not met.

The family has also gradually become more democratic. Throughout most of our nation's history, the American family was patriarchal, with the father considered the head of the household, having authority over and responsibility for other members of the family. Since he was head of the household and owner of the property, his wife and children were expected to reside with him or near his family, according to his choice. One characteristic of the traditional patriarchal family was a clear-cut distinction between the husband's and the wife's roles in the family. The husband was the breadwinner and was usually responsible for clearly defined chores that were considered “man's work.” The wife was responsible for “woman's work,” such as housecleaning, cooking, sewing, child-rearing, and other responsibilities. Children were expected to be submissive and obedient to their parents and to follow their directions, including assuming a considerable responsibility in the performance of family chores.

Gradually, a more democratic form of the family gradually evolved. This change came about for several reasons. First, the rise of the feminist movement brought greater economic power and freedom to women. In the 1870s, women gained the power to own property and to borrow money. Second, increasing educational opportunities for women and the gradual increase in the percentage of married women working outside the home encouraged the adoption of more egalitarian gender roles in the family. As more wives earned incomes, more husbands were asked to take on greater responsibilities for homemaking and child care. The general trend was toward a more equal voice in decision making and a more equitable distribution of family responsibility. Third, the recognition of the sexual capabilities of women in the 1960s and 1970s increased the demand for equality of sexual expression and fulfillment. With such recognition, marriages could be based on the mutual exchange of love and affection. The development of efficient contraceptives also freed women from unwanted pregnancies and enabled them to have personal lives as well as social lives with their husbands.

The child-study movement after World War II catalyzed the development of the child-centered family. No longer was the focus on what a child could do to serve his or her family but rather what the family could do to contribute to the total development of the child. The rights and needs of children as important members of the family were emphasized. As children matured, they demanded a greater voice in family decision making, which sometimes led to rebelliousness against their parents. Today's adolescents expect to have freedoms and degrees of influence that would have astounded their grandparents.

Nonmarital Cohabitation
Another significant change in marriage trends in the United States is the increase in the number of couples who cohabit before marriage. According to the government, there were 5.1 million unmarried cohabiting couples in the United States in 2004, which represents a 170 percent increase since 1980 (Fields, 2004). In excess of half of today's young adults will live...
with someone prior to marriage (Stanley, Whitton, & Markman, 2004). About 40 percent of these cohabiting couples have children (Fields, 2004). (A complete discussion of nonmarital cohabitation is found in Chapter 10.) Adolescents will be affected by this rise in cohabitation for two main reasons: (1) they will be more likely to be raised by nonmarried, cohabiting couples than in the past, and (2) they will be more likely to cohabit someday themselves.

Out-of-Wedlock Births

Another, related, trend worth noting is the dramatic rise in the number of births to unwed and never-wed mothers. This means that teens are more likely to become parents themselves prior to marriage and that they are also more likely to have been raised by single, never-wed mothers. (These issues are discussed more fully in Chapters 9 and 11.) Suffice it for now to say that unwed mothers are more likely to experience significant stress and to have a low standard of living than wed mothers. Moreover, their children are less likely to receive adequate prenatal care and to attend high-quality schools, and they are more likely to develop a variety of problems than children raised by married mothers.

Divorce

The divorce rate in the United States has been declining slightly since 1980 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2004; see Figure 1.5). In spite of this downward trend, the United States has one of the highest divorce rates in the world. Almost one-third of American adults have been divorced at least once (Krieder & Fields, 2002), and more than two-thirds of American children have experienced their parents’ divorce (Fields, 2003). The high divorce and separation rates, plus a rise in out-of-wedlock births, means that more than one-half of all children who were born in the 1980s and 1990s will spend a considerable amount of time living with only one parent. Today’s adolescents will most likely have less contact with their fathers than those in previous cohorts. Since most divorced adults remarry, these teenagers are more likely than those from previous generations to live in a blended, stepfamily situation.

The Evolving Sexual Landscape

The “sexual revolution” began in earnest in the 1970s with the development of the birth control pill and the rise of the feminist movement. This revolution has had both positive and negative effects upon adolescents.

Positive Effects of the Sexual Revolution

Acceptance of Sexual Desire

One benefit of the sexual revolution was a more open acknowledgment that humans are sexual beings. Individuals became more open, and presumably felt less guilty, about having sexual thoughts and feelings. Sex was something that could be discussed (although most parents still had trouble talking about it with their adolescent children). More comprehensive sex education courses began to be taught in schools. Now that sexuality was more widely accepted, teens could take some comfort in knowing that they were not abnormal in their longings or behaviors.

**FIGURE 1.5 DIVORCE RATES: 1960–2004**

Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census (2006).
Development of Scientific Knowledge About Sexual Functioning

Although biologists and physicians had studied the human body for centuries, little was known about the human sexual response prior to the 1960s. The mechanics of reproduction were rather well understood, as were malformations and diseases of the reproductive organs. Virtually no attention, however, had been paid to learning about sexual arousal, response, and expression. This all changed when the husband-and-wife research team of William Masters and Virginia Johnson began to conduct their well-known laboratory studies of the physical details of human sexual arousal. For the first time, the physiological changes in human sexual responses that occur under sexual stimulation were described. Since the pioneering work of Masters and Johnson (1966), other clinicians have made significant contributions to the field.

This knowledge of the sexual response system enables individuals to understand human sexual functioning better. In turn, this increased understanding can be used to enhance the pleasure of sexual relationships and to help solve many sexual problems. Knowing exactly what is to take place, medical personnel are now better able to assist individuals in dealing with sexual dysfunction. The study of the human sexual response system also exploded some sexual myths, one of which was that human females are not really sexual beings and are not able to respond sexually to the extent that males are. This fact tended to free females from the harmful philosophy that sex is a woman’s duty and a man’s pleasure.

Development of Contraceptives

The acceptability of sex for pleasure’s sake (as opposed to for procreation) spurred the development and availability of new forms of birth control. These include pills, implants, spermicides, condoms, diaphragms, patches, and less invasive sterilization techniques. The development of contraceptives freed women from the necessity of bearing one child after the other and enabled couples to plan their families rather than having them by chance. It also contributed to many individuals becoming more willing to be sexually active outside of marriage.

Willingness to Deal with Unwanted Sexual Behavior

Since the sexual revolution, people have become more willing to openly discuss sexual harassment and rape. Individuals who used to suffer the pain and humiliation of rape in silence can now come forth to confront their aggressors. The sexual abuse of children is also being faced and dealt with in a more helpful and healthful manner. Although American society still has a long way to go in reducing the incidence of sexual abuse of women and children, much progress has been made.

Flexibility of Gender Roles

Due in part to the sexual revolution, gender roles have undergone some drastic changes. Traditionally, society strictly defined what was meant by femininity and masculinity. People were stereotyped and pressured to live up to certain roles according to their genders. These gender-role stereotypes placed limitations on the relationships that people were capable of forming and on career and personal achievements. Today, gender roles have become more flexible and men and women are interchanging roles. Similarly, housekeeping and child care roles have expanded to include both sexes. Gender roles regarding choice of occupation have also changed, so that many women now occupy positions of leadership that were formerly reserved for men.

Negative Effects of the Sexual Revolution

Unfortunately, the more open sexual topics have become, the more opportunity there has been for this freedom to be abused. The media expose children to sexual images and violent materials before they learn to ride tricycles. Children have scant protection from sexual messages that 20 years ago would have been taboo for grown-ups. Adolescents are certainly affected by watching sexually explicit images on television and in the movies, and, as noted before, the Internet has made these images even more available. It is hardly uncommon to hear of parents’ reports of their 13-year-old children attending parties where they experiment sexually as part of the party games. A girl from Kansas said, “In fifth grade, my friends and I decided we would have sex with boys. Now we can’t get our reputations back. Now we’re the sluts of the school.” Another girl remarked, “It’s confusing, you’re pressured to have sex but when you do, you’re a whore” (Pipher, 1996).

An Earlier Beginning to Premarital Sexual Behavior

Researchers have noticed significant changes in premarital sexual attitudes and behavior over the past 540 years. Not only are youths more likely to have premarital intercourse, but also the age of their initial intercourse is younger than in the past. Research indicates that more than half of American teens have lost their virginity by their senior year in high school (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2006c). In addition, oral sex has become a common activity among even younger adolescents (Remez, 2000).
Unfortunately, many early and middle adolescents are not emotionally prepared to deal with intercourse. They are emotionally devastated when a relationship sours, they are not knowledgeable about birth control, they are not sufficiently concerned about sexually transmitted diseases, and they are uncertain as to how to set limits. Much early sexual behavior is therefore either unwanted or unsatisfactory.

Nonmarital Pregnancy
About 750,000 adolescent pregnancies, most of them unplanned, occur each year in the United States (Guttmacher Institute, 2006). Although this number is substantially lower from peak rates in the early 1990s, the American adolescent pregnancy rate is still far higher than that found in most of the rest of the industrialized world (Singh & Darrock, 2000). Almost half a million babies are born to adolescent girls annually, most of them to unwed, single mothers. More than 95 percent of these mothers keep their children and raise themselves rather than giving them up for adoption (Henshaw, 2003).

Almost no one considers this an ideal situation. Adolescent mothers are more likely households than other adolescent females to face continuing economic hardship, to fail to continue their education, and to fail to establish their own independent households. In addition, their children are similarly likely to be impoverished, to be deprived of prenatal care, and to have poor developmental outcomes. We must continue working to find ways to further reduce adolescent pregnancy rates.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS
Since the sexual revolution, the average person has more sexual partners in his or her lifetime than did those before it occurred. One of the most important consequences of the sexual revolution has been the rapid spread of STDs. In today's world, gonorrhea is more common than chicken pox, measles, mumps, whooping cough, tetanus, rubella, tuberculosis, and trichinosis combined. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 19 million new sexually transmitted infections develop each year in the United States, half of them to persons younger than age 25 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2004b). Adolescents are at high risk for STDs because they have multiple sex partners, do not consistently use safer sexual practices, and are frequently ignorant of STDs' symptoms. Many are unaware that several of the disorders are often asymptomatic (meaning that you might have an STD even though you exhibit no symptoms) and so unknowingly pass them on to their partners.

Unfortunately, although many STDs are merely unpleasant and uncomfortable, some can have serious consequences—ranging from serious illness through infertility to death. A number of them are becoming harder to treat since the organisms that cause them are becoming resistant to the available treatments. As with adolescent pregnancy, the adolescent STD situation is a national crisis that cannot be trivialized or ignored.

Confusion About Sex
Adolescents are more and more confused about their sexuality. They are encouraged to learn about and discuss it, and some are stimulated to sexual arousal, but they are not quite certain how and if they should express their sexuality when they are confronted with the dangers of losing their reputations, having their hearts broken, or contracting a dangerous STD.

Sex has been demystified, which may be a good thing, but it is also being marketed, which is not. Adolescents have moved from viewing sex as forbidden and terrifying to seeing it as accessible and interesting but still terrifying. Sex education and counseling are needed more than ever.

Evolving Safety Concerns
Another social change taking place in the United States is the increased fear of violence experienced by many individuals—adolescents as well as children and adults. Even before the tragedy of 9/11, there was a growing perception among many Americans that their neighborhoods and schools were not as safe as they would like. New fears of terrorism and global unrest have only augmented this anxiety.

Violent Crime
The violent crime rate in the United States fell precipitously during the mid- to late-1990s and, in fact, is now lower than at any time in the past 30 years (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Even so, there is an overall perception that the United States is becoming an ever
more dangerous place to live. Well-publicized shootings in a number of high schools have made many adolescents fearful for their own safety; there is a sense that violence can erupt anytime, anywhere and that there is nowhere to hide from it. In fact, adolescents have some reason to be afraid: even though crime rates have decreased, teenagers are more likely to be assaulted, raped, and robbed than persons in all other age groups (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

Violence in Society
Not only are significant percentages of adolescents involved in violent crime, but all of them have been exposed year after year to physical violence and disturbances in the world: the murders or attempted assassinations of national leaders, the bombings of embassies, terrorism at home and on a global scale, and war in more than a dozen countries. Television and the press have provided constant exposure to violence. The mass media have created an age of instant news: television viewers share in the experiences of starving Africans, bombings, tsunamis, wars, and massive earthquakes. Today’s youths have not just heard about killings, they have also seen them on the nightly news. They have been bombarded with sensory information that affects emotions and feelings as well as cognitive perceptions. As a result of this constant exposure to violence, many adolescents become insensitive to the
violence that goes on around them, and they begin to believe that violence is a necessary and accepted part of their lives.

**Violence in the Home**

Part of the violence that adolescents are exposed to may be traced back to violence in the home. Adolescents who are brought up in violent families in which spousal abuse and child abuse are common tend to become abusive mates and parents themselves. Youths generally model the marital aggression that they witness in their homes. Children who observe their fathers hitting their mothers are more likely to be perpetrators as well as victims of severe marital aggression. The greater the frequency of violence, the greater the chance that the young victims will grow up to be violent parents or partners. Moreover, teenagers who are exposed to violence are more likely to use violence against their parents (Holden, Geffner, & Jouriles, 1998).

**Violence in Schools**

There has recently been an increased awareness of the degree to which students are subjected to bullying at school. Although bullying generally does not entail much serious physical harm, it can be psychologically traumatizing. Many adolescents report that they are afraid to go to school for fear of being taunted and harassed by fellow students. The resulting stress can result in poor grades, depression, or psychosomatic symptoms or in the victims’ lashing out in turn. Larger numbers of students than previously thought are involved in bullying, either as victims, active perpetrators, or bystanders, and this seems to be across a broad range of countries (e.g., Due, Merlo, Harel-Fisch, Damsgaard, Holstein, et al., 2009).

**Violent Deaths**

The most disturbing development in recent years relates to adolescent mortality. Among adolescents ages 15 to 24 who die, more than three-fourths die violently. Death from accidents, suicides, and homicides has exceeded disease as the leading cause of death for youths (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2009). Young people are the only age group in the United States that has not enjoyed improved mortality over the past 30 plus years; the reason is the increase in violent deaths.

A greater percentage of adolescents have become involved in violent crime in recent years. This 15-year-old is accused of opening fire inside a California school, killing two classmates and wounding thirteen others.
Correlations

Throughout this text and already in this chapter, we have made statements such as “Adolescents who work long hours do less well in school than those who do not” and “Adolescents who watch a lot of violent television are more aggressive than those who do not.” Statements such as these describe correlations, or relationships between factors or situations. A correlation can be positive, meaning that as one factor increases, so does the other. For example, the sentence “Income level and years of schooling are positively correlated” means that the higher someone’s income, the more years he or she probably attended school. A correlation can also be negative, meaning that as one factor increases, the other decreases. For example, the statement “Weight and popularity are negatively correlated in Caucasian adolescent girls” means that the heavier a girl is, the less likely she is to be popular. Negative correlations are just as meaningful, and can be just as strong, as positive correlations: the difference between them lies in the direction of the relationship, not in its magnitude or certainty.

The most important thing to understand about correlations is that they do not imply causation. Many individuals will read a statement such as “Adolescents with high IQ scores do well in school” to mean that having a high IQ score causes someone to get good grades. This is a common mistake in interpretation.

Whenever a correlation exists, there are four possible explanations for its occurrence. One is that A might cause B. Having a high IQ score might indeed help you get good grades. Equally possible, however, is that B might cause A. That is, getting good grades and learning a lot in school might help you do well on an IQ test. There is a third possibility as well: that A and B mutually reinforce each other, that A causes B and B causes A. Having a high IQ score helps you do well in school, and because you do well in school you enjoy it and work hard at your studies, further increasing your IQ score. The fourth possibility, and the one that must always be kept in mind, is that A and B are not directly related to each other. Instead, some other factor, C, might cause both A and B. For example, an adolescent whose parents spend a good deal of time talking with him or her about how to solve problems might do well in school and have a high IQ. Having these discussions might independently promote getting good grades and might also help a teen do well on an IQ test. It is only coincidental that A and B occur together.

An example I often use in my intro psych class is this: there is a strong positive correlation between the number of ice cream cones purchased on a given day and the number of persons rushed to the hospital for heat stroke. Do you seriously believe the waffle cone I buy causes your uncle Fred to develop heat stroke? Of course not. The reason for the correlation is that there is a third, up-until-now unidentified factor—the temperature—that is independently causing both my desire for ice cream and your uncle Fred’s heat stroke. The lesson is this: when you read this text (or another text or a newspaper or magazine article), do not make the mistake of assuming that the factor described in the first half of a correlation caused the second factor. (See Figure 1.6.)
Another kind of family violence is perpetrated by the adolescent himself or herself. It includes parricide, the killing of a parent (which includes both patricide, the murder of a father, and matricide, the killing of a mother) and siblicide, the murder of a sibling. Although literary examples abound of such behavior—for example, Oedipus Rex, Cain and Abel—in fact, such behavior is sensational but uncommon. About 300 to 400 deaths per year are due to parricide (Sacks, 1994); roughly equal numbers of siblicides occur (Underwood & Patch, 1999).

Most parricides—90 percent—are committed by White males ages 14 to 17 (Shon & Targonski, 2003). Matricides are less common than patricides and matricides by females are especially rare. The most common profile of a perpetrator is a 17- or 18-year-old male from a middle- or upper-middle-class family who has no history of violent behavior. He usually acts alone and not in immediate self-defense, although most typically he has been repeatedly abused by his parent(s) (Hart & Helms, 2003). Research is contradictory as to whether these perpetrators are likely to have a psychological disorder, as some studies find that they do (e.g., Bourget, Gagne, & Labelle, 2007), while others find they do not (e.g., Hart & Helms, 2003).

Adolescents use different weapons when attacking their mothers or fathers, most likely because their fathers are usually bigger and stronger than themselves whereas their mothers are not. Guns are used more consistently in father homicides: they are more quickly lethal and can accomplish their task from a distance. Mothers are attacked with a broader range of weapons (Heide & Petee, 2007).

Siblicides are similar to and different from parricides. Perpetrators and victims tend to be older, so that adolescents are not the individuals most commonly involved. Whatever the age, brothers are more likely to be involved as both the victim and the murderer; when sisters are involved, they are more likely to be victims than perpetrators. As with parricide, guns are the weapon of choice. Usually the murder closely follows an argument; alcohol or other drugs are unlikely to be in use (Underwood & Patch, 1999).
quasi-experiment, preexisting groups of individuals are studied. The researcher cannot say to a 14-year-old girl, “OK, for the purposes of my experiment, today you are a 14-year-old boy. Get in that group over there.” If 14-year-old girls end up scoring differently than 14-year-old boys because experimental control was not maintained, the researcher will not be able to infer that this difference is caused by gender. For example, if we give 14-year-old girls and boys a math test, we might find that the boys do better than the girls. Does this have anything to do with gender directly? Maybe yes, maybe no. It might be that the boys, as a group, have taken more math classes, been more encouraged by their teachers, or not been teased by their peers for doing well in math. Without maintaining control, we cannot determine that gender per se caused the observed difference between the groups; other unspecified circumstances might have been more responsible. Again, it’s essential not to jump to causal conclusions when you read quasi-experimental or correlational data.

Research Designs That Measure Developmental Change

Although there are an unlimited number of questions we might wish to ask about adolescents, in some ways the most fundamental one involves age change. We want to know whether adolescents differ from children, whether early adolescents differ from late adolescents, and whether late adolescents differ from young adults. We are interested in whether there is stability across the lifespan, both within individual persons (will Stan be the same at 16 as he is at 11?) and between groups of individuals (as a group, are 16-year-olds different from 11-year-olds?). There are a number of research techniques that are specifically designed to answer one or both of these questions, all of them quasi-experimental. Again, you cannot randomly assign individuals to age groups and so do not have experimental control.

Cross-Sectional Research

The simplest of these designs is the cross-sectional study, which compares a group of persons who are one age with a group of persons who are another age. For example, imagine that I was interested in the issue of whether teens become less anxious as they move through adolescence. One way I could study this is to go out and find 100 thirteen-year-olds, 100 sixteen-year-olds, and 100 nineteen-year-olds. I would have 300 participants in my research, 100 in each of three age groups. I could then measure their anxiety levels in some way, giving the same test to all of my subjects.

Being a professional researcher, I would surely employ all sorts of fancy statistical analyses, but in essence what I would do next is compare the average scores of each group of subjects to one another. I would begin by calculating the mean scores for each group; imagine I found that the 13-year-olds averaged 70 on my test, whereas the 16-year-olds averaged a 55, and the 19-year-olds averaged a 32. Looking at the data, and assuming that a higher score indicates elevated anxiety levels, it seems that anxiety decreases from age 13 to age 19.

Not so fast, however. What if I looked more closely at the individual scores and realized that the 13-year-olds’ scores ranged from 10–180, the 16-year-olds’ scores ranged from 5–180, and the 19-year-olds’ scores ranged from 0–140. Would I be as confident now in my conclusions? Would I be as confident had the scores ranged from 70–72, 50–60, and 27–32, respectively? I hope not! Determining that the groups’ scores are different actually depends both upon the magnitude of the differences of their averages and the degree to which the scores in each group are similar to one another. (If you’ve taken statistics, you know this and understand that I am talking about examining means and standard deviations or variance.)

There is an obvious benefit to conducting cross-sectional research: you can get your results quickly. If my test is brief, I might be able to test all 300 of my subjects in a matter of a few weeks. However, there are limitations to this kind of research as well. One major drawback is that this design can never tell you whether traits are stable within individuals. Even if it were true that 20 percent of the subjects in each of my three age groups were highly anxious, I would have no way of knowing if the fretful 13-year-olds were the ones who were fretful at 16 or 19. Maybe, instead, many adolescents have short bouts of anxiety.

**true experiment**  a study in which the researcher maintains control to ensure there are no significant differences among his or her groups of participants before the study begins and that the different groups of participants have identical experiences (except for the one issue of interest).

**quasi-experiment**  a study in which the researcher compares preexisting groups.

**cross-sectional study**  a quasi-experimental study in which a group of persons who are one age is compared with a group of persons who are another age.
In addition, it is difficult to separate out true developmental differences from cohort effects in cross-sectional research. In the data set presented earlier, the 13-year-olds have the highest anxiety scores. Assuming that my measurement of anxiety was a good one, did I get this finding because younger adolescents truly are more anxious than older ones? Perhaps, instead, the 13-year-olds, who all attend middle school rather than high school, as do my other subjects, had an experience that my older subjects did not. Maybe there was a bomb scare or a school shooting in a middle school in a neighboring community that was highly publicized several weeks before I made my assessment. It would be possible that the middle schoolers were more affected by this incident than high schoolers. Cohort effects tend to increase between group differences and may make it seem that a true developmental difference exists when it does not.

Longitudinal Research
A very different approach to studying development is to conduct a longitudinal study. Longitudinal research begins with a single group of subjects and follows them as they age and mature. If, for instance, we were interested in determining whether individuals become more stubborn and dogmatic as they move through adolescence, we might find a group of 150 sixth-graders and give them a test to see how rigidly they cling to their ideas in the face of conflicting information. We could then wait several years and retest them, and then even call them back for a third testing when they were seniors in high school. (See Chapter 5 to see what our data might look like.)

There are two enormous benefits of conducting longitudinal research. First, because we are tracking the same individuals across time, we can get an idea of the temporal sequence by which events occur. These studies can help answer “chicken or egg” questions, such as whether teens are bullied because they are socially awkward or if they become socially awkward because they have been bullied. Although, as stated before, one must always be cautious about drawing firm causal conclusions from quasi-experimental data, one factor can cause another only if it precedes it in time. Therefore, if it turns out that teens are socially awkward before they are bullied, then we can logically conclude that the bullying did not cause their awkwardness. (We are on shakier ground if we try to conclude that their awkwardness caused them to be bullied.)

The second benefit of longitudinal research is that you can track trait stability within an individual. Using this technique, we can ascertain, as we could not with a cross-sectional study, if the anxious 13-year-old becomes the anxious 16-year-old who becomes the anxious 19-year-old. This is enormously important to know, as it has tremendous implications for the timing of and need for intervention.

There are downsides to longitudinal research as well. The first is that longitudinal research is, as its name implies, long. If a researcher is going to follow individuals from the time they are 12 to the time they are 20, she must wait eight years to collect her data. Another is that it is difficult to keep track of subjects over many years, and so fewer subjects are tested at the end than at the beginning of the study. This is not a large problem if the subjects withdraw randomly, but often this is not the case. Adolescents from lower-income families, for example, move more frequently than middle-class adolescents; this is also true of teens whose parents have divorced. The result is that the pool of subjects tested at the end of the study might be different in some significant ways than it was in the beginning, and this can result in misleading data. In addition, depending upon the nature of the study, sometimes there is a question of whether repeated participation in the study itself (testing effects) is coloring the results obtained in later years. Finally, cohort effects can also occur: it is possible to see the same surge in anxiety described earlier in a longitudinal study as well as in a cross-sectional one, and the question remains whether the occurrence is a true age effect or a result of a specific environmental condition that occurred at that precise time.

Cross-Sequential Research
Beginning in the 1990s, a new research design began to be used that was a hybrid of cross-sectional and longitudinal approaches. It was termed cross-sequential design or time-sequential research (Schaie, 1996). Although it takes longer to complete than cross-sectional studies, it is more efficient than longitudinal research and eliminates most of the problems associated with both of those two designs. Cross-sequential research begins by recruiting and testing subjects who are different ages—for example, 11, 14, and 17. These subjects are then retested at a later time or perhaps several different times, ideally until the age groups overlap: in this example, until the 11-year-olds are at least 14 and the 14-year-olds are at least 17. This does take three years, but at the end of that period, the researcher has collected data from subjects ranging in age from 11 to 20. Furthermore, the researcher can track individual differences and trait stability (something he couldn’t have done with cross-sectional research) and there is less of a problem with subject dropout and testing effects (as there would be with longitudinal research). Also, examination of the data allows one to determine...
Seven current societal changes are affecting the adolescent experience: the prolongation of adolescence, the presence of the Internet and other communication technologies, the changing job market, the need for a prolonged education, the changing family constellation, the sexual revolution, and the increased amount of exposure to violence.

In recent decades, adolescence has become greatly prolonged. Individuals in their twenties are less likely to be financially independent, to live in their own homes, to be married, or to have children than were adolescents in the past.

The Internet has had a profound effect on U.S. society. Cyberspace has opened up the world to adolescents in a way that would have been unimaginable in the past. Almost any fact can be found, and people around the globe can be contacted.

Unfortunately, many materials that are inappropriate for children and adolescents have also become available on the Internet. Unintended exposure to pornography can be unsettling.

The world of work continues to evolve. The average employed full-time worker puts in more hours now than at any other time in the past 50 years. An increasingly greater number of women, even mothers, are employed outside the home. Adolescents are ever more likely to hold down jobs after school. These

<table>
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<th>Design</th>
<th>2011 Who is tested</th>
<th>2015 Who is tested</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross-sectional</td>
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<td>No testing done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longitudinal</td>
<td>Group 1 (12 years old)</td>
<td>Group 1 (16 years old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-sequential</td>
<td>Group 1 (12 years old) Group 2 (14 years old) Group 3 (16 years old)</td>
<td>Group 1 (16 years old) Group 2 (18 years old) Group 3 (20 years old)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

whether group differences are truly due to maturation or are cohort effects (a potential confound in both of the other designs). Cross-sequential designs truly are the best of both worlds!

As you read descriptions of various studies throughout the text, keep in mind the benefits and limitations of the research design used. (See Figure 1.7 for an illustration of the differences of these three designs.)

**SUMMARY**

1. Adolescence is the period of growth between childhood and adulthood. It is usually considered to begin with puberty, but its ending is less clearly defined. It is often divided into early adolescence (ages 11 to 14), middle adolescence (15 to 17), and late adolescence (18 and older).
2. The various approaches to the study of adolescence include the biological, the cognitive, the psychosexual, and the social approaches.
3. The number of juveniles in the United States has been slowly but steadily increasing and will continue to do so. For a number of years, the increase had been less rapid, however, than that for other age groups, which means adolescents have been making up an ever smaller segment of the population. The relative size of the adolescent population has now stabilized. The American adolescent population is becoming increasingly diverse.
4. Because individuals born at about the same time experience the same historic events, different generations sometimes take on a predominant characteristic. There have been a number of identifiable cohorts since the beginning of the twentieth century, including the Lost Generation, the G.I. Generation, the Quiet Generation, the Baby Boomers, the members of Generation X, and the Millennial Generation.

5. Seven current societal changes are affecting the adolescent experience: the prolongation of adolescence, the presence of the Internet and other communication technologies, the changing job market, the need for a prolonged education, the changing family constellation, the sexual revolution, and the increased amount of exposure to violence.
6. In recent decades, adolescence has become greatly prolonged. Individuals in their twenties are less likely to be financially independent, to live in their own homes, to be married, or to have children than were adolescents in the past.
7. The Internet has had a profound effect on U.S. society. Cyberspace has opened up the world to adolescents in a way that would have been unimaginable in the past. Almost any fact can be found, and people around the globe can be contacted.
8. Unfortunately, many materials that are inappropriate for children and adolescents have also become available on the Internet. Unintended exposure to pornography can be unsettling.
9. The world of work continues to evolve. The average employed full-time worker puts in more hours now than at any other time in the past 50 years. An increasingly greater number of women, even mothers, are employed outside the home. Adolescents are ever more likely to hold down jobs after school. These
changes all have the potential of decreasing contact among family members.

10. Adolescents today have more money of their own to spend, and the consumer industry has responded by directing marketing and products their way.

11. Because high-paying jobs demand increasingly sophisticated skills, education is becoming more prolonged. More and more adolescents are graduating from high school, and to a lesser degree, more are graduating from college. Career-focused education is becoming more common.

12. Fewer individuals are marrying, and more are remaining single longer before they marry. Those who do marry are having fewer children. Most families have become more democratic and child centered.

13. More adolescents are being raised for at least part of their lives in a single-parent home. This is due to increases in both the nonmarital birthrate and the divorce rate.

14. Members of U.S. society are more open today about sexuality than they were in the past. This has had some positive effects—for example, the increased availability of information and contraception—but it has had some negative consequences, as well—such as increases in the prevalence of adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

15. In part due to terrorism and school shootings, Americans have an increased awareness of the violence around them. Even though the crime rate is not climbing, individuals are more fearful of their personal safety than in the past.

16. It is important to understand that a correlation between two factors does not imply that they are causally related. Much of the research about adolescence is quasi-experimental, not true experimental research.

17. Three main research methods are used to measure developmental change: cross-sectional studies, longitudinal studies, and cross-sequential studies. Of the three, cross-sequential studies provide the most benefits and have the fewest shortfalls.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

Personal Reflection
1. Are you an adolescent? If not, when did your adolescence end and why? If you are an adolescent, when do you anticipate adolescence ending? Why then?

2. How has the Internet affected your life? How much time do you spend online and what activities do you do? Do you always accurately portray yourself or do you perform identity experiments?

3. Did you ever consider not going to college? Why did you choose to continue your education?

4. Ideally, how many hours per week would you like to work? Would you be willing to work 45 hours per week if your job was otherwise good? 50 hours per week?

5. Have you ever cohabitated? Would you? Why or why not?

Group Discussion
6. What criteria should be used to determine when adolescence ends? Why are these criteria important? Is there an upper age limit to adolescence?

7. How greatly will the so-called “graying of America” affect the adolescent experience?

8. Who is affected by adolescence becoming more prolonged? Who benefits? Who is harmed?

9. What can society do to encourage more students to go on to college?

10. The nuclear family was the standard in U.S. society for a long time. Why have so many alternative family structures become common in recent decades?

11. What have been the most important social changes during the years you’ve been growing up? How have these changes affected your life?

Debate Questions
12. Today’s adolescents have too much independent spending money.

13. The sexual revolution has been more positive than negative.

14. Many young people are taking too long to become true adults.

15. Society is not any more violent than in the past.

16. The adolescent experience of the present generation is quite unique.

SUGGESTED READING


