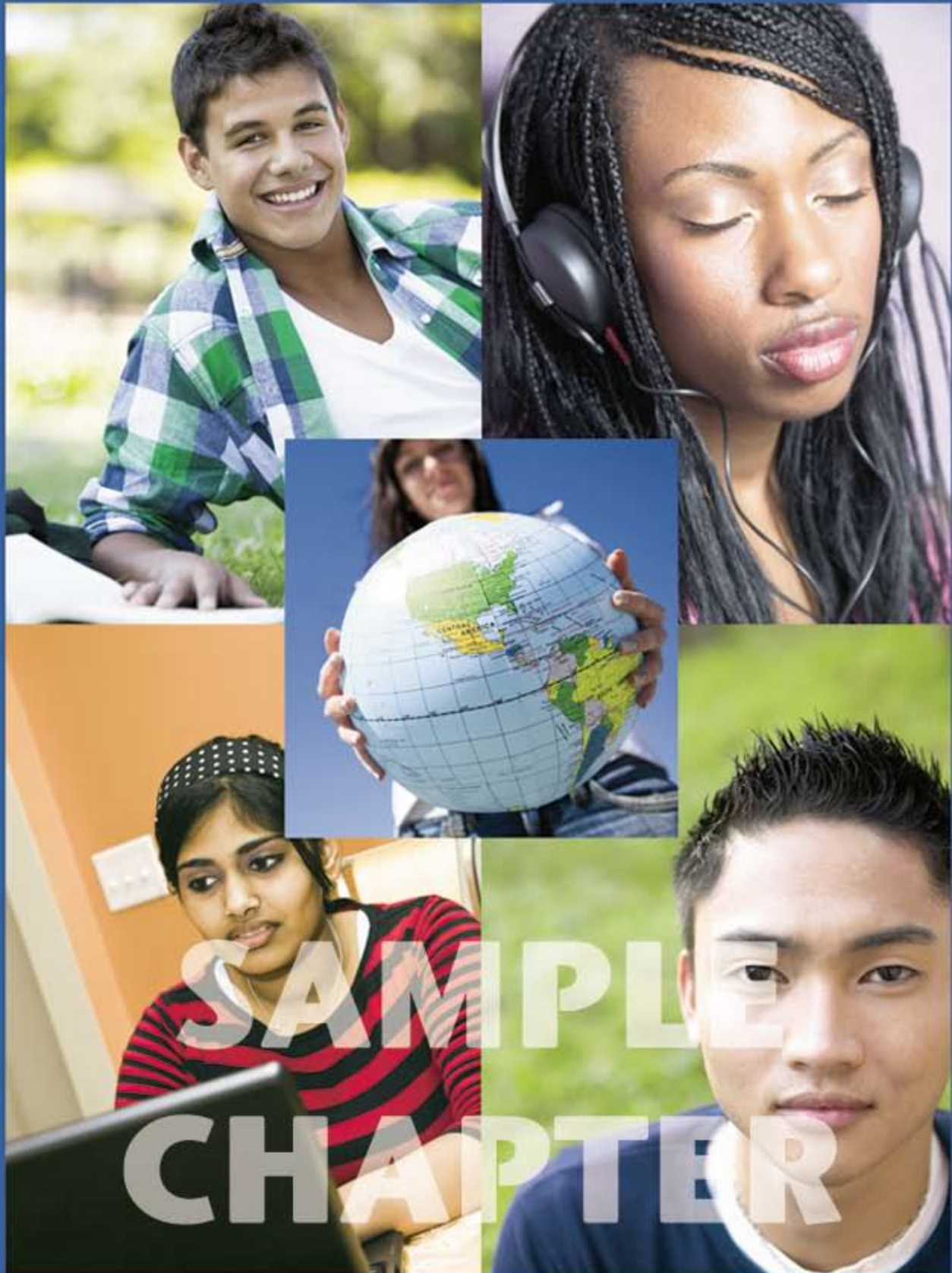


Adolescent Psychology Around the World




Edited by
Jeffrey Jensen Arnett

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Edited by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, Ph.D.
Clark University, Worcester, MA

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Preface

This book paints a portrait of adolescent psychology in four major regions: Africa/the Middle East, Asia, the Americas, and Europe. It is intended to address the imbalance between where most scholarship on adolescence is concentrated and how the vast majority of the world's adolescents actually live. The publication of the book comes at a propitious time. Growing attention to the phenomenon of globalization has reached the field of adolescent research, and scholars in the West today are increasingly aware of the necessity of expanding their awareness of the cultural context of adolescent development. Among the general public, too, awareness of globalization has led to increasing interest in understanding how people in different cultures live.

This book is an abridged and updated version of the two-volume *International Encyclopedia of Adolescence* published by Routledge in 2007. Although it contains fewer chapters than the encyclopedia, the international scope of this book is broad. Most of the chapters are on non-Western countries. The lives of the adolescents in these countries provide an especially sharp contrast to the lives of adolescents in the West. For example, although in industrialized countries adolescence is typically associated with attending secondary school, the reader of this book will find many countries where attending school beyond the early teens is the exception rather than the rule, especially for girls. By that age many adolescents in developing countries have left school to assist their parents on the family farm or to go to work in a factory in order to contribute to their family's income.

Alas, not all regions of the world are equally represented. Finding authors for the countries of Africa and the Middle East proved to be the most difficult challenge. Many of these countries have a limited tradition of social science research. Nevertheless, we were able to include several chapters from countries in this region, including Cameroon, Nigeria, Morocco, and Sudan.

The book is intended for courses in adolescent psychology, lifespan development, and/or cultural (cross-cultural) psychology taught in departments of psychology, human development and family studies, sociology, and education. It will also appeal to researchers and clinicians who study or work with adolescents.

The Content of the Chapters

The introductory chapter explains why the countries were selected and introduces the book's common themes. The section on *Africa and the Middle East* introduces students to teen life in Cameroon, one of the few places left where adolescents go through formal puberty rituals. In addition, readers learn about adolescent life in Ethiopia, Israel, Morocco, Nigeria, and Sudan. Next we travel to Asia—China, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Here readers see how India's growth is creating opportunities for young people whereas despite China's growing global economic impact, its political system limits opportunities for change. In *The Americas*, readers are introduced to life in Argentina, Canada, Chile, Mexico, Peru, and the United States. The book concludes with adolescent life in Europe including the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, and the UK.

Nearly all authors of the chapters were indigenous to the country on which they were writing, and this enabled them to write as informed observers and interpreters of the research evidence available. The authors of each chapter were given a template to follow, so that all chapters would contain information on the same topics, to allow readers to find specific information and to make it easy to compare countries on a given topic. Consequently, all chapters include sections on *Background Information, Period of Adolescence, Beliefs, Gender, The Self, Family Relationships, Friends and Peers/Youth Culture, Love and Sexuality, Health Risk Behavior, Education, Work, Media, Politics and Military, and Unique Issues*.

A **map** is provided at the beginning of each chapter so the reader can see where the country is located and what countries border it. The end of each chapter contains a list of **References and Further Reading**, which includes sources used by the author as well as additional sources that may be of interest. A complete **index** is provided to assist the reader in finding information on a topic that may not be obviously part of a specific chapter section.

Most of the authors of the chapters are psychologists, but contributors also include sociologists, educators, economists, and demographers. Although the majority of them were writing in a language that is not their first language, they wrote with exceptional clarity, and their chapters are a pleasure to read. Together, the authors of the chapters have provided an extraordinary panorama of adolescent life that is compelling and engaging in its diversity.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank each of the authors who contributed to the chapters in the book. Most of them I have never met and perhaps never will, but I admire the work they have done here. I thank them for what they have taught me in these chapters about adolescence in their countries, and I am delighted for the opportunity to share their chapters with other readers who are eager to learn more about how adolescents around the world experience this dramatic, fascinating, rapidly changing time of life.

I would also like to thank the reviewers, Larry J. Nelson of Brigham Young University, Phillip L. Hammack of the University of California, Santa Cruz, Ramaswami Mahalingham of the University of Michigan, and Lisa Cramer Whitfield of Santa Clara University.

Jeffrey Jensen Arnett
Clark University
Worcester, Massachusetts, USA

Introduction

Adolescence as a field of scholarship is widely viewed as having begun about a century ago with the publication of G. Stanley Hall's two-volume magnum opus in 1904. Hall was an American, and he drew mostly from American and European sources in his description of adolescence.

A century later, the study of adolescence remains a predominantly American enterprise. The Society for Research on Adolescence (SRA) is to a large extent a society for research on American adolescents. At SRA's biennial conferences over 90% of the presentations are by American scholars on American adolescents, and SRA's *Journal of Research on Adolescence* publishes papers that are almost entirely by American scholars, with an occasional European. The other major adolescent journals are similarly dominated by American and European scholarship.

The dominance of Western scholarship in the field of adolescence is not surprising, given the abundant research resources in Western countries and their relatively long scholarly traditions. "The rich get researched," one might say. However, this dominance is oddly incongruent with the realities of life as experienced by adolescents around the world. Of the world's nearly seven billion people, only about 10% of them live in the West. Furthermore, that proportion is shrinking daily. By the year 2050, the world's population is projected to surpass nine billion, and virtually all of the growth will come from non-Western countries.

This book is intended to address this imbalance between where most scholarship on adolescence is concentrated and how the vast majority of the world's adolescents actually live. The publication of the book comes at a propitious time. Growing attention to the phenomenon of globalization has reached the field of adolescent research, and scholars in the West today are increasingly aware of the necessity of expanding their awareness of the cultural context of adolescent development. In the general public, too, awareness of globalization has led to increasing interest in understanding how people in different cultures live.

The international scope of this book is broad. Most of the chapters are on non-Western countries. The lives of the adolescents in these countries provide an especially sharp contrast to the lives of adolescents in the West. For example, although in industrialized countries adolescence is typically associated with attending secondary school, the reader of this book will find many countries where attending school beyond the early teens is the exception rather than the rule, especially for

girls. By that age many adolescents in developing countries have left school to assist their parents on the family farm or to go to work in a factory in order to contribute to their family's income.

Alas, not all regions of the world are equally represented. Finding authors for the countries of Africa and the Middle East proved to be the most difficult challenge. Many of these countries have a limited tradition of social science research. Nevertheless, we were able to include several chapters from countries in this region, including Cameroon, Nigeria, Morocco, and Sudan.

The Content of the Chapters

“Adolescence” is widely recognized by scholars as a socially—and culturally—constructed period of the life course, so it is important in an international volume on adolescence to be clear about how I defined it and why. In view of the vast range of cultures to be included in the book, I wanted to be as inclusive as possible in how adolescence was defined, to accommodate the entire range of perspectives likely to exist across cultures. Consequently, I simply asked authors to cover development during the age range from 10 to 25. Scholars view adolescence as beginning with puberty, and age 10 is when the first outward signs of puberty occur for most girls in industrialized countries (boys usually begin about 2 years later). In recent decades this age has become typical in developing countries as well, as nutrition and access to medical care in these countries has improved.

Setting the upper age boundary of adolescence is more difficult and more subject to cultural variability. Scholars generally view adolescence as ending when adulthood begins, which sounds simple enough—until one tries to answer that question of when adulthood begins. If we use marriage as the quintessential marker, the way anthropologists and sociologists have in the past, then the end of adolescence varies worldwide from the early teens for girls in places such as rural India and northern Africa, to about age 30 for young people in Western Europe. Furthermore, it is highly questionable that marriage is any more the quintessential marker of adulthood around the world, given research showing that young people in industrialized countries no longer regard it as such, preferring psychological markers such as accepting personal responsibility and making independent decisions.

Age 25 was chosen as the upper boundary of adolescence for this book partly for practical reasons. Many international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization use age ranges up to 24 or 25 years old in the information they collect on “youth” around the world, and those organizations are rich sources of statistics that pertain to many of the topics in the book. However, the question of the age boundaries of adolescence was also explicitly addressed in the chapters. Each chapter contains a “Period of Adolescence” section in which the authors indicate whether adolescence is recognized as a distinct life stage in their country, and if so when it is considered to begin and end.

Age 10 to 25 is a wide age range, and in every culture the typical 10 year-old is vastly different than the typical 25 year-old. For this reason, I also asked authors to describe differences between the early and the later part of this age range. Specifically, I asked authors to address the question of whether a period of “emerging adulthood” exists in their country, that is, a period that takes place after adolescence but prior to full adulthood, during which young people are more independent of their parents but are not yet committed to adult roles (e.g., marriage, parenthood). This period is now widely recognized as a new life stage in industrialized societies, reflecting the later age of entering adulthood in those societies compared to past generations, but it also exists among the urban elite in many developing countries. Emerging adulthood is generally viewed as lasting from about age 18–25, so this was another reason for making 25 the upper age boundary in the book.

Nearly all authors of the chapters were indigenous to the country on which they were writing, and this enabled them to write as informed observers and interpreters of the research evidence available. The authors of each chapter were given a template to follow, so that all chapters would contain information on the same topics, to allow readers to find specific information and to make it easy to compare different countries on a given topic. Consequently, all chapters include the following sections:

Background Information. A brief overview of the nation including topics such as age distribution, ethnic groups, economics, political system, geography, and major historical events.

Period of Adolescence. Addresses whether adolescence exists or not as a recognized life stage; if so, how long it has been recognized as a separate stage of life; when it begins and ends (i.e., age when changes of puberty are first evident and age when full adult status is attained). Also includes topics such as changes in the length of adolescence in recent decades and rites of passage recognizing that puberty has been reached or that adulthood has been attained. If relevant, may address the question, is there a period of “emerging adulthood,” that is, a period that takes place after adolescence but prior to full adulthood, during which young people are more independent of their parents but are not yet committed to adult roles (e.g., marriage, parenthood)? If so, does emerging adulthood exist for most young people or only for the elite?

Beliefs. Discusses whether the country tends toward individualism or collectivism, and how these values are taught and whether they are currently changing. Also describes the main religious beliefs and how they are transmitted to adolescents.

Gender. Discusses gender role expectations, including gender-specific preparation for adult work roles, gender-specific physical ideals, and any gender and body image issues that are especially important in adolescence (for example, eating disorders, male or female circumcision).

The Self. Describes the development of personal and cultural identity, including ethnic identity formation among immigrants and ethnic groups. Also issues such as self-esteem and self-concept.

Family Relationships. Topics such as common parenting practices, amount of time spent with various family members, and amount and sources of conflict with parents. Also relationships with siblings, grandparents, and other kin. May include rates and effects of divorce and remarriage.

Friends and Peers. Discusses how much time adolescents spend with peers compared to time with family or alone. If relevant, may describe main peer crowds (defined by common interests in sports, music, devotion to school, or other activities). Includes a description of youth organizations (if they exist) and what the focus of their activity is—sports, social activities, political activities, etc.

Love and Sexuality. May include dating, cohabitation, marriage, sexual experimentation, birth control, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, parental attitudes toward adolescent sexuality, sex education, and homosexuality.

Health Risk Behavior. Discusses the extent to which adolescents have problems such as drug and alcohol use, crime, car accidents, suicide, and depression.

Education. Includes literacy rates, characteristics of secondary schools, participation rates in secondary schools, and gender differences in access to education, as well as performance on international tests of achievement.

Work. Describes work contributed to family and common types of adolescent employment. Also addresses working conditions (e.g., sweatshops, sexual exploitation, slavery). May include apprenticeships and other job training programs, unemployment.

Media. Describes rates of media use by adolescents (including television, recorded music, computer games, mobile phones, Internet, magazines, movies).

Politics and Military. Discusses whether adolescents are involved in politics and in what ways. Also addresses the extent to which adolescents participate in military activities, and volunteer work/community service if common.

Unique Issues. Issues pertaining to adolescents that are especially important in the country but have not been covered by the other entries.

Most of the authors of the chapters are psychologists, but contributors also include sociologists, educators, economists, and demographers. Although the majority of them were writing in a language that is not their first language, they wrote with exceptional clarity, and their chapters are a pleasure to read. Together, the authors of the chapters have provided an extraordinary panorama of adolescent life that is compelling and engaging in its diversity.



Chapter 8

India

Nandita Chaudhary and Neerja Sharma

Background Information

Historically known for exotic spices and rich textiles, India is now recognized as one of the largest consumer societies in the world, with a population of over one billion. Although mostly poor, in absolute numbers Indians form one of the largest pools of technically qualified personnel anywhere in the world. This paradox is the reality of India, where diversity in every sphere of life is more the norm than the exception. There are a total of 1,652 languages spoken in the country (Ramanujan, 1994), of which 22 are registered as official languages. In terms of religious diversity, the populations of religious groups often outnumber total populations of countries. For instance, outside of Indonesia, India has the largest number of Muslims in any single country.

India became independent from British rule in 1947, through a long struggle led by leaders such as Gandhi and Nehru. Today, despite significant poverty, illiteracy, and many other difficulties, natural and man-made, India has become an important contender in the global market. In recent decades, achievements in trade, commerce, and technology have been remarkable (Central Statistical Organization, 2005).

The diversity of India could easily be described as characteristic of all domains of culture and nature: geographical, ecological, climatic, ethnic, economic, architectural, linguistic, culinary, and spiritual, to name a few. Diversity and plurality are thus fundamental features of the country, making it, perhaps, more like a continent than a nation. Despite this pluralism, the “idea” of India is an old one, and one that has sustained each historical phase of the country.

Period of Adolescence

In Indian thought and writing, the idea of adolescence *per se* is rather ambiguous. On one hand we have texts suggesting that the interpersonal distance away from adults is not experienced in India, where young people spend more time with than away from their family (Verma & Larson, 1999). There is a correspondence of interests, activities, and presence of children of all ages in most social

settings. On the other hand, in the Hindu view, the idea of *kishoreawastha* places the pubescent child (particularly the male child) away from the family for a period of learning, dedication, and service. *Kishoreawastha*, the phase of being the equivalent of an adolescent, appears within the following sequence: *balavastha* (childhood), *kishoreawashtha* (adolescence), *yuvawastha* (youth), *prodawastha* (middle age), and *vridhawastha* (old age).

Contemporary positions on adolescence are different for different domains of activity. Legally a person is not an adult until 18 years of age. Men can marry at 21 years whereas women can legally marry at 18 years. However, the legal, social, cultural, and conventional markers of adolescence in contemporary India are without consensus. According to a report of the UNFPA (2000), at the macro level, Indians have a basic “resistance to the idea of adolescence,” attributing this resistance to a delay in the onset of puberty due to malnutrition and prevalence of early marriages, leaving little or no period between the beginning of puberty and the entry to adult roles and responsibilities for a large majority. This is supplemented by the fact that the distance between the different generations is not so wide, although, the report says, the patterns are changing, particularly for urban, educated youth. Within the family, adolescence remains, especially for women, a closely guarded period of life for the large majority.

For the Indian urban adolescent, however, the distance between childhood and adulthood has begun to extend, especially in upper-class families. Correspondingly, discourse of adolescence and its problems has also begun to find attention. Largely, one could say that financial progress, modernity and change of outlook have affected some areas more than others. The first domains to be affected are women’s employment, fertility rates, and educational status. In contrast, family obligations and residential patterns are still guided by tradition in most Indian homes. Of course, there are pockets of Indian elite society that live like their counterparts anywhere else in the world, but that is only a small, albeit significant, minority.

Puberty is reached earlier now than in the past, perhaps on account of the improvements in nutritional and health status. In consonance with data from other sources, around 68% of girls achieved menarche between 12 and 14 years of age (Bagga & Kulkarni, 2000). Some evidence for late menarche has been reported among specific populations, on account of either lower nutritional intake (specifically protein) (Bagga & Kulkarni, 2000; Padmavati, Poosha, & Busi, 1984), or higher sporting activity (Sidhu & Grewal, 1980). Typically, among both boys and girls, the growth spurt tends to occur more slowly and over a longer period of time than among populations of developed countries (Elizabeth, 2001).

Among the critical issues facing India is the fact that many children and adolescents grow up in very difficult circumstances due to poverty, destitution, disease, and disability. Many of our poor live on the streets of urban areas and their needs for livelihood, health care, nourishment, and education are not being met. Many live and earn on the streets from a young age. Unfortunately, India’s vast population and expanse interfere with the appropriate delivery of programs, whether government-run or voluntary. This makes youth from poor clusters a very vulnerable group. Poor youth face hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, disability, destitution, prostitution, and crime on the street and in the neighborhood. These problems are exacerbated when the family is absent or dysfunctional due to death, substance abuse, gambling, or criminal activity. In such instances, the basic protection of the young person from the harsh environment is lost. Due to strong family traditions, the state often leaves much of the care of the growing child to the family. State intervention is far from satisfactory and systems for child protection are still at a nascent stage. On account of this, the adolescent living outside of the family is particularly at risk.

Beliefs

Regarding the issue of individualism versus collectivism, it can be proposed that the Indian sense of self is highly committed to family values (Roland, 1988) and displays a combination of agency/autonomy and interpersonal relatedness (Kagitcibasi, 2002) that has been encountered in other modernizing populations with a strong tradition of family closeness. Children grow up among others and are often cared for by other people within the family rather than exclusively by their mothers or parents (Kurtz, 1992; Trawick, 2003). This develops an early sense of “belongingness” that lasts a lifetime, making the identity of the Indian adolescent deeply connected with the social relationships within which he or she is growing up. There is an intense commitment to family values demanded by adults (Chaudhary & Kaura, 2001) but children, adolescents, and youth are also actively encouraged by the family to have simultaneous and situation-related autonomy and competitiveness with the outside world.

Within Hindu ideology, the fundamental purpose of an individual soul is to gain gradual but effective separation from worldly experiences. Participation in religious activity is difficult to estimate, although it would not be wrong to say that children and adolescents form an integrated part of the collective religious activity at the time of festivals, rituals, and family and community functions. There is no segregation of children, except perhaps for occasions such as death ceremonies and last rites. During religious festivals, young men and women take to the streets to actively participate in the community song and dance festivities. This active participation characterizes all religious groups and is in fact intensified in the case of minority communities such as the Muslim community (Sriram & Vaid, 2009).

Among Hindus and indeed in all connected religions in India, social stratification is an important divide. Indians are deeply conscious of social status, socialized within the family to engage differently with people who are seen as different. Social discourse, even the style of language used (forms of address and other markers) are deeply sensitive to social status. It is sometimes said that in encounters with unfamiliar people, Indians tend to first evaluate the relative social standing of the other person (Roland, 1988; Sen, 2005; Varma, 2005). The caste system was originally based on stratification by occupation. Today it remains as a vestige of the former classification, but is still an important element of the Hindu identity.

More recent efforts of the Government in terms of affirmative action for lower caste groups has in many ways intensified caste identities and sustained divisions between caste groups, although the objective was social upliftment. Nonetheless, there has been tremendous impact of social policy on caste, and the present Constitution of India declares that caste is not officially recognized as a feature of an individual for social standing. The secular policy of the government declares the all religions and caste groups are equal, rather than saying that these do not exist as far as the state is concerned. This feature of the Constitution is perhaps based on the tacit understanding that caste remains very important for individual and group identity and social practices such as marriage, friendship and community living (Government of India, 2008).

Gender

Gender equality is a major concern for India. Social activists have reported disadvantage to the girl from the day she is born, which is even being expressed in the form of female feticide and infanticide (Visaria & Visaria, 2003). The expectations for fertility and domestic work place tremendous pressures on young women, especially (although not exclusively) among the poor (Chaudhary & Mehta, 2004). Among the urban middle class, however, increasing attention to gender issues has led to

positive responses toward gender equity, and girls enjoy near-equal status (Datar, 1995; Saraswathi & Pai, 1997). For the middle and upper classes education and career for women are often as important as for men. Increasingly, young men (even among the urban and rural poor) are seeking out partners who are educated, arguing that an educated woman is an asset to the family (World Bank, 2004).

Gender as a variable has been of significance in the study of socialization of children in the predominantly patriarchal communities in India. For the study of adolescence, it is of particular importance. Discrimination against the female child is well documented in psychological, sociological, and developmental research (e.g., *Girl Child in India*, 1995), especially among poor communities. However, most such research draws a generic profile of a girl victimized by her status and circumstances. A longitudinal study of the developmental journey of the girl from childhood to adolescence and later is largely lacking. With all the obvious and subtle forms of discrimination, what forms the core of the adolescent girl's identity, and what gives her the resilience to negotiate the vicissitudes she is surrounded with, is little known in psychological literature.

Probing the identity of the adolescent girl among 150 girls in the age range 16 to 19 years, Sharma (1996) found that gender identity was the primary feature of the female adolescent's sense of self. Although formal education generated certain questioning about self-worth and future aspirations, it did not seem to overwhelm her sense of identification with her gender role. The emphasis on her role as a future homemaker is never lowered, even at the highest level of education.

Women in India are worshiped, revered, feared, and victimized. This conflicting dynamics is difficult to understand and explain. An important fact is that it is not so much the person, but her role in any given situation that defines people's attitude to her. In the role of a mother, she is respected and even worshiped as a selfless sustainer of the family. As a young girl she may be loved, ignored, or feared as her conduct is considered to determine the family's honor. When we look at the collective statistics on women, we find much to be ashamed of in this day and age; and yet, India has been the home to many firsts as far as women are concerned. The Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen (2005) wrote of his experiences with women in higher education, stating that as he moved from Calcutta to London to the United States, the number of women colleagues in his place of work reduced as he travelled westwards.

The Self

As discussed in the preceding section, gender is a strong feature of an Indian person's sense of self. Additionally, social status is determined by age and relative position in the network of relationships within the group, family, or community. Together, age and gender become the key features for determining the life chances within the constraints of the social situation.

A specific cultural setting will evoke particular images of the self that necessarily deviate from those in other locations. In some places, the idea of an independent "self" or a separate identity is not easily communicated in the native vocabulary and may even evoke laughter or incredulity (Chaudhary & Sriram, 2001). The interdependence with the context and others in the environment is now accepted as an important point of departure from the Western sense of self. In India, parents often find it uncomfortable to detach themselves from the lives and loves of their children. It is "connectivity" and not "separation" that characterizes group relations and self-orientations (Seymour, 1999). Relationships within the family, including relationships with siblings, form an integral part of the self of the Indian person (Roland, 1988; Sriram, Chaudhary, & Ralhan, 2002).

Within the physical limits of this life-world, the sense of self among Indians is believed to be constantly changing, evolving partly because the context is given primacy. Bodies are considered to

be relatively “porous,” “permeable,” and predicated on the different life circumstances and relationships (Menon, 2003, pp. 431, 433). The transformations possible will be determined by the social and biological state of being woman or man, pregnant or young, and so on.

Family Relationships

There are several accounts of the family being at the center of adolescent lives in India, a feature not unusual in a society where relationships are based on interdependence. For example, in a detailed cross-cultural study, 100 Indian middle-class adolescents, both girls and boys (mean age 13.2 years), were compared with 220 middle-class European and American youths (Larson, Verma, & Dworkin, 2003). Indian adolescents were found to spend much more time with families than their American counterparts and to feel positive in doing so most of the time. Very few of them reported any signs of conflict with their parents and there was no attempt at breaking away. When together, Indian families were usually at home and involved in routine activities such as watching TV, talking, or doing homework (for school). The authors concluded that close relations with parents were beneficial to Indian adolescents.

The intergenerational continuity that is suggested in this study is also encountered in other research. While investigating interpersonal disagreements between adolescents and their parents in middle-class urban families, Kapadia and Miller (2005) found that there was very little disagreement and a favorable attitude to compromise between the two generations in the resolution of hypothetical issues related to marriage. The basic understanding between the two parties is that parents have the best interests of their offspring in mind. This belief leads to the fundamental acceptance of the intentions behind parents’ actions. In a recent study of sleeping arrangements in the homes of college-going women (Chaudhary & Gilsdorf, 2010) it was found that out of a total of 46 (18–20 year old) women surveyed, 23 continued to sleep with parents, siblings, or grandparents in the same bed, while many others preferred to return to their mother’s beds on occasions when they wanted proximity. Although these patterns may have been guided by situational constraints of space and other resources, the young women attributed them to the desire for warmth and closeness and to sometimes coping with fear and loneliness by sleeping with others.

Children are believed to require specific themes in care at different ages (Krishnan, 1998). The child under five years of age should receive affection, which is followed by discipline for the next 10 years. At 16, the child is believed to be like a friend and should be treated as such by the family, with respect for girls and regard for male children as responsible for the family line. The daughter is regarded as an essential but temporary member of her natal family because she will eventually marry and move away to live with her husband’s family, although evidence has pointed to a greater intimacy between daughters and mothers subsequent to their marriage (Sharma, 1996).

It is not unusual for older siblings to be expected to “take care of” younger ones (Mascolo & Bhatia, 2002), and also for brothers to be protective of their sisters. The early network of relationships “predisposes children to develop not simply some kind of a homogenous group self, but rather a socially embedded, relational self that includes affective identifications and representations of multiple caregivers” (Sharma, 1999, p. 39).

On the whole, the single most significant leitmotif that characterizes Indian adolescents is their constant pull toward the family ethos that encourages them to place individual needs secondary to family needs, and subjugate their decisions to those made by the family to maintain cohesiveness. However, it is essential to understand that earlier interpretations of Indian collectivity were rather misplaced since there was no realization of the deep openness to debate (Sen, 2005) and negotiability

(Kapadia & Miller, 2005) in relationships and perspectives within the Indian family, depending on context. The dominant misunderstanding has been that Indian society is deeply hierarchical and authority-bound, always subordinating the self to the group; this position is mistaken (Miller, 2002).

Friends and Peers/Youth Culture

In contrast to the West, engagement with friends and peers is not perceived to be a crucial expectation from adolescents in India (Sarawathi & Ganapathy, 2002). In the process of making decisions, Indian adolescents continue to look to the family rather than to peers for important choices such as career and family (Ramu, 1988; Uplaonkar, 1995). Although not much is written about peer influence and the young adolescent, one study finds that Indian adolescents spend most of their time with their family rather than with friends, but whatever time is spent with friends is evaluated as very positive in terms of emotional affect (Larson et al., 2003).

The prevalence and continued importance of the large family network, in both reality and ideology (Uberoi, 2003), limit the role of friends and peers in the lives of Indian adolescents. However, there is evidence to support the increasing incidence of what may be termed “peer culture” among middle- and upper-class urban youth (Verma & Sarawathi, 2002) as affluence, mobility, and consumption become common. The extent to which these features will actually impact the primacy of the family as a socialization agent is yet to be discerned (Schlegel, 2003).

A feature of Indian society with important implications for peer relations is the early age of marriage for a majority of young men and women. Thus, peer contact is significantly truncated due to the fact that many youth are already married by their mid-teens. Peer contact for boys remains much higher than for girls, primarily due to the greater mobility that boys are allowed. In this regard, acceptance by peers and social standing were found to be far more critical for boys than for girls (Singhal & Rao, 2004).

Love and Sexuality

In India, 50% of girls between 15 and 19 are already married (UNFPA, 2000), although one finds a gradual rise in the age at marriage over the past century or so: from 13 years in 1901 to 16 in 1951 (Agarwala, 1962, p. 238), then rising to 20 in 1991, with slightly higher ages for urban areas (21) in comparison to rural areas (19). The most recent figures for average age at first marriage (2008) are 25 for men and 21 for women.

Since the idea of adolescence is Western in origin, the concept of adolescent sexuality is also largely based on the behavior of unmarried sexually active adolescents, as most adolescents in the West are unmarried. This position stands challenged in most developing nations, and issues of fertility replace those of sexuality, making it essential to address policy and programs related to delay of marriage. In one estimate, 55% of girls under 19 are already married (Singhal & Rao, 2004, p. 17), whether or not they have had the formal departure to the husband’s home. Delay of marriage beyond puberty is considered a risk in many communities, placing pressure on parents to get daughters married early. Even if departure to the husband’s home may be delayed for some years, marriages are usually fixed and solemnized before or soon after puberty.

Attending school has significantly delayed marriage. However, there is no denying that once maturity is reached, parents in a majority of Indian homes display latent or overt signs of eagerness for the daughter to find a home outside of her natal one. The unmarried daughter/sister is seen as a threat to the dynamics of a community, especially a rural community—a fact that is repeatedly seen in cultural content such as myth, folktales, and film (Kurtz, 1992). Parents feel forced to marry off

their daughters at a young age due to concerns for reproductive health (Bruce, 2003), fears of sexual exploitation, and greater choice in finding a spouse.

Regarding arranged marriages in India in contrast with love marriages, it is difficult to estimate the proportions of each, for several reasons (Mathur, 2006). First, there are very few examples of “pure” forms of either marriage—young people who may find romantic love often choose to work through the known system of introductions through parents to keep respect for the system. In arranged marriages as well, some freedom is given to young couples to make choices of whom they would like to marry by encouraging some interaction before finalizing matters. Traditionally, there has always been a precedence of family over individual with reference to marriage choices. Appropriateness and social characteristics were always more important than romantic love. Love was believed to start after marriage was entered (Mathur, 2006). It remains true for many rural communities that early marriages of men and women are encouraged to prevent young people from making their own choices regarding a spouse. Among urban, educated populations, however, the delay in marriage and the increased contact between young people that is typical of an urban environment have led to an increase in the frequency and tolerance of marriages of choice.

A recent trend has been the introduction of websites that display captions such as “Arrange your own love marriage,” “Meet your match online.” Although no accurate data are available, there is much anecdotal evidence of young people and families increasingly using Internet encounters for both arranged and dating choices, but with marriage as the objective.

Living with a heterosexual partner without being married is restricted to a small section of the upper-class elite society. Similarly, homosexuality is only now becoming a matter of public opinion. Despite the fact that ancient Indian art, architecture, and literature demonstrate a great variety in sexual expressions of men and women, over the years this variety seems to have become suppressed for the common person.

There is no doubt that being married and having children is viewed as the ideal outcome of an individual’s youth. Parents believe that they have not fulfilled their duty if their child has not married or not had any children. The pressure for getting and staying married and also having children has clear manifestations in the fertility figures and lower divorce rates for India among all religious and ethnic communities. These patterns are slowly changing and only time will tell whether the vibrancy of familial relationships, marriage, and childhood is able to sustain the pressures of modernity (Trawick, 2003).

Although primarily understood as an unromantic system dominated by family, arranged marriages and vows exchanged between partners at the time of the ceremony display a somewhat different flavor. In a Hindu marriage ceremony, the following vows are exchanged during the seven steps that a couple takes around the sacred fire (Badrinath, 2003, p. 136):

With these seven steps, become my friend. I seek your friendship. May we never deviate from this friendship. May we walk together. May we resolve together. May we love each other and enhance each other. May our vows be congruent and our desires shared.

Dating as a concept is still quite unfamiliar to most Indians. It is a phenomenon that is viewed from the outside on the several Western television channels available. And yet, this is not meant to imply that romance for the young person is not experienced. The dense social environment and encounters with family and friends on the many social occasions that a person usually participates in provide young men and women with opportunities for romantic encounters. This, however, would be hidden from the public view and considered as transgression by most elders. More recently, urban

spaces and Internet access provide young men and women with plenty of opportunity to interact with members of the opposite sex, at school, college, the workplace or on the Internet.

With international funding for AIDS awareness, sex education has become an important concern and several nongovernmental organizations, both national and international, are engaged in social action for sex education, which is largely avoided within the conventional spaces of the family. However, many young women and men receive indirect information from conversations of others. The recent explosion in access to the Internet would impact on this area as well.

Health Risk Behavior

Regarding concerns about health, in a study of over 25,000 adolescents from government and private schools (Singhal & Rao, 2004) it was found that around 30% emerged as having health concerns. Although this study was done only on school-going adolescents, there was a fair representation of family income groups. Health concerns included appearance, frequent aches and pains, inability to eat regularly, frequent illnesses, and weakness. There were no noticeable income-level differences in the problems identified by the respondents. Regarding appearance, boys outnumbered girls by 7 to 1 in assessing themselves as weaker than similar others (p. 164). Thus, although reproductive health remains a critical issue during adolescence, other matters linked with nutrition, body image, and peer pressure are important concerns of adolescents in India.

Youth on the street, particularly boys, remain vulnerable to substance abuse and petty crime in areas such as bus stands and railway stations. The participation of youth in gang warfare and group violence seems marginal, although they may be inducted by criminals for participation in crime. Exclusively youth gangs are not common. Among women, early induction into prostitution and labor seems to be the main concern for children of the poor. Rural and small city communities are close-knit and more organized. Most types of crime are more common in big cities such as Delhi and Mumbai.

An interesting observation about bulimia and anorexia, common ailments among Western adolescents, particularly women, is that these are very rare in the Indian community. Despite recent changes in body image in favor of the fashion model look, intense importance is placed on food as a source of love and nourishment within the family. Any rejection of food is considered a rejection of the person who has prepared the food, and in our more than 25 years of experience of teaching at a women's college in the University of Delhi, we have not yet encountered a single case of either of these difficulties among the young women we teach. Perhaps in a country where hunger is a persistent problem, eating disorders are likely to be fewer. Adolescent deaths are mostly still on account of infectious diseases and malnutrition (UNICEF, 2008).

Education

The educational system in postcolonial India is a collaborative reconstruction of missionary efforts, British rule, and the increasing importance given to indigenous ideologies (Srivastava, 2003). This reconstruction has had several important impacts on the way schooling is understood today. Several important indigenous movements such as the Arya Samaj, which attempted to return education to the glorious past of the Vedic period, have made significant contributions to the cause of education at all levels, especially education for girls. India has made progress in education in recent decades. However, despite legislation and planning, access to schools remains elusive for many communities. Nevertheless, the motivation for and the belief in schooling as a key to individual and family progress are encountered even among the poorest of the poor.

Repeated evaluations have suggested that no longer can the blame be placed solely on parents for not sending children to school; it is far more significantly a result of poor distribution of schooling facilities, especially at the primary level. If one compares educational achievement between India and China, India is both lower and more unequal (Dre'ze & Loh, 1995).

Girls' participation in education is growing and becoming more equal to that of boys. In higher education, we find that in 1951 only 10% of girls were being enrolled in education beyond high school; that figure had risen to 40% in 2000–2001 (Selected Educational Statistics, 2000–2001).



Regarding national government expenditure on education, we find a concerted effort at an increase in budgetary allocations at the state level. The number of higher educational institutions that adolescents can enter is increasing by the day. Although these are still a long way away from providing occupational, technical, and professional training for all interested youth, there has been a substantial jump in the gross number of youth with higher education. The educational status of youth in India is certainly rising. Increasing numbers of adolescents are attending and successfully completing school. Although boys still outnumber girls, there is a tremendous improvement in the literacy rates for young women. Recent years have seen the emergence of a very large population of technically qualified youth in India. Increasingly, this trend is gaining international attention, and India is accessing more jobs for its youth today than ever before.

For families from middle and upper classes, education-related issues are the top priority for adolescents. Parents declare that much of the scheduling of family time is negotiated around children's academic commitments (Verma et al., 2002). Despite national and state action and personal motivation, schooling remains elusive for the very poor. In most instances, reasons that keep

children out of school are linked with responsibilities for work in the home (especially so for the firstborn child, male or female), such as care of younger children while the parents are out to work, lack of accessibility to school, frequent migration of families for work, harsh attitudes of teachers, and the absence of positive role models within the community (Chaudhary & Sharma, 2005). According to a World Bank study (2004), when children who do reach school against the odds it is for reasons including the following: they are later-born children (so an older child can take on household responsibility), a member of the family is keen to send them to school, school is accessible, there is encouragement from teachers, and the children are male. Education remains largely problematic, and with the absence of serious commitment from the state to provide schools in every neighborhood; to train teachers for commitment and positive attitudes to poor communities; and to provide infrastructure such as classrooms, toilets, and books, a large section of children of all ages (mostly girls) remain outside of school—keen to enroll but unable to do so.

For those upper- and middle-class children who do reach school and are potential members of the technically trained workforce of India, the major challenge is to face the deepening crisis of competing against large numbers of peers in education, training, and the job market. Academic matters have remained the largest factor contributing to stress among urban adolescents (Kaura, 2004). In a study of around 26,000 school-going children between 10 and 19 years of age (in and around Delhi) from different economic backgrounds attending both government and private schools, it was found that academic matters posed the most serious problem among 41% of children, both boys and girls. School tasks at this stage were found to be uniformly difficult across gender, social class, and type of school. Boys more frequently complained about “not liking” studies, and both sexes complained about classroom experiences, inability to comprehend, and examination fear (Singhal & Rao, 2004, p. 203).

Work

The law in India prohibits the employment of young children under the age of 14. However, due to economic difficulty, children of all ages find themselves in jobs, either with family or outside the family. A UNICEF report indicates that as many as 12% of children in India participate in the workforce, either as employees or within the family (UNICEF, 2008). Other estimates are even higher (UNFPA, 2000, p. 21). The participation of older adolescents (15 to 19 years), particularly boys, was as high as 50% according to one estimate (Singhal & Rao, 2004, p. 18). It is also important to note that estimates of employment among children and youth are very difficult to ascertain, especially for situations such as domestic, construction, and agricultural labor (Planning Commission, 2001; UNFPA, 2000). Most often children are employed in factories, small-time hotels, car repair shops, and domestic labor. In the last of these there is a greater prevalence of girls.

Media

The Indian media show clear preferences for urban, Westernized youth. Images of fashion models, Bollywood actresses and actors with light eyes, and svelte images of scantily clad women adorn glossies and dailies in the Indian market. In this sense, the Indian media are far more Westernized than the general population is.

The most recent media advance has been in the mobile phone industry, and the Indian market is booming. A total of just over 63 million mobile phone users and 500,000 Internet users have been identified (Bhatnagar, 2005). This unprecedented expansion in the communication sector is bound to impact the lives of young people in significant ways. It remains to be seen how these changes will

become absorbed into the existing social and personal lives of Indian families in general and adolescents in particular.

Verma and Sharma (2003) examined adolescents' use of free time and found gender differences in free-time activities regarding content, duration, frequency, and quality. Leisure for girls was primarily home-based, such as watching TV, reading, cooking, and embroidery, while boys reported more outside activities such as playing sports, going to movies, and hanging out with friends. The authors concluded that in urban areas media technology has had a mediating role in replacing traditional leisure-time activities among youth with a more Westernized pattern, although family time and community activities seem to enjoy an important place in these as well.

Politics and Military

Regarding political activity and youth, a common lament is the lack of motivation for political participation and voting among youth (Raedler, 1999), for which the country has a great need in order to benefit from the energy and enthusiasm of the young (Solomon, 2003). Young voters reported being more concerned about their careers than about political parties, as they believe politics to be riddled with corruption (Raedler, 1999; Solomon, 2003), something they would rather stay away from.

Militarily, India is an advanced country. The armed forces have always been an attractive career, especially for young men. This has been linked with the colonial period when the British deliberately encouraged people from the warrior castes in the north (particularly Punjab and Haryana), through positive associations of their masculinity with a career in the army, to serve as soldiers in the British Army (Chowdhury, 1994). The trick worked, and the states of Punjab and Haryana still carry a great deal of enthusiasm toward a career in the armed forces. The armed forces of the Army, Navy, and Air Force in India have an image and function way beyond the idea of war, although that thought is invariably present, and defense of the country is always in the background as a noble idea. The armed forces also provide administrative, social, and emergency assistance to the government.

Being in the army does not carry the stigma that it does in some other parts of the world, and it offers a lucrative career for young men and also young women now. The local belief is that a person becomes more disciplined after a few years in the army. The National Cadet Corps (NCC) Act was passed by Parliament in India in 1948 with the objective of instilling discipline and unity among youth to enhance their participation in the nation, the armed forces, and community living. With these objectives, the NCC has recruitment centers all over the country and encourages the enrollment of young men and women. There are over a million cadets enrolled in the NCC as per the latest records (Keshavan, 2005). The cadets are trained for social, community, and military activity in regularly held camps all over the country. Cadets are selected through the educational institutions in which they are studying. They can volunteer to join the NCC, after which they are trained and given uniforms and ranks. The NCC is one of the largest organized youth activities in India.

Unique Issues

From the preceding discussion on adolescence in India, several critical issues have come to the surface. It is essential to understand that the adolescent in India faces a situation that is quite different from that of his or her Western counterpart.

- Younger people will continue to live with their families until marriage or departure for work or study. Young men may stay on with families even after marriage. Living separately is not a common practice.

- Parents continue to be concerned with the everyday lives of youth (and even adult children) for the rest of their lives. This concern often translates into advice, assistance, and/or interference.
- The belief in lifelong commitment to the family makes the network of social relationships very enduring, and family cohesion is highly valued.
- Great value is placed on compromise rather than conflict in all relationships.
- Young adolescents in India spend much more time with their families than do their counterparts in other parts of the world.
- Adolescents truly believe that their parents have their best interests in mind.
- The social unit of the peer group, fraternity, or any other collective is almost always subordinate to the family.
- The family remains an ideal group even among the homeless, abandoned, and street-based children.
- The heterodoxy of Indian community living leads to several significant variations according to region, religion, caste, income, or language.
- There is no doubt that modern influences have led to a greater negotiability in life choices and individual preferences of young people.

These features of family life in India make the experience of adolescence quite distinctive from adolescence in other parts of the world. Therefore, any discussion of intergenerational dynamics in India must account for these aspects of social reality. Policy, planning, and action related to adolescence have to work within the framework of these patterns of social life.

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