The Editor's Inaugural Introduction

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Few editors have the honor and privilege of authoring the first pages of their journals. The task is quite humbling. Academic journals do much more than archive findings and communicate ideas. They set standards for judging scientific quality, certify the merit of ideas and their investigators, and contribute to their discipline's intellectual life. By necessity, introductions to new journals set an academic field's parameters and impact the production and dissemination of knowledge.

Introductions may be important, but they are paradoxically so. In all likelihood, few researchers actually read what those few inaugural editors write, and even fewer cite to them. In addition, introductions reflect on aspects of their field that do not exist; their statements have yet to be validated and stand the test of time. At their core, introductions seek to justify their journals' existence when they do not even yet really exist. A look at past introductory editorials reveals founding editors' awareness that introductions appear momentous and foundational yet lack validation, seek justification, and are quickly ignored. As with this introduction, that awareness leads to short statements that focus on journals' missions and rationales for them.

The mission of *Adolescent Research Review* is a simple one. It seeks to highlight, support and create programs of empirical research centered on the adolescent period. It embraces a developmental focus that draws from many social and behavioral science disciplines, ranging from such fields as psychological science, education,

criminology, public health, medicine, social work, sociology, family sciences, and human development. By drawing on diverse disciplines, the *Review* seeks to advance developmental science, practice or policy relating to adolescents. It does so by supporting serious, disciplined reviews that interpret and draw together original research to reach new insights presented with clarity and simplicity.

The rationale for the *Adolescent Research Review* also is a simple one. Approximations to truth in empirical research and scholarship rest on the quality and weight of evidence assembled and judged over time. Advancing a field of empirical inquiry requires more than original research. It requires programs of research. Science advances through research programs that are theory based, thematic, contextualized, sustained and cumulative. This is an important observation for research on adolescence. Solid research findings relating to the adolescent period now come from many fields of inquiry, at an exceedingly fast rate, and from across the globe. But, those findings will become useful and relevant only to the extent that they become part of research programs. Those programs will reach their greatest effect when researchers consolidate evidence addressing them and place that evidence in appropriate contexts to develop workable theories or provide conceptual backgrounds for subsequent research, practice or policy development.

The need for more deliberate development, communication, and promotion of research programs on adolescent development comes from the remarkable increase in research productivity and research outlets. Gone are the days (if they ever really existed) when researchers subscribed to flagship journals and relied on them for much of their work. Research relating to adolescence still comes from a broad variety of disciplinary journals, not just journals devoted to the adolescent period. As much as “adolescent” journals

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specialized to manage relevant research and can be credited for developing the field of adolescent research, they still produce a small fraction of research on adolescent development. The study of adolescence remains broad and deep, yet much of it is not recognized as belonging to the field of adolescent research.

While search engines accessing large databases can readily locate research from diverse fields of study, such research might not necessarily be used effectively to advance developmental understandings of adolescence. Making effective use of research results requires careful and appropriate evaluations of existing findings, a solid understanding of what constitutes competent research, an awareness of developmental issues, a keen sense of relevancy, a knack for identifying issues that matter, and an ability to weave compelling narratives. Developmental science focused on adolescence undoubtedly can benefit tremendously from rigorous reviews that carefully bring together existing research.

The state of developmental research outlets centered on adolescence means that *Adolescent Research Review* exists to address situations similar to those that end up making introductions to journals paradoxical. Primary research may be potentially important and even foundational, but attaining that status requires that the research be brought to

life, validated, supported, justified, and rendered useful. The *Review* provides a vehicle for doing just that. It asks authors to develop important developmental findings, even perhaps previously ignored findings, by integrating them with others to help make better sense of their meaning and relevance. It recognizes that single statements or empirical findings cannot stand on their own, that statements and findings gain significance through evaluations that come after them. It takes seriously the reality that research becomes important only when put to good use. As it does so, the *Review* will justify its own existence and fill an important gap. At least for now, it stands alone as an academic outlet dedicated to supporting researchers who use existing studies to foster research programs that reveal something original, substantive and important about the second decade of our lives.

Conflict of interest The author of this editorial reports no conflict of interest regarding the *Adolescent Research Review*.

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