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Book review

Adolescence and emerging adulthood: a cultural approach.

J. J. Arnett Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2001, 544pp, \$84.00

This first-edition text provides a thorough and thoughtful consideration of development during the second decade of life. Two key features set this apart from the other fine works that already exist in this niche. As such, it will surely have a permanent home on the bookshelves of scholars, instructors, and other professionals who teach and/or work with youth.

First, most texts end coverage around age 18, but Arnett covers the handful or so of years that follow—the period he calls “emerging adulthood.” This inclusion of emerging adulthood serves to clarify and further elucidate the theme of continuity that underlies lifespan development models. The second distinguishing feature is the strong emphasis of contextual influences on development during adolescence and emerging adulthood. Bronfenbrenner’s model serves as the organizing theoretical framework; in particular, the macrosystem (i.e., cultural attitudes, beliefs, heritage) and chronosystem (i.e., historical context) levels are brought to life with well-explained examples in Cultural, Historical, and Research “Special Focus” boxes. Readers will be captivated by discussion of the rise of the youth culture during the Roaring Twenties in America, the experiences of adolescents during 19th century England and during the Great Depression in the USA...even The King (i.e., Elvis) is invoked to help illustrate the importance of historical contexts. Discussion of Moroccan conceptions of adolescence, Germany’s apprenticeship program, Native American concepts of self, and the experiences of youth from Japanese, Nepalese, and Samoan cultures are just a few of the examples used to illustrate the importance of cultural contexts. Arnett also takes care to explain how scientific methods from multiple disciplines unearth and apply knowledge about adolescents and emerging adults. As more colleges and universities move to include culture and diversity components in their general education missions, instructors seeking to transform or refine their adolescent development courses to meet that goal would do well to consider adopting this text.

The text is well-organized; after the introductory chapter, the 13 that follow are divided into three sections: “Foundations” (i.e., biological and cognitive transitions, cultural beliefs, gender, and the self), “Contexts” (i.e., family and peer relationships, dating, love, and sexuality, school, work, and media) and “Problems and Prospects” (i.e., issues of mental health, and the opportunities and challenges posed by increased globalization in the 21st century). Coverage is current, comprehensive, and includes multiple standard pedagogical devices (e.g., key terms in bold, a glossary, critical thinking questions throughout each chapter). Arnett’s style is straightforward and serious, but not simplistic nor stuffy. While books are not to be judged by their covers, the physical attractiveness of a textbook is important. This text has substance and style—its length, clear and colorful charts, tables, and photographs all invite the reader beyond the

2

Book review / Journal of Adolescence ■ (■■■■) ■■■-■■■

1 front cover. Students and instructors will appreciate the companion website; a course syllabus can
2 be uploaded, and students and instructors will appreciate the companion website; a course
3 syllabus can be uploaded, and students can assess their learning with on-line practice quizzes. In
4 sum, Arnett has crafted a compelling and comprehensive account of adolescence and emerging
5 adulthood that is sure to become a classic.

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