

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Laudatory for Inaugural Klaus J Jacobs Research Prize Winner

Prof. Laurence Steinberg

By Prof. Anne Petersen

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Dear Mrs Renata Jacobs, dear Dr Christian Jacobs, dear members of the Jacobs family, dear President of the University of Zurich, dear Former Federal Councilor Pascal Couchepin, dear Professor Stock, dear Members of the Jacobs Foundation Board of Trustees, dear Members of the Prize Jury, dear Father Casutt, and last but definitely not least, dear Professor Steinberg, it is an honor to be with all of you today for this very special award ceremony.

Klaus J Jacobs cared deeply about the future of youth and he believed that research held the greatest promise for understanding and addressing the needs of young people to develop in positive, productive directions. It is most fitting, therefore, that the Jacobs Foundation chose to create this new award in his honor.

The distinguished Jury created to select the initial winner of the Klaus J Jacobs Research Prize included Professors Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, William J Wilson, Meinrad Perrez, Albert Bandura, Monique Boekaerts, and Rainer Silvereisen; I am honored to have served as the Jury Chair. All of us, in our professional careers, had the chance to witness Klaus Jacobs' visionary power and his deep belief in children and youth. This

service to the Jacobs Foundation and Klaus Jacobs was and continues to be an honor for all of us.

We on the jury understood the great significance of this inaugural award in terms of honoring Klaus Jacobs and setting an appropriately high standard for the award. While the challenge was daunting, we were delighted by the very high quality of the nominees. Being aware of the particular importance that the choice of candidates has when bestowing an award for the very first time, we deliberated at length to reach consensus about not only the most outstanding scientist but also the outstanding scientist whose work has been most consistent with Klaus Jacobs' intent to fund research that will make a difference for youth. We believe that we found our most outstanding candidate in Professor Laurence D. Steinberg – better known as Larry Steinberg.

Larry Steinberg, Distinguished University Professor and Laura H Carnell Professor of Psychology, Temple University, USA has devoted his career to improving young people's development. He has been a pioneer in the scientific study of adolescent development, using the best scientific theories and approaches to illuminate key developmental processes, and using these to evaluate and improve social and legal policies affecting young people. He has also disseminated broadly and effectively, the best scientific information in terms readily understood by policy-makers, practitioners, educators, parents, and the broader public.

As a scientist, Larry Steinberg is author of more than 250 scientific articles and chapters, as well as numerous books, primarily on

adolescent development. His research has spanned disciplines, and is deep as well as broad. In many of the areas he has focused on, he has made influential theoretical and empirical contributions that have changed the direction of the field. Two examples make clear this general inference. His early research with Ellen Greenberger studied systematically the general assumption that part-time work enhances youth development. These researchers found that the assumption held for lower amounts of work (below 20 hours a week); above that threshold, however, adolescent work experience had several negative effects, some quite serious such as decreasing school achievement as well as increasing drug and alcohol use, without any additional benefit to self-reliance, work orientation, and self-esteem. A second example, from among the many that could be drawn, is his systematic study of the belief that puberty causes conflict with parents. His findings revealed that becoming pubertal does temporarily cause some deterioration in relationships with parents. In addition, though, he found that existing family conflict caused the young adolescent to begin puberty at an earlier age than would otherwise be likely. This controversial finding stimulated a great deal of research which largely replicated his findings, and further, stimulated interest in studying social influences on human biology.

The research just cited represents just one of Larry's major findings related to parenting adolescents. He has conducted many studies on aspects of the adolescent-parent relationship, and is known as a leading researcher on this topic. He also published a very important book on parenting adolescents, which came out initially just as many parents were seeking a research-based but understandable to the educated lay

public volume on this important topic. Being able to discuss complex scientific findings in clear and understandable ways is another of Larry's tremendous gifts.

The research mentioned above as well as the rest of his work have helped make Professor Steinberg's research central to the body of science on human development. Indeed, his research has achieved very high impact on scientific publications according to the various indices. He has won virtually every award within developmental psychology. He is considered highly influential within psychology (or that field combined with psychiatry in some measures) in all of the quantitative rating or ranking systems of global scientific impact.

But the Jacobs Prize is not only based on scientific excellence. Research meriting the Prize must also be consequential. Here also Steinberg's body of research has had tremendous impact. Again, drawing just a couple of examples we see impressive effects. Steinberg's influential 1996 book on school reform, *Beyond the Classroom*, in which he and his colleagues presented evidence on the profound impact that non-school factors have on educational outcomes, was cited in the *New York Times* as one of the most important books on education written during that decade. His work on adolescent development and juvenile justice has transformed legal policy and practice across the United States. The U.S. Supreme Court's 2005 ruling, abolishing the juvenile death penalty, relied substantially on the argument advanced by Steinberg and colleagues, and their work was cited numerous times in the Court's majority opinion which established judicial precedent. He published another editorial on this work a couple weeks ago in the New York

Times. Very few scientists can claim to have influenced any policy, and even fewer affect judicial decisions. Larry Steinberg is a very special scientist!

Professor Steinberg is nationally and internationally renowned, relentlessly productive, and is a public spokesman for the most important issues of adolescent well-being in our time. Larry is not only an excellent scientist but also demonstrates unrelenting commitment to research into and promotion of the optimum development conditions for young people. All of this makes him an ideal candidate for this initial award. Klaus Jacobs would be proud of the first award winner of the prize in his honor.

Professor Steinberg and Dr Jacobs, would you please join me on the stage?