



Handbook of
ADOLESCENT
DEVELOPMENT
RESEARCH *and*
ITS IMPACT *on*
GLOBAL POLICY



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Handbook of Adolescent Development Research and Its Impact on Global Policy

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Jennifer E. Lansford
and
Perna Banati

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{ FOREWORD }

Young people have an important voice, and this book would not be complete without their opinions and thoughts.

This foreword presents the words of young people attending the United World College of the Adriatic (UWCAD). UWCAD is a part of the United World Colleges, a global educational movement that brings together students from across the globe with the aim to foster peace, international understanding, and a sustainable future. The school is attended by around 200 students aged between 16 and 19, mostly on full scholarship, from around 90 countries.

Our young contributors took up the challenge to write their responses to the following questions:

- If you could ask a senior politician in your country for attention to one challenge affecting young people, what would it be?
- What could international organizations, governments, and other decision-makers do to help the situation for adolescents in your country?
- What research and information are still needed to better understand adolescents today?
- What would you like adults working on issues for young people to know about this topic?

I ask for attention to the ones whose destinies are pre-determined from the day that they were born. We don't choose to be born in the slums, we don't choose to be born in a community where every lane seems like a thread of the perpetuating loom of poverty. Our lanes stink, our women are beaten up, in schools we have more sticks to be beaten up with than teachers to teach. We are only a part of the adolescent generation of my country but we are huge. Which is why, we deserve to be heard. We need more spaces to learn and keep repeating to ourselves that our community is not the end. It is possible to achieve what we dream of without people telling us that we can't. Adults—government leaders, policy makers, educators, social workers, activists this is an open invitation. Come, observe, understand, study and examine the causes behind why more than half of the kids in my community don't make it to high school, why their annual family income remains the same from generation to generation. Come and help us recreate our own loom where we shall thread our own stories in new colors of dreams and hope.

PRIYANKA, age 17, India

The Canadian Mental Health Association estimates that 3.2 million Canadian youth ages 12–19 are at risk for developing depression. Currently only 1/5 of Canadian children requiring mental health services receive them. First Nations youth are five times more likely to commit suicide than non-Aboriginal youth, and Inuit youth have a suicide rate eleven times the national average. This epidemic requires drastic and immediate action from the government. Why might one feel comfortable sharing a diagnosis like diabetes yet suppress sharing a diagnosis for depression? Because there is still a crushing stigma surrounding mental health. Conversations and education are not happening enough and they are not happening early enough. As I sit in a complicated math lesson my classmates dejectedly ask: “when am I ever going to use this?” Now I fully support the importance of math but let’s give students a class teaching them skills that they can apply that very afternoon. Let’s implement nation-wide mandatory mental health education courses in schools encompassing where to access resources, recognizing signs of mental illness, how to support others with mental illness—something holistic, researched and comprehensive. It could be customized for students from elementary to high school, reflecting relevant and appropriate issues at each level to empower students to better their mental health. For Aboriginal students, it should be in partnership with tribes as to not perpetuate the harmful colonialist attitudes which played a role in structuring the conditions, like residential schools, that contributed to this crisis in the first place.

STEPHANIE, age 17, Canada

Having more than 50% of all Mexicans under eighteen suffering from poverty has made it impossible to overcome the vicious cycle that starts with economic deficiency, then relates to mediocre nutrition and the underdevelopment of the brain, incrementing the already low rate of education in the country, leading to more dangerous situations for teenagers (e.g., teenage pregnancy, involvement in criminal organizations, and abuse of adolescent immigrants); provoking thousands of deaths each year, and increasing the population and the violence in poor social strata. On the other hand, Mexico has a deep-rooted problem of corrupt management of the country’s economic resources by the government, which pays its public servants almost as much as first world countries do, and funds its political parties disregarding how much votes they generate.

I would urge the international community to pressure the Mexican congress to establish a salary for the public servants that is proportionate to the GDP and the minimum salary of the country, and to support initiatives like congressman Manuel Clouthier’s “#SinVotoNoHayDinero”, which would save more than \$2,000,000,000 pesos each year by making the number of valid votes in elections the foundation of the total annual stock, instead of the number of registered electors. All savings would then have to be directed to social development programs that strengthen education, empower women, and provide

information about safe sexual activity and access to contraceptive methods. Tackling corruption is the most urgent step to take if there is to be a change in the Mexican adolescents' reality.

PAULINA, age 18, Mexico

If there was one thing I wish politicians and policy makers would focus more on in Norway, it would be mental health. High social and academic pressure has increased stress and mental health related issues over the past years, and many teenagers at home suffer from eating disorders, anxiety and depression. Mental health issues are still considered taboo in Norwegian society, and people shy away from talking about it. I have had many friends who have needed to see a psychiatrist, but disguised it as simply being sick or having to see the dentist. If the stigma is not addressed, and the support is not enhanced, a proportion of the young population will be left without help to diagnose and overcome mental health issues. I think politicians need to prioritize mental health, especially for young people to build a solid foundation for the future. This could be resolved by increasing the number of available school nurses, psychiatrists and doctors specializing in mental health. However, many of the issues are based in a mindset that mental health issues mean weakness, or failure. This means that becoming mentally ill can trap a lot of young people in a vicious cycle of perceived failure. Therefore, I hope policy makers can focus particularly on mild and moderate mental issues to prevent further repercussions in contribution to society in the future.

ELIZABETH, age 19, Norway

In my opinion, education is the most important challenge young people (have to) face nowadays. There are two extremes, adolescents having to take decisions about their later future at a far too young age and not pushing young people enough to do what they actually want to do later in life.

In order for the international community to solve, or first better this issue, it has to be ensured that every child on our planet is not deprived of its intrinsic rights. As conflicts and wars are part of many children's lives, tackling this issue can be a difficult one, though it is from utmost importance to ensure the upholding of children's rights, as they are the generations of tomorrow, which ultimately have to live with the burden that is caused right in this particular moment.

On the other hand, children and adolescents in so-called "Western countries" are often, in my opinion, not really able to ultimately decide on their own what they really want to do later on in their lives. Therefore, the international community should encourage adolescents in their passions and desires to ensure content and satisfied future generations; this will ultimately also benefit the international community on a large scale, as satisfaction in their personal lives will result in fewer conflicts amongst citizens.

This leads us to the mission statement of the United World Colleges that says, “UWC makes Education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future.”

ADAM, age 17, Austria

Approximately 27% of the Peruvian population is young (between 15 and 29 years old) and, every day, many have to face the tough challenges arising from living in a Latin American developing country. Unfortunately, Peru is affected by informality, violence, corruption, discrimination, and very restricted access to suitable health and education. For young people, lack of public safety, early pregnancy and restricted job opportunities are also main concerns.

Despite a vast legal framework that theoretically is oriented to improve quality of life for Peruvians (e.g., public policies to punish discrimination and promote social insertion of traditionally excluded sectors) and relevant efforts to increase infrastructure (for health, education and other areas), none of these actions has been enough. The main problem in Peru is the endemic lack of enforcement of legal rules and, consequently, the weak implementation of new policies because of limited resources available for authorities or continuation of corrupt practices.

In this context, young Peruvians’ principal claim is: “Grant us the same opportunities to achieve our personal development within a safe, predictable and equal environment.” We do not want privileges to avoid mandatory provisions or receive special treatments; we demand similar conditions for our individual growing according to our expectations, in order to be accurately empowered and with self-confidence to build our future. To obtain this purpose, we require collaboration of authorities, organized civil institutions, private companies and, obviously, our personal effort to assume and comply with our responsibility.

MARÍA, age 18, Peru

When we talk about development in a country, one of the main facts that we need to keep in mind is that kids need food to grow up.

In the Western world, the industrialization of the food production has for sure helped in achieving higher health standards that lead to a general increase in living conditions. It was one of the keys that has let Europe escape from a widely diffused child mortality.

However, industrialized food has become, in the recent years, a synonym for “lack of health”: the greed of producers acted against the benefit of the poorest parts of the population: too often poor kids in developed countries, such as the US, cannot afford expensive healthy food and they have to rely on cheap low-quality products.

In non-urban contexts, there is another problem: there is not enough food for everyone, and that food is not subject to health standards. This is the case of

sub-Saharan Africa, where there is a lack of a big and controlled food industry. Moreover, often corporate implants tend to be unsustainable and polluting, thus failing in ultimately achieving welfare for everyone.

One of the targets for any organization that aims to help youngsters around the world should be providing good quality food for everyone, with respect of the environment and the local traditions.

NICCOLÒ, age 18, Italy

I am writing to you with a major concern. I feel like the Belgian government doesn't address an important issue properly, namely poverty. In Belgium, 18.8% of the kids are born in a family with an income under the poverty threshold (1085€/month). That is almost two babies out of ten. Children experiencing poverty are mostly either from big (20%) or single-parent (36.5%) families. Children whose parents don't have a university degree (53.8%) or are immigrants (37.2%), are especially targeted too. One of the main causes of this poverty is the lack of income during pregnancy and most of all, after the child-birth, which is a vulnerable period for women. Since they do not get access to work, their socio-economic situation degrades. Throughout the whole country, 5% of women have to call for social aid just after giving birth. This indicates a considerable dependency. Despite this financial help, poverty stays alive in our society.

Another problem is that children living in poverty can bear the consequences for their whole life. Often, they do not get access to proper health care and are highly subject to unemployment, which is perceivable in the unemployment rate for the Belgian youth (-25), being 19.2%. Poverty is a vicious circle. In a country like ours, these numbers seem very unfair when looking at the GNP (454 787 million dollars). Thus, I would like to encourage you to spend more money and time to eradicate poverty, as it is severely undermining the prosperity of our country. The future of Belgium is its youth, and it is intolerable that such a great percentage of this youth lives in poverty. You are the daddy of all Belgian children, please take this matter into consideration. Thank you.

LÉONE, age 16, Belgium

One of the challenges that many adolescents face in Italy is the discrimination against homosexuals. Although this issue may seem as one that concerns only a part of the young population, it actually affects the whole society. In Italy the attitude towards homosexuals is really diverse: while in May 2016 a law has been passed that allows civil partnerships between same-sex couples, according to a survey of 2012, almost half of the people interviewed would not agree with an elementary school teacher being homosexual (41.4%) and the homosexuals questioned felt discriminated against almost the double compared to heterosexuals. Although young people are the most open-minded in the society, there are still cases of discrimination by adolescents; this is shown by the fact

that in the recent past a number of Italian youngsters have committed suicide after being victimised by their friends for their homosexuality. Discrimination is a form of violence that goes from verbal insults to cyber-bullying and it is often rooted in ignorance and lack of knowledge. For this reason we need a project of education that would teach the new generations to accept diversity since young age, with experts and trained teachers answering questions and dispelling myths connected with gender issues, sexuality and homosexuality. This way we would help our adolescents now and we would set the ground for a more aware and responsible society of the future.

DOMITILLA, age 18, Italy

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Jennifer E. Lansford, PhD, is a research professor at the Sanford School of Public Policy and faculty fellow of the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University. A developmental psychologist by training, Lansford leads an international study of parenting and child development in nine countries that is currently in its 10th annual year of data collection. Her research focuses on the development of aggression and other behavior problems in diverse cultural contexts, with an emphasis on how family and peer contexts contribute to or protect against these outcomes. She has consulted with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) on standards for parenting programs in a number of countries.

Prerna Banati, PhD, is chief of programs at UNICEF’s Office of Research—Innocenti. Her research focuses on the social and structural forces that are among the most fundamental determinants of poor well-being among children. She was a Takemi Fellow in the Department of Global Health and Population at Harvard University and has previously worked at the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria and at the World Health Organization (WHO). Before WHO, she was based in South Africa, leading research on community HIV prevention, and has published in the fields of HIV prevention, reproductive health, health systems, and financing.

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Handbook of Adolescent Development Research and Its Impact on Global Policy

Introduction: Adolescence in a Global Context

Prerna Banati and Jennifer E. Lansford

The Challenge of Adolescence

Although an aging world is a frequent preoccupation of economists, humanity as a whole is still young, with most people alive today under 30 (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2014). An estimated 1.8 billion adolescents are at the crossroads between childhood and the adult world, with 9 of 10 of these young people living in the developing world, more than half in urban areas (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2011; UNFPA, 2014). In many settings, they are responsible breadwinners, caregivers in their families and communities, socially and politically engaged change agents, and sometimes parents themselves.

Arguably, today's challenges for adolescents are more complex than those of their parents. They are growing up within a stagnating world economy, where real household incomes are largely sloping downward. Fifteen to twenty-four year-olds form around one quarter of the world's working poor (UNICEF, 2011). Many young girls' unwaged contributions of work within the home or family enterprise—including taking care of siblings or performing domestic duties—are largely unquantified. Technology is predicted to become a driving force of economic growth and social development. Yet, investments in digital education are low, and key principles of protection of privacy and data remain underrespected (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2017).

Addressing these challenges requires collective action. The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) spurred significant progress from 2000 to 2015. In the final report of the MDGs, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon reflected: "The global mobilization behind the Millennium Development Goals has produced the most successful anti-poverty movement in history" (United Nations, 2015, p. 3). The commitment, collectively agreed on by world leaders in 2000, spoke of "spar(ing) no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty." The translation of Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) into practical change strategies has enabled people across the world to improve their lives and their future prospects. Despite conflict and environmental threats, young children globally have benefitted from MDG successes. The number of out-of-school children of primary school age worldwide declined by almost half during the period 2000 to 2015, from 100 million to an estimated 57 million, with sub-Saharan Africa showing the best record of improvement; the global under-five mortality rate declined significantly over the same period, dropping from over 70 to 43 deaths per 1,000 live births (United Nations, 2015; UNICEF, 2015).

The value of the MDG framework was in galvanizing stakeholders around new and innovative partnerships motivated for change. The MDG era can be credited with showing how global collective action in partnership can be effectively designed, advocated, and implemented. The successor to the MDGs, the SDGs laid out in “The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet” (United Nations, 2014) describes 17 ambitious goals, including ending poverty and ensuring well-being for all ages, inclusive and equitable education, gender equality and empowerment, decent work, reducing inequality within and among countries, and others (United Nations, 2015).

Following from MDG-focused investments in the early years, the SDG framework signals political momentum to promote adolescent development and adolescent rights. The children born at the start of the MDG period have now matured into adolescence. The implementation of the SDGs will affect their life chances, choices, and transitions to adulthood. The implementation of the MDGs left behind many challenges to be addressed. For example, in India, where school enrolment has increased significantly during the MDG period, education quality has declined (Young Lives, 2013). The SDGs are an important, as yet unrealized, instrument to cement the gains of the MDGs and ensure a more secure future for adolescents.

At the same time, scientific advances have contributed to an expanded evidence base on adolescents. This has provided not only better insight into the adolescent life but also new opportunities to improve it. Research has identified this period as a unique window of development and a profound period of social, psychological, economic, and biological transition. Children do not take a direct path to adulthood, and today more is known about the challenges faced and opportunities available during the adolescent period and how these shape life trajectories. Over the last 35 years, specialized journals addressing adolescent issues have been launched, including the *Journal of Adolescence*, the *Journal of Adolescent Research*, and the *Journal of Research on Adolescence*. Unfortunately, often this information is not being translated into evidence-based programming.

Despite a growth in scholarly literature, much is still disproportionately focused on adolescent experience in high-income Western contexts, and comparatively few empirical studies of young people growing up in non-Western nations

are published in English language journals devoted to the field of adolescent development (Arnett, 2008; Larson et al., 2009). Much scientific evidence developed in the global north lacks reflection on the diverse experiences of adolescents around the world, including in harsh situations of war, conflict, chronic stress, or malnutrition.

As the field of adolescent development research matures, the application of findings to interventions will face an important challenge of how to understand the complex relations between developmental biology and the environments in which adolescents live. Interdisciplinary research is needed to fill knowledge gaps, situate evidence from research within a larger body of science, and consider a range of biological, behavioral, socioeconomic, and contextual factors to build a broader and more inclusive understanding of developmental processes.

Defining Adolescence

There is no universal agreement on the nature of adolescence, when adulthood begins, or the values to ascribe to this period of life, although adolescence is often defined as the developmental period from the onset of puberty until the transition to adulthood as marked by marriage, parenthood, completion of formal education, financial independence from parents, or a combination of these milestones (approximately ages 10–20). Arguably a social construction, the initial widespread use of “adolescence” carried gender, race, and class connotations and implications: “The “adolescent boy” was to be managed and contained, while allowed to be “wild”; the “adolescent girl” was to be trained and domesticated (Morrow, 2015). In modern times, adolescence has largely had a bad reputation. Used interchangeably with “teenager,” Western notions tend to describe a period of “storm and stress” (Hall, 1904), involving hormones, drama, unsafe experimentation, and irresponsibility. However, in many parts of the world, arriving at adolescence marks increasing responsibility—with many hurtling toward adulthood by entering the workforce, marriage, or parenthood. Adolescents in one country may be protected from economic or domestic responsibilities; in another, such responsibilities not only may be the norm, but also may be considered beneficial for both the adolescent and the family.

Adolescence, from the Latin *adolescere*, means “to grow to maturity” (Shute & Slee, 2015) and is usually associated with the teenage years or the second decade of life. The physical, psychological, and cultural expressions of adolescence can appear at different times in a young person’s life, adding to confusion in applying narrow definitions to this period. The biological phenomena associated with adolescence are likely to be the most recognized, but encompass within the biology a number of domains, including neuroscientific, hormonal, and cognitive. The onset of puberty is considered the main marker of the initiation of the adolescent period. Physical and sexual maturation is accompanied by social and economic

independence, development of identity, the acquisition of skills needed to fulfill adult relationships and roles, and the capacity for abstract reasoning (World Health Organization [WHO], 2016). Arguably, the distinctive part of adolescence occurs at the interface of the child and society. During this period of life, children are persuasively influenced by the opportunities and risks provided by their context, culture, norms, and environment. Importantly, gender roles are solidified during this time, male and female responsibilities are assigned, and gender differences entrenched. Normative processes that construct adolescence as a rite of passage into adulthood will undeniably shape context-specific definitions.

There have been a number of conventional approaches to understanding adolescence by “stages,” best exemplified by the early work of Piaget (1970). Many of the life stage approaches rely on specific (often European or North American) assumptions defining stages and transitions between them. Such constructions of adolescence have had a significant impact on frameworks for understanding and responding to adolescents. Implicit in such approaches is a somewhat prescribed and largely static description of the nature of each stage and an assumption of linear graduation between stages. Model deviations can be damaging. The rhetoric of “children left behind” can negatively characterize adolescents who have not followed prescribed trajectories and risk undermining their worth and dignity (Morrow, 2013).

Arguably, life stage models can be counterproductive and, rather than serving to provide useful concepts, can constrict scientific understanding of reality. In low-income countries, and especially in rural areas, despite increased school enrollment, children’s work is still expected, and large numbers of children combine school and work. As such, Western normative assumptions—such as exclusivity of work and school—undermine the validity of these models in different cultural contexts. Furthermore, factors such as class, poverty, intergenerational interdependence, or power relations that are underpinned by economic structures and inequality shape social life through dynamic nonlinear processes. Increasingly, traditional linear sequences of social role transitions such as finishing school, getting a job, getting married, and having children are also less well defined (Eisenberg et al., 2015).

Heterogeneity of capacities within the second decade further complicates attempts at a universal definition. The notion of evolving capacities, first introduced in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990, advises that adolescents will require varying degrees of protection, participation, and opportunity for autonomous decision-making at different ages, in different contexts, and across different areas of decision-making. Depending on age, context and the decision under question, domains of evolving capacity might differ—including the capacity to understand available alternatives; express preferences; articulate concerns; exercise choice; assess potential for benefit, risk, and harm; understand consequences of different courses of action, how they will affect him or her, the risks involved, and the short- and long-term implications; as well as the ability to

represent a value base (Lansdown, 2005). Taking these differences into account when thinking about interventions will be critical for improving their impact. Across the different domains of adolescence (e.g., physical, neurological, emotional, and social) capabilities will vary, and benchmarks for presumed capacity will differ (e.g., sexual consent/medical consent; conscription/voting).

Despite the absence of a unifying global definition, on the whole, history tells us that adolescence now takes up a larger proportion of the life course than ever before. As a consequence of changing patterns of childhood, infectious disease, and the resulting lowering of pubertal age, as well as delayed transitions to marriage and parenthood, the period of life between early childhood and adulthood is expanding, placing adolescence more centrally in the creation of well-being and human capital than previously (Schlegel & Barry, 1991). Progress in poverty reduction, industrialization, and rapid urbanization are among a number of drivers that have been implicated in the extension of this period.

For the purposes of this book, adolescence is considered to take place during the second decade of life, between the ages of 10 and 19, and is understood as a unique part of childhood. Early and later adolescence may have different influences and necessitate different policy and program approaches to improve well-being.

Conceptualizing Adolescent Development

With the rise of scientific inquiry into adolescents, the number of conceptual models to understand them has grown. This section does not seek to describe these models exhaustively. Instead, we describe three complementary frames to conceptualize adolescent well-being, drawing from commonly employed models seen in the literature, with the goal of providing a foundation for the chapters that follow in this volume. In doing so, we present some limitations to current conceptual thinking on adolescents.

A LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE OF ADOLESCENCE

Life course approaches have emerged over the past 50 years across several disciplines, including neurobiology, child psychology, sociology, and population sciences. Early empiric evidence to support such an approach came from demographic longitudinal studies of children and their exposure to events, family, education, and work roles. Developmental psychology introduced notions of life stages and turning points, while sociology added concepts of evolving history, adaptation, and social conditions. Despite varying disciplinary origins, these fields have shaped a framework with many common features.

Life course analyses are driven by concepts such as life trajectories, transitions, events, and turning points (Elder, 1985; Settersten & Mayer, 1997). *Life trajectory* refers to the pathway of progression through the aging process (Elder, 1985;

Elder et al., 2003; Liefbroer & Dykstra, 2000). The individual life course is made up of many interdependent trajectories, such as work, family, and educational trajectories that encompass life events and transitions (Settersten & Mayer, 1997). Each transition influences the probability of the next occurring. An event is usually conceptualized as a relatively abrupt change, whereas a transition is usually conceptualized as a more gradual change that evolves over time. Transitions and events are always placed within a larger trajectory, and the trajectory gives them a clear meaning (Elder, 1985; Settersten & Mayer, 1997). Turning points denote a substantial change in the direction of one's life and can be determined either subjectively or objectively (Hareven, 2000; Settersten & Mayer, 1997). Critical periods are a phase within the life span during which there is a heightened sensitivity to exogenous stimuli. These periods are particularly conducive to programmatic interventions, and growing evidence indicates that critical periods exist beyond prenatal development into early childhood and even adolescence (such as substance abuse; see Chambers et al., 2003).

Three key points emerge from the literature on the life course that are particularly relevant for adolescence. First, circumstances experienced in one phase of life can have consequences for later phases. Evidence shows that early childhood experiences can predict adolescent outcomes. For example, low birthweight predicts depression in adolescent girls (Costello et al., 2007). Similarly, experiences during adolescence can predict later life outcomes. The work of Falconi et al. (2014) showed that early adolescence is a sensitive developmental period for males, with stressors between 10 and 14 years of age being related more strongly to a shorter life span than stressors experienced earlier in life or after age 15.

It is also important to note that later consequences might occur in different domains of life. For example, links between different aspects of children's development have been modeled in the Young Lives project, identifying children's height at age 12 as associated with cognitive outcomes during adolescence (Sanchez, 2013). Specifically, in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam, an increase of 1 standard deviation in early height for age predicted an increase of cognitive skills by 6%–17% during adolescence (Sanchez, 2013). In addition, how children report feeling about themselves and their opportunities (psychosocial well-being) can relate to their later learning outcomes. Stunted or less healthy children may not achieve the same learning outcomes as their peers for many reasons—they might not go to school regularly, may start school later, or may learn less in school. Policy approaches to achieve success within one sector (education in this example) have a crucial interest in engaging beyond that sector (such as earlier health and nutrition) (Dornan, 2014).

Furthermore, the impact of stressors on an individual are cumulative, making it difficult for individuals to catch up once they fall behind. For example, in Vietnam 48% of those in the bottom quartile of math scores at age 12 had left school by age 15 (Rolleston et al., 2013), further limiting their life chances. Benefits in one age group can be derived from interventions in an earlier age group, with sustainable

improvement sometimes requiring multiple interventions. Longitudinal research also showed that gender differences emerge at particular points in time, interact with other forms of disadvantage, and accumulate. Disadvantage is transmitted intergenerationally, often through the educational or health status of the mother. Young people are particularly vulnerable to the impact of childhood and chronic poverty, which is often transmitted intergenerationally.

THE SOCIAL ECOLOGY OF ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model has compellingly illustrated the social ecology of the family as a context for human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983). The bioecological model of human development recognizes the importance of individual characteristics and relationships within the family, as well as those influencing the family unit from external sources. Through a number of well-developed examples, Bronfenbrenner described nested interactions—endogenous to the individual (adolescent), and interactions between the individual and family and between the family and peer groups, school, employment, and the community.

The emphasis in such a framework is placed on a multilevel, ecological model where micro-level actions are nested within broader macro contexts, appreciating the interplay of determinants operating in macro, meso-, and micro levels. As such, the framework must be dynamic across levels, operating multidirectionally. One can conceptualize the framework with three levels of influence. At the macro level, the importance is attributed to the context of society, including the broad set of structural and functional features that affect adolescents directly via mesolevel mediators. The macro level includes politics, history, economy, environment, social norms, values, and beliefs. At the mesolevel, institutions and policy processes, both public and private operating at community and national levels, constitute important dimensions. The mesolevel is at the interface of the macro-level contextual elements and outcomes at the individual (micro) level. This space represents a critical entry point for program and policy interventions to improve adolescent well-being. The micro level is the immediate interpersonal and individual contextual environment, which includes individual factors and interactions, including life histories.

Determinants of well-being manifest at different levels. For example, education and learning are particularly emphasized as important determinants of future livelihoods, and children's access to and individual performance in formal schooling is an important predictor of future success. At the mesolevel, the education system is an important institutional entry point for the delivery of programs to adolescents. Learning is also a key component of accelerating behavior change and shifting societal norms at the macro level.

Power has resonance across the framework, operating at all levels. Many notions of power and its role in shaping social hierarchies exist. The role of power

is recognized as a critical factor in the creation of societal inequities, operating at the macro and mesolevels, and has significant bearing on adolescent outcomes in the micro environment, such as in the case of interpersonal violence. In contrast, empowerment can also be a driver of positive change among adolescents.

Gender, closely linked to the distribution of power, is a normative social construct that has the ability to create systematic discrimination for girls and boys. Like power, gender is a strong determinant that operates across the framework. Girls and women are disproportionately affected, with limitations often placed on access to services, employment, and freedoms. Gender norms can be closely tied to cultural and religious practices and can give rise to intractable and deeply rooted forms of discrimination. The transition from childhood into adolescence is a particularly challenging and critical period for girls. Physical changes are often accompanied by body objectification from their social world, with implications for self-esteem, sense of self, and position as an individual. During adolescence, girls are at risk of losing confidence and optimism as they are pressured to submit to demands of adult femininity (Pipher, 1994). Concepts and labels of femininity as applied through critical feminist thought need to be brought to bear on the lives and experiences of girls to better understand how they become women. Examining the context of girls' lives from a feminist perspective can move beyond viewing girls and their experiences as a problem to contextualizing the vexed experience of growing up as a girl, particularly within patriarchal societies.

RIGHTS-BASED APPROACHES FOR ADOLESCENTS

Adolescent rights—the human rights of adolescents—include a range of key economic, social, cultural, and political entitlements that are transformational in the achievement of social justice. There is no single rights-based approach to development. However, human rights approaches share a number of common principles, including being based on the realization of normative standards, the recognition of the State as ultimate duty bearer (responsible for securing human rights); the availability of services, their accessibility, their acceptability and quality; participation; equality; nondiscrimination; and accountability. The child rights-based approach, under which adolescents' rights are protected, adds additional core principles: the responsibility of parents, families, and wider civil society as well as the State (although not replacing the State as main duty bearer), the best interests of the child, the right to survival and development, and respect for the views of the child.

There are a number of challenges associated with the implementation of rights-based approaches, such as when achieving the realization of one right violates another. The universality and indivisibility of rights infer that implementation strategies take into account the impact on rights in a holistic and comprehensive manner. A genuine rights-based approach has to consider the unintended consequences of interventions as well as whether or not it is achieving its main

goal. However, the trend toward strategies that focus strictly on desired results (e.g., “results-based management”) among international development agencies has inadvertently driven programming to ignore unintended consequences, leaving these rarely measured and poorly understood. For adolescents, this case is most acute in trade-offs between the need for protection (e.g., from hazardous or exploitative labor practices) on the one hand with the benefits of participation (e.g., in income-generating activities) on the other. Additional critiques include the disconnection between the principles underpinning rights-based approaches and their application. For example, risk-averse institutions may be uncomfortable challenging the political and social status quo, thereby reducing impact at the project level rather than at national levels that support systemic change.

The landmark CRC introduced an important concept for adolescents. The principle of best interests of the child (defined in Article 3) “shall be a primary consideration in all actions affecting children.” This umbrella provision has far-reaching implications throughout the CRC and has been widely studied and used in matters of adoption, migration and trafficking, juvenile justice, and medical consent. The benevolent underpinning of the best interest concept poses some practical challenges—largely in the potential for value-laden determinations of what is the best interest, particularly given considerations of evolving capacity and context (Alston & Gilmour-Walsh, 1996). Unlike younger children, adolescents can voice their opinion, which alleviates some of the difficulties in determining their best interest. Evolving capacities of the child and the child’s ability to reason through choices when making decisions present some challenges, and adolescents’ inherent need to engage in some types of risk-taking behavior might result in competing determinations of what is in their best interest. The inherent vulnerabilities of adolescence, the psychological instability, and the responsiveness to peer pressure all present legitimate difficulties in adolescents being able to determine their own best interest but are also reasons that checking on their best interest is so important.

Central to any rights-based framework is the concept of human capabilities. Human capabilities (i.e., what people are actually able to do and to be) are indicative of quality of life (Sen, 1999). Sen’s capabilities approach challenges existing paradigms of development to look beyond economic growth as the marker of development success. This approach to well-being emphasizes the importance of agency and participation, freedom of choice, individual heterogeneity, and the multiple dimensions of welfare (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993; Sen, 1999, 2001).

The capabilities approach has been concerned with social institutions, laws, norms, and practices as they relate to discriminations that deny adolescents the ability to reach their full potential. One can seek to understand how this potential is both constructed and limited in ways that promote or forestall equalities. Indeed, the capabilities framework has been applied to young people in some limited domains (Stoecklin & Bonvin, 2014), including child labor (Biggeri et al., 2006) and gender inequality (Nussbaum, 2001). Advancing the positive capabilities of adolescents requires the application of a strengths perspective. Initially proposed

by Weick et al. (1989), this was described as a model that aimed to move beyond problem-focused reference points, even among children diagnosed with emotional or behavioral difficulties. This approach aims to shift the discourse toward a recognition of the inherent abilities within children to adapt and respond. The focus on positive factors in adolescents’ lives is transformed into change strategies designed to enhance strengths. Fergus and Zimmerman (2005) identified two types of promotive factors: assets and resources. Assets include individuals’ positive internal attributes, such as self-efficacy and self-esteem; resources include factors in the environment such as supportive parents, adult mentors, and programs that promote positive youth development by teaching new skills (Zimmerman et al., 2013).

This section described three overarching conceptual frameworks. While originating from different disciplines, they are naturally coherent and form the bases on which research on adolescence has been built and from which the chapters presented in this book have drawn. Importantly, these frameworks have common themes that inform this book. First, adolescence as a period is one part of a life course. Second, numerous factors, including individual, institutional, and structural, affect adolescents both directly and through their families and peers. And, last but not least, our support to adolescents should be grounded in a rights-based framework that acknowledges both the assets of adolescence and protection from risks.

Shaping the Policy Landscape for Adolescents

While most policymakers are convinced that human rights must be respected and that poverty and inequality must be reduced, it is not always clear how to achieve these goals. Global development agendas, such as the SDGs, do not provide a road map, but rather a menu of options. The SDGs in particular aim to encourage policymakers to take a broad view of how policy can affect a wide range of social progress measures for their populations (Figure 1.1). The imbalance between policy options and the number of targets they should achieve means that effective responses will require much innovation and planning. To do this well, a greater understanding is needed of how targets can complement one another—across sectors and across time—and how policies might be coordinated to achieve better



FIGURE 1.1 *The United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goal framework.*

Source: The Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the Member States of the United Nations by resolution A/RES/70/1 of the General Assembly of 25 September 2015, freely reproduced.

outcomes most efficiently. Delivering sectoral results alone is not enough to ensure social progress, and monitoring the well-being of adolescents as a constituency growing up in a particular social context will tell us more about social progress beyond the sum of its sectoral parts.

Such an analysis is particularly relevant in our discussion of adolescence, where myriad policies and programs bear on this stage of life, contributing to the choices and chances that adolescents can take advantage of. The obligations of the States to protect all adolescents from potential risks and harms should be coupled with the need to recognize their evolving capacities—increasing understanding, competencies, and levels of agency—and to recognize adolescence as a positive developmental stage of life. At the same time, the recognition of the principle of evolving capacities should not discourage States from guaranteeing appropriate protection, as adolescence is a stage of life when many risks for well-being, development, and rights are present.

To explore the enabling policy environment for adolescents and identify some themes for consideration in a discussion on substantive and redistributive policies that promote adolescent well-being, we provide as examples key international frameworks and legal conventions that are relevant for adolescents (Table 1.1). We also provide examples from the region with the largest number of adolescents: South Asia (Table 1.2). Exploring the lives and environments of adolescents in this region has highlighted the wide variability of experiences and responses and the importance of context in ensuring adequate interventions that respond to adolescents' needs.

In examining the delicate balance between protective and empowering rights, analysis has pointed to a number of key findings. First, children under 10 tend to be covered by more protective national child policies, whereas youth over 16 tend to be covered by national youth policies that seek to empower young people to enter the workforce or contribute economically. Adolescents between 10 and 16 tend to slip through the cracks in many countries. Policies that do cover adolescents tend to be focused on risky behaviors, particularly sexual and reproductive behavior, HIV, alcohol, drugs, and tobacco consumption.

Second, evidence points to a challenge in ensuring policy coherence. This is particularly notable when analyzing minimum ages—and exceptions—across a wide array of issues, such as majority, voting and candidacy, marriage, and employment. A recent study covering Central and Eastern Europe identified a number of such inconsistencies (UNICEF, 2016). For example, in general the minimum age for accessing services in the area of health is higher than in other domains, such as civic and social participation, highlighting an inconsistency in the presumed capacity of the adolescent. High age barriers in accessing sexual and reproductive health services are also contrary to the often lower age of consent to sexual relationships and even marriage at younger ages (Camilletti, 2017; UNICEF, 2016). Education policies and employment policies also tend to be asynchronous (UNICEF, 2016).

Civil and Political Rights	<p>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: 1976</p> <p>Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: 1976</p> <p>Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty: 1991</p>	Parental Responsibilities	<p>Hague Convention on Parental Responsibilities (HHCH)</p> <p>Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption: 1993</p> <p>Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction: 1980</p>
Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights	<p>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: 1976</p> <p>Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: 2013</p>	Child Marriage Disabilities	<p>Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages: 1962</p> <p>Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities: 2008</p>
Torture	<p>Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment: 1987</p> <p>Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment: 2006</p>		<p>Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities: 2008</p> <p>Acceptance of the Inquiry Procedure (Art. 6–7)</p>

TABLE 1.2 Description of Key Legal and Policy Frameworks in South Asia

Country	Age of Majority ^a	Age of Criminal Responsibility ^b	Death Penalty ^c	Minimum Age of Marriage ^d	Exceptions for General Minimum Age of Marriage ^d	Minimum Age for Full-Time and Light Work ^e
<i>Afghanistan</i>	18	12	No for individuals under 18 at the time of crime	18 for boys, 16 for girls; no exceptions to minimum age legislation based on parental consent	For girls, earlier marriage is legal under religious law	18 for general work, 15 for light work, 14 for those wanting to learn a profession
<i>Bangladesh</i>	18	9	Yes	21 for boys, 18 for girls; no exceptions to minimum age legislation based on parental consent	None	12 for light work, 14 for work in general
<i>Bhutan</i>	18	12	N/A	18 for both; no exceptions to minimum age legislation based on parental consent	None	18, although 13–17 allowed for some work and workplaces other than worst forms of child labor
<i>India</i>	18	Varies according to offense: 7 or 12, or 16 for a heinous offense	No for individuals under 18 at the time of crime	21 for boys, 18 for girls; no exceptions to minimum age legislation based on parental consent	None	No legislated national minimum age for work in general or for light work
<i>Maldives</i>	18	Different interpretations; however, 15 is the age at which immaturity is presumed	Yes	18 for both; no exceptions based on parental consent, but the registrar of marriages has the discretion to allow for earlier marriage if the child has attained puberty	None	16, except when in connection with training associated with their education or deportment and when participating in the family's line of work
<i>Nepal</i>	16; however, the definition of child varies in different legislation	10	No	20; no exceptions to minimum age legislation based on parental consent	Not available	14, but no provision for minimum age for light work

<i>Pakistan</i>	18	7, however national discussions under way to increase age to 10	Yes	18 for boys, 16 for girls; no exceptions to minimum age legislation based on parental consent	Yes, the parties must have a Quazi's permission to marry before contracting into marriage if they are Muslims	Province specific, no legislated national minimum age
<i>Sri Lanka</i>	18	8	No	18 for both, except for Muslims (no minimum age); earlier marriage is legal with parental consent (regardless of child's gender)	No minimum age of marriage for Muslims, but rule and practice has been to be 12 years old	14, but with major exceptions allowing younger children to work

Country	Voting Age (Lower–Upper Houses) ^f	Beginning Secondary Education? ^g	Completing Secondary Education? ^g	Age of Sexual Consent ^h	Youth Public Institutions ⁱ
<i>Afghanistan</i>	18–N/A (indirect elections)	Tuition free and compulsory	Tuition free but not compulsory	None: sexual activity outside marriage is illegal	Office of the Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs (DMoYA), part of the Ministry of Information and Culture
<i>Bangladesh</i>	18–N/A (unicameral)	Tuition reported, and not compulsory; no tuition fee for all girls attending public schools outside metropolitan areas; Core books free for all	Tuition reported and not compulsory; no tuition fee for all girls from outside metropolitan areas for government-supported schools; core books are free for all	None for male, 14 for female (or 13 if married); sexual relations are only legally and religiously allowed between married couples	Department of Youth Development (DYD), Ministry of Youth and Sports
<i>Bhutan</i>	18–18	Tuition free but not compulsory	Tuition free but not compulsory	If the child is under 12, the person he/she had sexual intercourse with is accused of statutory rape	Department of Youth and Sports (DYS) within the Ministry of Education

(continued)

TABLE 1.2 Continued

Country	Voting Age (Lower–Upper Houses) ^f	Beginning Secondary Education? ^g	Completing Secondary Education? ^g	Age of Sexual Consent ^h	Youth Public Institutions ⁱ
India	18–25	Tuition free and compulsory; right to free and compulsory education to all children ages 6–14	Tuition reported and not compulsory	N/A for male, 16 for female	Ministry of Youth and Sports, supported by the respective departments in the states and its Department of Youth Affairs
Maldives	18–N/A (unicameral)	Tuition free and not compulsory	Tuition free but not compulsory	None: sexual activity outside marriage is illegal	Ministry of Youth and Sports, however, unclear mandate
Nepal	18–N/A (indirect elections)	Tuition free and not compulsory; tuition free and compulsory up to Grade 8	Tuition free and compulsory up to Grade 8 and free up to Grade 12	N/A for male, 16 for female (based on the definition of rape—consent by person under 16 is not considered)	Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS)
Pakistan	21–N/A (indirect elections)	Tuition reported and not compulsory (WORLD Policy Analysis Center)	Tuition reported and not compulsory (WORLD Policy Analysis Center)	No set minimum age; Islam does not permit sex before marriage	Provincial-level departments
Sri Lanka	18–N/A (unicameral)	Tuition free and compulsory	Tuition free and compulsory	Not mentioned for males, 16 for females	Youth Development Division within the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skill Development

^a**Age of majority:** *Afghanistan:* Civil Law of the Republic of Afghanistan (Civil Code)—Official Gazette No. 353, published January 5, 1977 (1355/10/15 A.P.); *Bangladesh:* Government of Bangladesh. (1875). Age of Majority Act. *Bhutan:* Section 16, Child Care and Protection Act of Bhutan 2011; *India:* The Indian Majority Act, 1875; *Maldives:* CRC Committee (2006), Forty-Fifth Session: Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention. Concluding Observations: Maldives; *Nepal:* Children Act 1992; *Pakistan:* Government of Pakistan. (1860), Pakistan Penal Code, Article 299; *Sri Lanka:* CRC Committee (2008). Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention Third and Fourth Periodic Report of States Parties Due in 2003. Sri Lanka.

^b**Age of criminal responsibility:** *Afghanistan:* Article 10, Juvenile Law (Juvenile Code)—Official Gazette No. 846, published March 23, 2005 (1384/01/03 A.P.); *Bangladesh:* Government of Bangladesh (1860), Penal Code, Section 83; *Bhutan:* Government of Bhutan (2004). Penal code of Bhutan, Section 114; Amendment Act of Bhutan 2011; *India:* The Indian Penal Code, 1860 Act No. 45 of 1860 1* [6th October, 1860.]; the Code of Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 (CrPC); Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection for Children) Act, 2000 (JJ Act); *Maldives:* Government of Maldives. (2003), Penal Code. Regulation on Conducting Trials, Investigations and Sentencing Fairly for Offences Committed by Minors, Art. 4(b), 5(a)-(c), 6. According to another translation a person under the age of 15 is presumed immature and thus excused, <https://www.law.upenn.edu/live/files/4203-maldives-penal-code-2014>; *Nepal:* Children’s Act of Nepal (1992), Section 11(1) and (2); *Pakistan:* Pakistan Penal Code (Act XLV of 1860), Sections 82 and 83; *Sri Lanka:* Government of Sri Lanka (1883), Penal Code, Sections 75 and 76.

Death penalty/capital punishment: *Afghanistan:* Afghanistan Juvenile Code (2005), Art. 31; *Bangladesh:* Children Act 2013, Section 33(1); *Bhutan:* 2008 Constitution (Article 7, Section 18); *India:* The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000, Section 21, http://trackthemissingchild.gov.in/trackchild/readwrite/JJAct_2015.pdf; *Maldives:* Penal Code; 2014 Regulation on Investigation & Execution of Sentence for Willful Murder; *Nepal:* The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal (1990); *Pakistan:* Juvenile Justice System Ordinance, 2000; *Sri Lanka:* Sri Lanka (1885), Penal Code, Section 53.

Minimum age of marriage and exceptions to the general minimum marriageable age under customary or religious law: *Afghanistan:* Afghan Civil Code (1977) Article 70; *Bangladesh:* The Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929; The Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Ordinance, 1984, sections 2 and 4; WORLD Policy Analysis Centre; *Bhutan:* Marriage Act of Bhutan, 1980; *India:* The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2007; *Maldives:* Family Act 2000. However, the Registrar of Marriages has the discretion to allow for earlier marriage if puberty has been attained by the child in question; *Nepal:* Marriage Registration Act 2006; Act to Amend and Repeal Some Nepal Act 2072 (2015) Amending the Chapter on Marriage in the General Code (Muluki Ain), 2020 (1964); *Pakistan:* Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA) 1929; Sri Lanka: Marriage Registration (Amendment) Act No. 18 of 1995, Kandyan Marriage and Divorce (Amendment) Act, No. 19 of 1995, Muslim Marriages and Divorce Act (1951); Marriages Ordinance 1997.

Minimum age for full-time and light work: *Afghanistan:* Labour Law, 2007, Art 13; *Bangladesh:* Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Sections 34 and 44; *Bhutan:* Labor and Employment Act, 2007, Section 171; *India:* US Department of Labour, India, <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/India.htm>; *Maldives:* Employment Act, 2008, Art 6; *Nepal:* Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 200; *Pakistan:* US Department of Labour, Pakistan, http://www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/Pakistan.htm#_ENREF_37; *Sri Lanka:* Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children (Amendment) Act No. 8 of 2003.

Voting age: Source for all countries: <http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp>.

Beginning and completing secondary education: *Bangladesh:* Compulsory Primary Education Act 1990. The revision of the act is under way to extend primary education up to grade VIII; *India:* Right to Education Bill (draft); 86th Constitution Amendment Act, Article 21A; Constitution of India (1949, and amendments in 2007): Article 45; *Nepal:* Education Act (Amendment Bill) 2072 (2016); *Rest of the countries:* WORLD Policy Analysis Centre; UNICEF specialists.

Age of sexual consent: *Bangladesh:* Penal Code, Sections 366A, 375 and 376; *Bhutan:* Penal Code of Bhutan, Sections 181—on statutory rape—and 183 on rape; *Nepal:* Penal Code Nepal, Chapter 14, On Rape: Number 1.479; *Sri Lanka:* Penal Code Sri Lanka, section 363. *For the rest of the countries:* FOSIGRID; UNICEF consultations.

Youth public institutions: For all countries, information was found on <http://www.youthpolicy.org>. Links to the website of specific authorities: *Afghanistan:* <http://moic.gov.af/en/page/1293>; *Bangladesh:* <http://www.dyd.gov.bd/site/view/policies/Youth-Policy>; <http://www.moysports.gov.bd/>; *Bhutan:* <http://www.dys.gov.bt/>; *India:* <http://yas.nic.in/> and department at <http://yas.nic.in/youth>; *Maldives:* <http://youth.gov.mv/en>; *Nepal:* <http://www.moys.gov.np/>; *Pakistan:* provincial-level links are the following: Punjab, <https://www.punjab.gov.pk/yasat>; Sindh, <http://www.moya.gov.pk/>; Balochistan, http://www.balochistan.gov.pk/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=31&Itemid=493; Kybher Pakhtunkhwa, <http://kp.gov.pk/Departments/RIC/page.php?PageId=144>; Gilgit Baltistan, link not available; Azad Jammu and Kashmir, link not available.

Note: This section has been supported by analysis from Elena Camilletti.

To be effective, policy responses will need to engage with the profoundly interdependent and complex nature of adolescent development embedded in context (Figure 1.2). In Bangladesh, flooding and other natural disasters have been key drivers of the harmful practice of child marriage. There, almost one in three girls is married before age 15 (UNFPA, 2016). In an ideal scenario, mutually reinforcing policies will be in place at all levels—institutional, community, national, and even international. Examples of multisectoral action (e.g., in HIV/AIDS response in sub-Saharan Africa) can provide lessons on integrated approaches—particularly unified budget and results frameworks—that are relevant for the challenges of adolescent programming.

Third, the ways in which policies are designed tend to be lacking in life course evidence. However, it would be wrong to suggest that policymakers ignore life course implications. Rather, policy and program choices and how they sequence or play out across an adolescent’s life are not well mapped or well understood. Social policy needs to have a long-term horizon. This involves governments and international organizations moving beyond short-term goals aligned to political cycles and demanding evidence that considers the interconnectedness and dependencies across different life stages.

Finally, and importantly, substantive policies need to engage head-on with difficult issues of adolescent development, including how to respond to the most

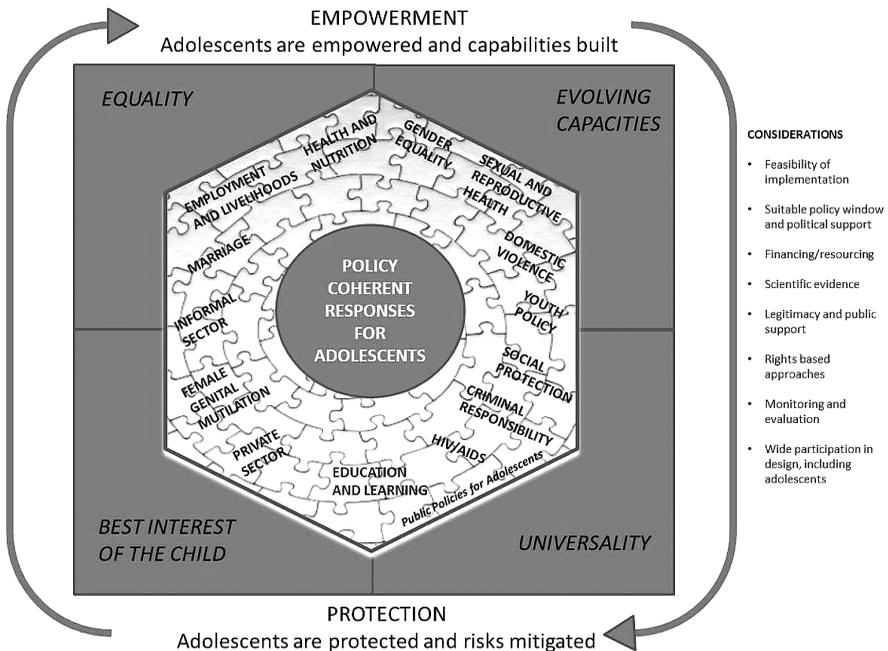


FIGURE 1.2 A framework for policy-coherent responses for adolescents.

marginalized, out-of-school children, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) youth, and migrant populations, for example. Most evident in the analyses of policies conducted here was the different treatment of adolescent girls and boys. Half of the countries explored in the analysis of South Asia have discordant minimum marriage ages between boys and girls. This regional picture shows that even *de jure*, there are still discrimination and gender disparities between boys and girls in terms of marriage protection. This is further complicated in situations where the law considers the possibility of a lower marriage age with parental consent or of exceptions based on certain issues. In relation to parental consent, in the case of Afghanistan, for example, there are circumstances when the father's consent or the competent court can grant the right to marry to a girl younger than 16, but not less than 15 years old. Under religious law, adolescent girls may be allowed to marry even earlier. Policy approaches need to address discrimination through a set of strategies and approaches, operating under an umbrella of universal coverage.

Legal and policy frameworks provide the background for action by government, profit and not-for-profit actors, civil society organizations, and single individuals, including adolescents themselves, for ensuring and upholding adolescents' well-being. Legal coverage of rights and protection is only the first step in understanding whether adolescents are not only protected but also offered opportunities to achieve their potential and aspirations. A crucial step—not undertaken here—would then be to assess the actual implementation and therefore the effective coverage of adolescents' rights and identify implementation gaps that impede effective protection and the realization of adolescents' rights.

Policy and program interventions that successfully address the largest cohort of adolescents in history can shape the future of nations. To be effective, social policies must be strongly grounded in human rights. This necessitates the active involvement of all sectors of society, including government, civil society, communities, and others to be engaged in realizing the rights of young people.

Translating Research to Global Policy

This volume forges a potent collaboration between the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) and UNICEF, two different organizations with shared aims and interests. The volume is designed to bring together cutting-edge research on adolescent development with policies and interventions directed toward adolescents, with a global focus. Blending scientific knowledge on adolescent development with evidence from practical program and policy experience from the field aims to inform understanding of how to promote adolescents' positive development globally.

The first part of the volume *Domains of Adolescent Development* captures the state of the evidence in key areas of adolescent well-being. Some domains, such as sexual and reproductive health, have been working with adolescents for longer, while others, such as neuroscience, are relatively new. The second part of the volume focuses on *Social Relationships* and reviews evidence and models operating in macro and mesospaces, exploring the influences of family and non-family members in promoting adolescent wellbeing. The third part of the volume focuses on risks that adolescents face, and also the opportunities that exist to improve their wellbeing. The chapters in this section engage with issues of child marriage, conflict, and migration, and span a variety of social and cultural contexts, highlighting the complexity of the world where adolescents grow up. The fourth part of the volume, *Interventions and Policies* describes services, systems, and policy responses for and with adolescents, identifying promising interventions and approaches. The final part of the volume explores the empowerment of adolescents, through participatory monitoring and evaluation and capacity building initiatives.

As a whole, this work reinforces the notion of adolescent protection and adolescent empowerment as two sides of a coin. The chapters therefore engage with major risk factors such as violence, poverty, social exclusion, early marriage, and pregnancy, as well as major protective factors, including education, families, peers, and communities. A diverse set of authors from different countries and disciplinary backgrounds have contributed chapters to this volume. This diversity not only reflects the complexity of adolescence, but also allows the volume to situate adolescents within broader cultural contexts and to engage more widely with policy debates and political decision-making regarding when, why, and how some programs and interventions should be tailored to better serve the needs of their intended recipients.

The diverse contributions collectively relay a powerful underlying narrative seen across the chapters, which describes adolescents as a positive force, to be valued and understood in their own right. In challenging historical interpretations of adolescence, the volume has engaged with contemporary issues explicitly, and sometimes implicitly across the chapters, including the topics of migration and human security, technology and inequality.

Such a volume can never be comprehensive. There are many areas in which evidence is lacking or implementation does not respond to local realities. Evidence on the challenges and opportunities of multisectoral programs has a large gap, and increasingly, we should be engaged in dialogue with practitioners to strengthen the role of practice (particularly in low- and middle-income countries) in guiding scientific frameworks. Research on adolescence has also not gone far enough in listening to adolescents themselves. Occasions for adolescents to provide input into defining their lived experiences, opportunities, hopes, and challenges are few, and more space could be made for their meaningful inclusion in research and policy processes.

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{ SECTION 1 }

Domains of Adolescent Development

Health and Well-Being in Adolescence

A DYNAMIC PROFILE

Susan M. Sawyer and George C. Patton

The global health and development community is poised to invest in the second decade of life as the importance of adolescent health and well-being has leapt to prominence. A series of high-impact reports over the past decade has helped shape this new global agenda (Levine et al., 2008; Patton et al., 2016; United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], 2011; World Bank, 2007; World Health Organization [WHO], 2014b). The success of the child survival agenda within the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs; 2000–2015) has further galvanized this agenda, with many countries having more children in the second decade of life than the first. The transition to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the inclusion of adolescent health within the new Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health (Every Woman Every Child, 2015) present for the first time an opportunity for governments to develop integrated strategies for the health and well-being of adolescents and young adults. The publication of the first case for global investment in the capabilities of adolescents affirms the value of national investments, given the size of the benefit–cost ratios (Sheehan et al., 2017).

Within the MDG era, the global health community focused on conditions that caused large numbers of premature deaths, such as under-five mortality. In addressing adolescent health, it is also important to consider the causes of premature death as approximately 2.6 million 10- to 24-year-olds die each year (Patton et al., 2009). However, the Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing described the wider benefits of investing in adolescent health in terms of a “triple dividend” (Patton et al., 2016). The notion of the triple dividend refers to benefits gained from investing in adolescence during adolescence itself (such as from reduced mortality and disability), as adolescents mature into healthier adults (such as by reduced risks for noncommunicable diseases [NCDs]), and for the health and well-being of the next generation when these parents are more educated and healthy when they conceive and parent (Figure 2.1).

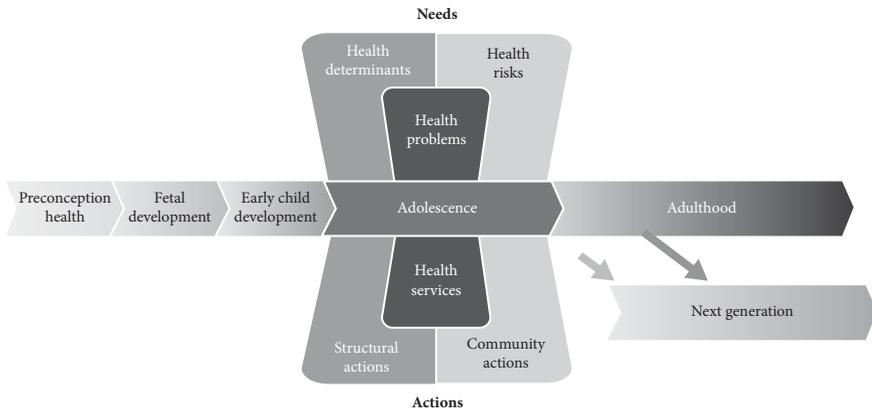


FIGURE 2.1 A life course approach to adolescent health frames the opportunity of a “triple dividend” from investments that match health actions with health needs.

Note: Reprinted from Patton, G. C., et al. (2016). Our future: A *Lancet* commission on adolescent health and wellbeing. *The Lancet*, 387, 2423–2478. Copyright 2016, with permission from Elsevier.

Given the historic lack of focus on adolescent health and well-being, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), a rapid “phase shift” is required to educate and orient policymakers, politicians, and parents toward the second decade and the health issues that adolescents experience. Particular investments will be required by ministries of health if health service systems are to adequately respond to health problems during adolescence. However, ministries of education, health, family welfare, and transport are equally required to engage in the adolescent health agenda given that the most effective preventive actions for adolescent health address social and structural determinants and health risks through intersectoral, multicomponent interventions (Patton et al., 2016).

The definition of health and well-being embodied within the triple dividend extends well beyond reductions in mortality (as important as that is) to include a focus on the assets and capabilities required for healthy growth and development, for learning and employment, for intimate relationships and parenting, and for civic participation. Adolescent health therefore requires an understanding of the importance of healthy development (including growth and nutrition), physical and mental health (including risks to future physical and mental health), and sexual and reproductive health (including risks from early pregnancy, female genital mutilation, and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV). It also requires understanding the complex interlinkages between health and education, as quality secondary education is one of the best investments in adolescent health (Patton et al., 2016), while good health and well-being are an essential resource for learning. Furthermore, it requires understanding the challenges faced by adolescents in accessing the current health system and how these barriers might be overcome to ensure that adolescents have access to universal health coverage.