


Introduction to Special Issue on the Teenage Brain

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The idea for this special issue came to me in a most prosaic situation. I was sitting in a doctor's office and picked up the first magazine on the table beside me. The *National Geographic* had an article titled "Beautiful Brains" about the teenage brain and how new research was starting to enlighten us about this critical period of development (ngm.national-geographic.com/print/2011/10/teenage-brains/dobbs-text).

Several things struck me about the article. First, the study of adolescence, any area of adolescence, has historically been a relatively quiescent add-on to other vital areas of developmental psychology. It was an area where there traditionally has been little empirical work, and theories of development tended to focus on children from the beginning of the field, with emphasis on adulthood and aging occurring in more recent times. The teen period was stuck in the middle, with more speculation than investigation. That is

changing with new techniques for studying the brain and its development. This is also a time in our history when the ideas of control—control of behavior, emotion, and thought—are important to many different areas of psychology. The phrase "What were you thinking?" is known to every parent of a teenager.

One of the scientists mentioned in the article was B. J. Casey of the Weill Cornell Medical College. I have known B. J. since her graduate-school days and knew her to be the perfect person to work on this issue. She is a marvelous scientist and generalist who could bring the issues to life and who understands the importance of telling the research stories in engaging language speaking to our very broad audience. She has a beautiful mind herself and has done a beautiful job bringing this issue to fruition. I am very proud of her and this issue of the journal.