Exercising citizenship

chapter 7

Consider what young people can accomplish: Days after the October 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, news began circulating that coordination problems among relief agencies were keeping aid from reaching those who needed it most. A group of 24 students from Lahore University of Management Sciences volunteered to be the first surveyors of devastated villages. Sleeping in tents, traveling by foot and in borrowed cars, these young men and women—between the ages of 18 and 22—surveyed 3,500 households, assessing needs and delivering supplies. Since then they have conducted a second, more in-depth survey of 200 households—covering some 32,000 individuals to date. Their data helped donors and relief agencies target their efforts and save lives.[1]

It is during their youth that people start to participate in social and political life on their own, and decide which skills to acquire, where to work, and with whom to develop intimate relationships. They can vote for the first time. Many choose, or are required, to serve in the military. Some join clubs or sports teams. They might decide, along with others in their religious institution, to provide care for extremely sick AIDS patients in their community. They might deliberate over whether to assume the debt a neighbor owes to the village moneylender. Some have staged protests because fees at their schools were too high, others because community leaders ostracized a supposedly immodest young woman. All these roles—both social and, in the broad sense of the word, political—are aspects of citizenship.

Citizenship is an ideal in social movements and political life, but the meaning of the term is elusive because almost any relationship between individuals and communities can be cast as an aspect of citizenship. The simplest definition is that to be a citizen is to be a member of a political community and to enjoy the privileges and protections, as well as the incumbent obligations, associated with community membership.[2] Citizenship has both *passive* and *active* dimensions. Individuals, simply by being community members, receive rights and privileges—the right to a free education, the right to a legal identity, and, in liberal democracies, the right to vote, to a fair trial, and to associate with others. They also take on obligations to pay taxes, and to serve in the military where required. Active citizenship emphasizes how individuals should hold public officials accountable for their actions, demand justice for themselves and others, tolerate people who are ethnically or religiously different, and feel solidarity with their fellow citizens and human beings.

Public action to nurture good citizens is important because markets cannot do it alone—nor can mere social participation (too many social institutions are exclusionary or worse). It is also important because collective action, public accountability, caring for kin and community, and environmental stewardship are so much more difficult without an active citizenry. Even if Kant was right when he wrote that the problem of good government can be solved even "for a race of devils," the solution would be expensive and unpleasant (box 7.1).

This chapter examines the transition that young people undergo as they become citizens and the policies that might support them, first reviewing data on youth citizenship at the global level. Although young people might be growing less interested in politics and more disaffected from mainstream institutions in high-income and many middle-income countries, that does not appear so in several low-income countries, where interest in politics, and confidence

BOX 7.1 *What is citizenship?*

Historically, the status of citizens was contrasted to the state of slaves and others supposedly without the capacity to use reason to shape the common destiny of communities. The ideal of citizenship has also, at various times, and in various places, emphasized equal participation in and obedience to the community, advocated participation in social life, and described a zone of private life that the state ought not violate. Citizenship also has been used to refer to a shared way of life and the willingness to defend it against outsiders. Citizenship is now often used to suggest human dignity, and many social and political movements, such as movements for health and education rights, are cast as efforts to enhance citizenship. The rights associated with citizenship, particularly in developing countries, have in recent decades expanded to encompass the requisites of freedom—social and economic goods, such as employment and access to basic services—and not only political and civil immunities and privileges.[3]

That is the ideal of citizenship. The reality, of course, has always been, and continues to become, more complex. For example, de facto legal rules throughout much of Africa ascribe rights—regarding not only religion and family matters but also land ownership and economic opportunities—to the chiefs of ethnic and linguistic groups, not to individuals. This practice reflects the colonial distinction between individualist rights for urban residents and group-based privileges for "peasants."[4]

The two main elements of contemporary citizenship—shared identity and rights—are becoming unbundled as legal resident aliens receive rights of access to basic public services in many countries (and even the right to vote in national elections in Chile, Malawi, New Zealand, Uruguay), as the numbers of undocumented aliens, asylum seekers, and refugees increase, and as countries carve out export processing zones and other areas with different legal rights and obligations.[5]

The ideal of universal, equal citizenship does not specify the state's relationship to ethnic minorities. Should subnational electoral and administrative boundaries correspond to ethno-linguistic divisions? And what languages should be taught in schools?[6] Some states have stripped ethnic minorities of national citizenship to shed the costs of providing services to groups that do not support the dominant regime, making hundreds of thousands stateless in the last decade.[7] In many countries, women continue to face legally sanctioned and cultural barriers to own and inherit property, participate in politics, or receive an education.

in the civil service and private business are increasing.

The chapter next explains why youth citizenship is crucial for development outcomes. The youth experience of citizenship is formative and has lasting effects on the extent and kind of political participation throughout life. Citizenship affects development outcomes through three channels: by enhancing the human and social capital of individuals, by promoting government accountability for basic service delivery, and by enhancing the overall climate for investment and private decision making.

The chapter then moves to the three policy areas developed throughout this Report: opportunities, capabilities, and second chances. The opportunities available for youth to develop active citizenship depend on the principles and customs that structure the political and social spaces throughout a nation. Countries have promoted youth citizenship in several ways, including lowering the voting age and establishing youth councils and consultative bodies, military service, and national and community service. Such opportunities for political and social participation, if flexible and well-designed, can support active citizenship.

The section on capabilities develops the notion that the adoption of political and social roles is a process of identity formation for youth and that a young person's identity emerges through recognition from those who count. Possessing a legal identity and having work are both important. The clearest and most equitable policy for promoting the capability of young people is to make sure that all young people possess legal identities as full citizens. Two specific policies can promote youth capabilities in citizenship: civic education and programs of youth development and youth action. The absence of agency can lead youth to choose negative social roles, including gang membership and participation in personal and political violence.

Because many young people are attracted to, and experiment with, social defiance—and because many governments and societies fail to protect youth—legally recognized second chances are crucial. The chapter analyzes policies to give second chances to young people who have committed crimes and to child soldiers; young offenders can benefit from restorative justice programs, and former child combatants from assistance in reintegrating with their home communities.

Youth participation: Rising, declining, or both?

Concerns about the civic dispositions of young people are not new. In the eighth

century BCE Hesiod observed: "I see no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent on the frivolous youth of today, for certainly all youth are reckless beyond words." Condorcet argued in 1782 that, as a rule, every generation appears less virtuous than its predecessors. As always, the virtue of young people is a preoccupation in many, probably most, places in the world.

How well-founded are concerns about contemporary youth? Are young people less involved citizens than their parents? Citizenship is a composite of complex and culturally differentiated identities, attitudes, and behaviors. For youth in high-income countries, some measurable declines—in political participation, interest in politics, and membership in civic organizations—have been widely documented. Youth sections of political parties in Belgium have lost more than 60 percent of their numbers since the 1980s. Membership in youth organizations in Sweden fell from 220,000 in 1972 to less than 50,000 in 1993. Almost all the decline in Canadian voter turnout can be attributed to the lower rate of voting among young people today, compared to their counterparts 30 or 40 years ago.[8]

A three-generation, longitudinal analysis that separates life-cycle and generational effects finds a sharp decline in social trust among American youth.[9] In recent decades newspaper reading, watching politics on TV, knowledge of current events, voting, and the belief that voting is a civic duty have all fallen among youth in almost all established democracies.[10] These changes reflect a decline in both opportunities for participation and civic interest on the part of youth, although alternative forms of civic participation may be emerging. Indicators of environmental activism and participation in protests, for instance, are up among young people in established democracies.[11]

Is declining interest visible in developing countries? Apparently not, at least not in low-income countries. Analyses of data from the World Values Survey suggest that, for low-income countries, youth interest in politics might actually be rising. It has been rising in China, India, and Nigeria, but falling elsewhere (figure 7.1). Related questions in the survey—How important is politics in

"Although youths want to participate in politics and raise their concerns and priorities, they are unable to do so because political leaders have their own agendas and self-interests, which detaches youths from active involvement in politics and social life."

Chandan, 20, Nepal
January 2006

Figure 7.1   Interest in politics is on the rise among youth ages 18–24 in low-income countries
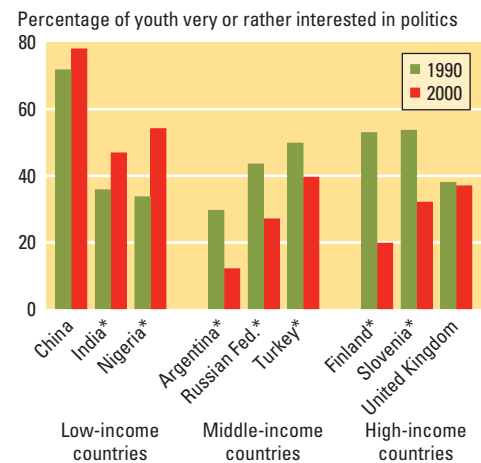
Percentage of youth very or rather interested in politics

Source: Authors' calculations from World Values Survey 1990–2000 (Inglehart and others (2004)).
*Difference significant at < 5 percent.

your life? How often do you discuss politics with friends?—exhibit the same trends. Another way to look at this is to compare political interest among young people with that of older age groups. The proportion of young people in most middle- and high-income countries who think that politics is important is about half that for older age groups, or even less. But in China, India, Nigeria, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe, young people are at least as interested in politics as older people (table 7.1). In Indonesia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, interest in politics is highest among the young, and steadily declines with age.

These differences in participation coincide with an equally distinct pattern in youth attitudes. In the low-income countries sampled, there is evidence of growing confidence in many national institutions, confidence that appears to be falling in many middle- and high-income countries. Whereas youth in middle- and high-income countries have less confidence in the civil service than a decade ago, the reverse is true in low-income countries (figure 7.2). Confidence in the press among youth is down or unchanged over the last decade in middle- and high-income countries, but rising in low-income countries. Strikingly, in low- and lower-middle-income countries—such as China, India, Russia, and Vietnam—

young people are most likely to believe that business should be privately owned, in contrast to the pattern in high-income countries—France, Japan, and the United States (table 7.2). Indonesian youth in 2000 were less likely to believe that business should be privately owned, but this might reflect their heightened political awareness during the financial crisis.

Girls are less likely than boys to participate in political activities. Gender disparities in political interest (How often do you discuss politics with friends?) are generally larger in low-income countries (table 7.3). This is related to the large gap in educational and participatory opportunities for girls and young women in low-income societies (including informal opportunities, such as spaces to play). That leaves girls less interested in public life, which in a vicious circle leaves the interests of girls and young women underrepresented in public institutions. Recent data from Sierra Leone show that girls are much less likely than boys to attend community meetings, and when they do attend, they are much less likely to speak (see spotlight on Sierra Leone following chapter 7). Among urban slum dwellers in Rio de Janeiro, boys score significantly higher than girls on every dimension of citizenship, including political participation, membership in community or civic organizations (excluding churches), seeking out government agencies, and having official legal documents.[12]

The declining interest and confidence in mainstream political institutions among youth in middle- and high-income countries may be due to other coincident transformations that are less pronounced in low-income countries. The technologies that have lowered information and coordination costs might also have increased the relative power of firms, civil society organizations, and other nonstate actors, and in the process reduced the power, prestige, and legitimacy of the state—and the incentive to participate in traditional politics. Young people might have less interest and trust in political life as aging populations push political debates toward the concerns of older citizens, and as income inequality increases.[13] Substitute forms of participation

Table 7.1   Do young people care less about politics than older groups? Not everywhere

	Age group			
	18–29	30–44	45–64	65+
Low-income countries				
India	46.3	45.3	43.5	40.5
Indonesia	53.3	41.7	28.4	18.9
Nigeria	54.9	50.3	47.5	53.9
Uganda	45.7	54.4	58.5	—
Vietnam	76.9	79.4	82.0	80.7
Zimbabwe	31.6	30.3	33.7	25.3
Middle-income countries				
Albania	26.1	44.3	47.6	44.0
Argentina	13.0	19.4	19.9	25.8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	29.3	39.7	44.6	51.7
China	74.7	65.3	74.8	83.3
Iran, Islamic Rep. of	61.9	57.4	45.5	32.1
Korea, Republic of	38.5	47.2	60.3	71.4
Poland	30.6	37.4	53.2	41.5
Russian Federation	28.8	37.8	47.8	39.8
Venezuela, R. B. de	22.2	25.3	27.6	24.2
High-income countries				
Canada	34.9	46.2	56.7	55.5
Finland	22.1	21.5	35.1	32.8
France	27.2	34.7	40.5	42.6
Iceland	36.8	53.3	53.4	62.9
Japan	43.7	48.9	75.7	84.1
United States	58.5	59.3	71.6	83.5

Source: Authors' calculations from World Values Survey 2000 (Inglehart and others (2004)).
Note: — = Not available. Table represents percentage of respondents in each age group reporting very or rather interested in politics.

Figure 7.2   Young people's confidence in the civil service is increasing in low-income countries
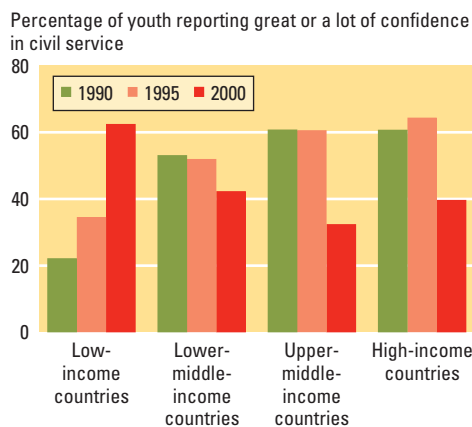
Percentage of youth reporting great or a lot of confidence in civil service

Source: Authors' calculations from World Values Survey 1990–2000 (Inglehart and others (2004)).
Note: The sample of countries is restricted to those with data from all three waves of the survey.

Table 7.2   Should private ownership of business be increased?

	Age group			
	18–29	**30–44**	**45–64**	**65+**
Low-income countries				
India	19.3	18.2	19.4	16.5
Indonesia	4.9	8.0	13.3	18.0
Uganda	39.4	40.1	41.5	—
Vietnam	15.0	14.3	11.6	10.0
Zimbabwe	33.8	34.9	43.2	30.0
Middle-income countries				
Albania	21.0	22.4	18.7	19.8
Argentina	13.4	15.2	20.9	19.9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	19.8	15.3	15.2	13.6
China	10.5	8.1	4.8	—
Iran, Islamic Rep. of	8.6	10.3	8.0	3.7
Korea, Republic of	7.0	9.4	14.3	11.1
Poland	12.1	9.1	9.6	4.6
Russian Federation	14.9	8.4	6.0	5.6
Venezuela, R. B. de	17.0	21.0	25.0	23.0
High-income countries				
Canada	14.3	18.8	17.1	25.1
Finland	5.7	8.2	11.9	13.2
France	14.7	17.4	21.9	25.2
Iceland	13.5	18.4	19.9	21.4
Japan	4.9	6.5	8.3	17.5
United States	24.8	24.3	26.4	34.2

Source: Authors' calculations from World Values Survey 2000 (Inglehart and others (2004)).

Note: — = Not available. Table represents percentage in each age group reporting that private ownership of business should be increased.

that are more opportunistic and less stable might have increased but are not yet being measured—such as "monitoring citizenship," in which individuals evaluate governments from afar through electronic media; targeted protests; or "checkbook activism," in which individuals spend money on consumer goods and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that match their values.[14]

Whether trends in youth participation and attitudes in low-income countries will, as incomes rise, begin to reverse themselves and resemble the declines visible in richer countries remains to be seen, as do the effects of these declines on youth engagement in politics and social relationships in middle- and high-income countries. Note that these trends of youth political engagement hardly encapsulate political citizenship, let alone the social dimensions of citizenship.

A more meaningful set of indicators of youth citizenship, which countries could assemble with new household and official data, would include the share of youth without identity papers, the share of youth in presentence detention, measures of local political or civic knowledge, and the percentage of youth who answer yes to the question, "Have you ever worked together with someone or some group to solve a problem in the community where you live?"

What youth citizenship means for adult citizenship and development

Patterns of behavior endure: political participation in adulthood is largely determined by participation in youth.[15] Young people learn political beliefs and behavior from those around them, and over time these orientations become habits, even if young people leave their socializing group behind. Consider voting habits, which are stable over time.[16] The first voting experience is challenging: young people might not know how to register to vote, where polling places are located, and perhaps have not developed an understanding of where candidates and parties stand on issues. Moreover, their peers, from whom they learn, are typically nonvoters. Some young citizens overcome these obstacles and become habitual voters, but others do not. Whereas parental education and income, as well as peer effects, help young citizens overcome these voting "start-up" costs, these socioeconomic and demographic effects diminish over time as voting (or nonvoting) tendencies become habitual.[17]

Conversely, political exclusion during youth has lifelong consequences. Although voting rates among women in the United States gradually approached those among men over the 20th century, the group of women who came of age before female enfranchisement in 1920 exhibited lower voting rates than their male counterparts over their entire lives.[18]

The lasting impact of early political behavior is visible in other areas, though it is generally stronger for symbolic attachments (party affiliation) and the extent of participation

than for other political variables, such as location on the left-right political scale or attitudes toward specific policies. A study comparing young individuals who participated in intense and dangerous political activism with individuals who were going to participate, but for some reason did not, found that those who participated were more involved in politics and displayed more concern for civil rights issues over the course of their lives. Another study tracking lifelong participation among successive cohorts of high school students found significant continuities in civic engagement and social trust over the life span.[19]

Participation in civic life promotes shared growth

Active citizenship can broaden the access of previously excluded groups to opportunities for growth and higher living standards, most obviously in the empowerment of women. Participants in the Women's Empowerment Program in Nepal were more likely than nonparticipants to initiate community development activities and campaigns against domestic violence, alcohol, and gambling. They had more influence on household expenditures, and they better understood the importance of keeping their daughters in school. Legal and political empowerment includes informing people of their rights and providing the disadvantaged with opportunities to effect and exercise these rights. The Panchayat Raj program in India has empowered women and previously marginalized groups (*dalits*) and led to some increase in participatory democracy.[20]

Active citizenship also facilitates collective action, which can yield more effective and better targeted public services.[21] Community involvement is particularly effective in managing such local public goods as water supply, sanitation, forests, roads, schools, and health clinics.[22] In some areas, the participation of older youths in decision making enhances service quality. Student-university co-management councils in Russia aim to reduce corruption in higher education (chapter 9). The municipality of Fortaleza, Brazil, improved budget processes and outcomes by including young people in the deliberations (box 2.4).

Table 7.3 Women (ages 18–29) are less likely to discuss politics with friends

	Overall	Men	Women
Low-income			
India	60.3	76.0	40.4*
Indonesia	82.4	88.0	77.0**
Nigeria	74.7	82.9	66.0*
Uganda	73.0	73.6	72.4
Vietnam	75.8	82.1	69.9*
Zimbabwe	44.0	58.6	30.9*
Middle-income			
Albania	70.5	81.9	60.9*
Argentina	46.3	49.2	43.3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	60.8	69.2	53.0*
China	82.4	87.7	78.3
Iran, Islamic Rep. of	76.7	79.7	73.5*
Korea, Republic of	70.4	69.9	70.8
Poland	72.0	72.6	71.4
Russian Federation	70.3	74.0	66.4
Venezuela, R. B. de	53.6	57.1	49.6
High-income			
Canada	57.9	64.4	51.0*
Finland	62.7	64.2	60.8
France	52.0	62.9	42.5*
Iceland	66.3	60.9	72.5
Japan	45.0	58.5	34.6*
United States	65.1	67.1	61.9
Overall	64.4	69.7	59.2*

Source: Authors' calculations from World Values Survey 2000 (Inglehart and others (2004)).
Note: Table represents percentage of respondents in each age group reporting that they sometimes discuss politics with friends.
* Difference between men and women significant at < 5 percent.
** Difference between men and women significant at < 10 percent.

Citizen participation is greater in democracies than nondemocracies, almost by definition, and some evidence indicates that democracies, on balance, have better development outcomes than authoritarian governments. However, untangling the effects of democracy and economic growth runs into problems of identifying causal pathways, imperfect measures of democracy and participation, selection bias related to differences in regime durability, and the absence of reliable data. Some observers conclude that democracy has a modest or near-zero net effect on growth, with a possibly positive effect during initial democratization and a possibly negative effect later on

Alluring, Fascinating
Beautiful, Charming
Mere descriptions all
That we have never seen
All around us there is but one image
Tell me, is this to be my fate?
No sir! No sir! Accountability and
nothing but Accountability

. . .

How long will it take?
For this dream to be realized

The answer to all these questions...
Accountability, only Accountability
Accountability, Accountability
Accountability, only Accountability

Junoon, *Ehtesaab*[27]

as interest groups mobilize.[23] More secure property rights, associated with constitutional limits on the state and vigilance on the part of rival institutions, seem to promote growth.[24]

Democratic participation also enhances development outcomes indirectly—reducing corruption, improving governance, increasing the demand for human capital investment, and preparing for and preventing disasters. Democracies—insofar as they improve governance—reduce corruption, which in turn stimulates technological change and spurs productivity. In countries with the best civil liberties, public investments have an economic rate of return between 8 and 22 percentage points higher than the rate in countries with the worst civil liberties. Voting rights and participation explain which countries expand access to education, itself crucial for economic growth. Famously, democratic countries avoid calamitous outcomes, such as famines.[25]

Crime and the fear of crime and violence are widely acknowledged to depress private investment among both households and firms. Between 1984 and 1996, civil war cost Sri Lanka most of its tourists, and the estimated equivalent of $1.6 to $2.8 billion, or between 13 and 23 percent of GDP. The total cost of the war—in lost human capital, law and order, and investments—weighs most heavily on the poor and the young. School enrollment is lower among households in Colombian municipalities where homicide rates are above the national median. Crime and violence can have international spillover effects: tourism in Turkey has been significantly reduced by violence in Greece.[26]

Significant group-based social exclusion is also a source of violence and conflict. Some observers express concerns that the size of youth cohorts in many developing countries predisposes countries toward war, but the evidence on this is mixed (box 7.2). Most kinds of political violence—whether interstate conflict or war, civil war, riots, or terror—have roots in grievances and perceived injustices. As Trotsky observed, however, "The mere existence of privations is not enough to cause an insurrection; if it were, the masses would always be in revolt."

Political violence requires a motive, but also a group identity and the subsequent socialization of individuals into a fighting mode—and then an opportunity to engage in violence. Democracy may at first increase the opportunities to stage conflict as the repressive powers of the state are dismantled, and only subsequently reduce the motive to fight, after democratic institutions channel and satisfy group-based grievances. The result would be an inverted U-shaped relationship between democracy and the risk of civil war, a proposition supported by recent findings.[28]

BOX 7.2   *Do large youth cohorts cause violence? Maybe, if economic growth rates are low*

Samuel P. Huntington and Robert D. Kaplan have both argued that demographic dynamics portend conflict and violence across the developing world.[29] Their argument is that members of large cohorts, relative to those in their parents' cohort, experience reduced opportunities in life: more childhood poverty, less parental attention and supervision, and greater influence of peers relative to adults.[30] Their lower economic status, in turn, leads to lower fertility rates, higher female labor force participation rates, later marriage, and higher rates of divorce and out-of-wedlock birth when compared to the preceding cohort.[31]

Researchers across diverse disciplines have looked for the effects of cohort size on crime, drug use, wars, political alienation, and civic knowledge.[32] While cohort effects have been found for political views and behavior as well as for civic knowledge in some contexts, they are mitigated by national sociopolitical factors in others. The correlation between youth cohort size and crime and violence is stronger in rapidly growing cities, exacerbated by HIV/AIDS and competition for cropland and fresh water.[33]

Urdal (2004) finds no evidence for Huntington's claim that societies with larger youth cohorts are particularly war-prone, nor do large youth cohorts appear to lead to anarchy. Urdal does find that cohort size can increase the propensity for conflict among countries with poor economic performance. It seems that a large youth cohort can aggravate the tensions caused by poor growth but does not by itself lead to conflict. Similarly, others argue that "multiple demographic stress factors tend to exacerbate each other's effects, expose more of a population and more geographic areas to tensions, and test developing country governments with complex challenges."[34] Thus, the risk of civil conflict for countries in the early or middle phases of their demographic transition may be heightened by an interaction of demographic factors with each other and with nondemographic factors.

Very little of this research focuses on the effects of cohort sizes for developing countries.[35] In recent decades, the importance of cohort size has diminished due to changing sociopolitical and demographic dynamics, such as shifts in gender roles and values.

## *Youth can be political actors while still in their youth*

Investing in youth citizenship affects patterns of participation, development priorities, and thus development outcomes, as young people age. But youth are important not merely because they are future adults: they can define and achieve positive change today. The political, moral, and even stylistic choices of youth help society see what is culturally important and achieve what is politically possible. Writing between the World Wars, Mannheim noted that the emergence of youth permits a society to achieve "fresh contact" with its cultural and social possibilities, and this fresh contact "facilitates re-evaluations of our inventory and teaches us both to forget that which is no longer useful and to covet that which has yet to be won."[36]

It is no accident that a new generation of young leaders has been involved in the transition to democracy and economic openness in Latin American countries, the political reforms in Eastern and Central Europe, and the adoption of new information technologies everywhere. Less embedded in older patronage and exchange networks than adults, they are positioned to exploit new political, social, and economic conditions.[37] It also makes sense that young people everywhere tend to be more receptive to emerging values and worldviews, such as environmentalism (figure 7.3). Young people have been crucial participants in China's anti-imperialist and democratic movement that began in Beijing on May 4, 1919; the 1942 Quit India movement; the prodemocracy movement in South Africa following the Soweto uprising in 1976; and the Otpor youth movement in the former Yugoslavia between 1998 and 2000 (box 7.3).

Opportunities for political participation and active citizenship

As young people encounter their society's main social institutions, they learn the privileges and protections their communities provide, the tasks their communities require, and what they can do to improve those institutions. Social institutions both teach young people how others regard them and estab-

Figure 7.3   Young people are more willing than older people to give up income to prevent environmental pollution

Percentage willing to give up income
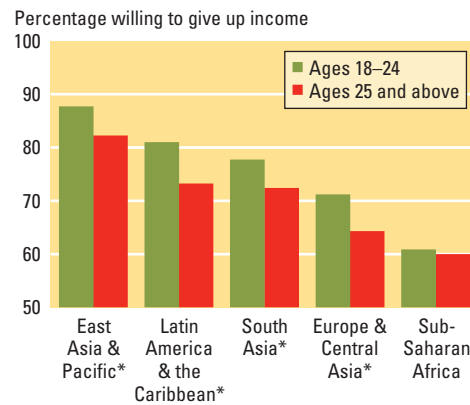
Source: Authors' calculations based on World Values Survey 1990–2000 (Inglehart and others (2004)).
* Difference significant at < 5 percent.

lish (or deny) opportunities for young people to participate in public life. This section addresses the participatory aspect of institutions—the next, how institutions shape the social identities of young people. Every institution does both, but for ease of exposition this section focuses on the opportunities to participate in elections, youth councils, the military, and national or civic service.

The quality of participatory opportunities depends on a society's constitutional framework—the formal rules and informal practices that suffuse its political and social spaces. Institutions based on liberal democratic principles teach young people the beliefs, skills, and habits of active citizenship—through the ways nondiscrimination and personal liberty are incorporated in schools, legal systems, health clinics, and village leadership councils. Rules for unionization gave rise to labor rights activism in Europe. Social rules associated with plantation economies promoted forced labor arrangements and limited political activism in Guatemala, Guyana, and elsewhere in Latin America. More recently, in Brazil, mobilization to oust the military government led to a new constitution in 1988 with a specific right to health care, which in turn promoted citizen mobilization to provide antiretroviral drugs to all AIDS patients.[38]

Young people have more opportunities to participate in public life than ever before,

BOX 7.3   *The Otpor youth movement in the former Yugoslavia*

When older generations in positions of power are beholden to vested interests and are morally compromised, young people can have the independence and moral courage to stand up to these institutions—whether parents or government officials or corporations. Young people's lack of experience can be a political asset. Free from prevailing norms and protocol, they can challenge failed policies and procedures.

The Otpor ("Resistance") youth movement in the former Yugoslavia, which played a key role in removing Slobodan Milosevic from power, relied on these traits. Otpor began in four universities, where young people used simple protest tactics and principles of nonviolence to express their dissatisfaction with the Milosevic regime and their disillusionment with political parties and the political process.[39] Participants had a hands-on approach to building sup-

port for the movement, starting within their families, schools, and communities, under the radar of Serb authorities. They communicated their slogans and symbols through graffiti, badges, T-shirts, and other media. Belgrade was covered with Otpor slogans and its protest symbol, the black fist.

Gathering strength through their grass-roots work and partnerships with student groups and trade unions, Otpor's demonstrations against military tribunals and a public communications campaign spread the movement into the provinces and to older age groups. This mounting pressure brought early elections. When Milosevic tried to annul the election results in September 2000, Otpor conducted national protests that led to the installation of a new legitimately elected president.[40]

Source: La Cava and others (2006).

in the sense that there is "more democracy in more places" than at any time in human history. About 60 percent of the world's countries are democracies (121 of 193), up from about a quarter in 1974 (41 of 150).[41] In addition, the recent trend toward political decentralization has expanded opportunities to participate in subnational politics. Brazil, India, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, Nigeria, Uganda, and the United Kingdom are among the many countries that have recently taken significant decentralization initiatives.[42] New technologies have also lowered the cost of acquiring information on social and political life.

However, the evidence that youth participation and interest in politics has declined as democratic institutions have become more widespread suggests that competitive elections are not enough to genuinely expand the opportunities for active citizenship. In many countries, the democratic transitions are incomplete, with persistent authoritarian enclaves, such as secret police; continuing clientelism; concentrations of power that limit participation, political competition, and accountability; and the emergence of lawless zones where the state is weak.

These themes emerge clearly in a 30-year study of *favelados*—urban slum dwellers—in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. As each succeed-

ing generation became better educated and more politically astute, and more committed to democratic ideals, it also became more aware of its exclusion from citizenship. It grew more cynical and less willing to participate in what it perceived to be a closed and corrupt system run by and for the elite. For many, particularly for youth, the main contact with the state is now the police, widely considered more disrespectful and needlessly violent than drug dealers. As drug factions emerged and began to negotiate votes on the community's behalf, the few tangible benefits the communities received from old-style clientelist politicians disappeared (box 7.4).

Promoting active citizenship among youth requires more than allowing more young people to vote and hold office. The constitutional framework involves the broad opportunity structure of the society, not just elections. Steps to enhance that opportunity structure include establishing institutions of accountability in government, widening access to justice, and enhancing civil society advocacy and participation.

Participating in elections

The opportunity to vote is perhaps the most hallowed form of political participation in electoral democracies. Recognizing this, and aiming to enhance the involvement of young people in public life, most democracies now set the voting age at 18 (107 of 121 countries with available data), and as low as 15 (in the Islamic Republic of Iran). Because of varying rules for the accessibility and voluntariness of voting, and the timing of national elections, it is difficult to compare voting rates across countries. It is widely recognized, however, that young people are less likely to vote than adults, and that youth voting rates have been declining in many middle- and high-income countries.[43] The percentage of urban youth in Chile registered to vote steadily declined between 1997 and 2003 (figure 7.4). This may be related to global patterns, as well as to potential fines and imprisonment in Chile for failing to vote once registered.

There are two alternative explanations for the difference in voting rates between young people and adults. First, young people may vote less frequently because they have less experience with politics and

are less socially and politically integrated than adults. Alternatively, young people may be decreasingly interested in and more excluded from political life. The decline in overall turnout observed in many countries between 1965 and 1999 may be due to life-cycle effects, paradoxically exacerbated by the decision to lower the voting age to 18. It may be that well-prepared voting cohorts are being replaced by younger, less well-prepared ones, who first vote just when they leave home.[44] Overall, young people are voting at lower rates than they did in previous generations.[45]

While developing countries such as Bolivia and India have lowered their voting ages, no studies have been found that track the subsequent effect on youth or adult turnout. Because there is evidence that voting is a habit, reforms that lower the voting age should be combined with efforts to incorporate young people into public life, and perhaps to ritualize their first voting experience. For example, a proposal to lower the voting age to 16, combined with more intensive "citizenship education" in schools, is being discussed in the United Kingdom.[46] Turnout is also related to illiteracy and economic indicators, but evidence also suggests that relative educational levels, not the absolute amount of education, determine voting behavior for individuals.[47]

Randomized trials of "get-out-the-vote" campaigns in the United States show that phone canvassing increased young voter turnout by 5.0 percentage points, and face-to-face canvassing by 8.5 percentage points. The cost per vote ranged from $12 to $20.[48] In developing countries, capacity constraints often translate into out-of-date voter rolls and cumbersome registration processes. However, these constraints may be overcome in ways that are not prohibitively expensive: a voter roll of 75 million people in 83 electoral districts in Bangladesh was digitized and reproduced on CD-ROMs to allow voters to check their names before the elections—a first in the country's history.[49] Some countries have legally codified youth involvement in governance, such as the Philippines through the Youth in Nation-Building Act—an important first step in encouraging youth to vote.

BOX 7.4   *The citizenship of Big George— from youth to adulthood*

Jorge Paivo Pinto (not his real name), known as "Big George," came to Rio de Janeiro from a small city in the Northeast when he was 16 years old. He is the fifth of 19 children, nine of whom died from malnutrition. His parents were illiterate rural workers, and he never went to school. He traveled all over the country during his military service, an experience that developed his political awareness.

While still young, he was among the early invaders of a squatter settlement in the industrial North Zone of Rio, and he led the fight against eviction. By 1968 he was a highly respected leader within the community, and he spearheaded the struggles to obtain electricity, water, sewerage, paved pathways, and concrete steps on the muddy hillsides.

Rio's citizens had earlier lost the right to vote for mayor, governor, and president, but they could still elect their own city councilmen (*vereadores*). George remained president of the Residents' Association and negotiated with the city council on behalf of the community. Democracy was restored in 1984–85, and citizen action, nonprofit organizations, and political parties blossomed. This was also when the drug traffic started to appear within the favelas. It was felt that the police protected the rich neighborhoods, but looked the other way in the poor favelas, the locations of choice for the drug trade.

The drug trade attracted both money and weapons to the favelas, and drug dealers began to exert more influence, taking over the Residents' Association, community organizations, and even the local school. George was forced to move to a more remote area of the favela, but he continued to upgrade community life, fighting for a health clinic, daycare, and better school quality—and to be a respected leader in his own right, angering the dealers even more. The lights on his street were shot out each night. Bullet holes punctured the water tank on his roof and riddled his house with pockmarks. Youth gangs doing drugs congregated in front of his entranceway. Finally, in 2004, after several death threats and much pleading by his family, he moved out.

The majority of the people interviewed in Rio's slums do not feel like citizens. They do not even feel like *gente* (people). Experience has taught them to be cynical. The police are not held accountable for extra-judicial action, including murder—and the justice system and the political system are "complicitous in maintaining the privilege of the privileged," as George's son explained.

Source: Perlman and Anthony (2006).

Figure 7.4   Fewer youth are registering to vote in urban Chile
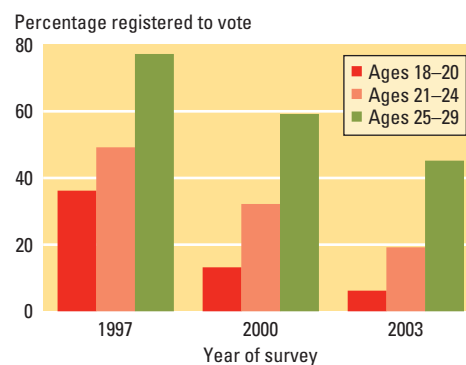
Source: Authors' calculations based on Chilean National Youth Surveys 1997–2003.

Youth councils promote citizenship

Many countries do not permit young people to hold national political office. For instance, the Philippines requires individuals to be 40 years of age to serve as president, 35 as a senator, and 25 as a member of the house of

representatives. (Some offices of local governments in the Philippines are open to individuals as young as 18). Even if young people could hold national office, either through a lowering of age cutoffs or official set-asides for youth, it is not obvious that national priorities would move in a direction favorable to youth interests. Youth representatives could be too few in number, possess heterogeneous priorities, or cease to identify with other youth once they obtain positions of influence (chapter 9), with no change in the outcome.

Many countries promote advisory youth assemblies, councils, or parliaments. Some, such as those in Slovenia and Zimbabwe, bring together local youth representatives at the national level. Regional structures include the European Youth Forum, the Latin American Youth Forum, and the African Youth Parliament. Assemblies also operate in many locales, including the Youth Council of Catalunya and the Youth Parliament of Ryazan, Russia. In the municipality of Barra Mansa, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, children ages 9–15 help set expenditure priorities. In the Philippines, the councils are open to youths ages 15–21.

These initiatives can promote civic engagement—research shows that participation in student government (and other extracurricular activities and volunteering) is strongly correlated with other civic behaviors, such as volunteering and voting in adulthood.[50] But there are few data on youth participants in representative bodies—or on those whom they represent. Preconditions for successful youth involvement in decision making include commitment from the top leadership to youth involvement, prior support by the organization for young people in decision-making roles, strong advocacy by adult leaders for youth participation in decision making, and pressure by young people to increase their involvement in governance.[51] Without a strong sense of purpose or a clear set of objectives, a sense of disempowerment and tokenism can set in.[52] The objective of some of these councils is to advise governments on how to improve services provided for youth, but there is little evidence on whether any youth parliaments have enhanced the quality of youth services or the governance of service delivery.

Perhaps the most important drawback is that these initiatives are necessarily small, typically targeting those already motivated to participate. In Nepal, boys were more likely to participate than girls, and higher caste youths more likely than others.[53] Moldova's youth parliament (implemented with the support of an NGO) involved 450 children in four years, and because of concerns about who was included and the small scale of involvement, "was eventually phased out in favor of concentrating on the development of effective models of local youth participation capable of reaching greater numbers of young people."[54] Moldova then moved to youth councils as forums for youth representation and empowerment—the councils were operating in 25 percent of all localities in Moldova in 2005.

Military service has disparate impacts

Wars and armies have been crucibles of national identity, particularly in multiethnic societies. The former Yugoslav People's Army was one of that country's only national institutions, and conscription was one of the few common national experiences. When the armed forces attach themselves to the nation and not to a particular regime or social group, they can be liberal, modernizing institutions. For young people, military service can provide opportunities to learn skills and integrate into national society, particularly for disadvantaged ethnic and racial minorities who have few other opportunities for advancement. In the United States, active duty service has large positive returns for African-Americans, while it depresses earnings for whites and women. Among almost all countries sampled in a recent international survey, the majority of young people (ages 15–24) remain favorably disposed to military service, even more than to mandatory national service (table 7.4). And in most of these countries, young women tend to favor both national and military service at higher rates than young men.[55]

Although some have argued that required military service can promote citizenship, conscription is unevenly applied in both developed and developing countries, favoring the wealthier classes. The result is that it is more likely to harm rather than promote

Table 7.4 Youth opinions on military and national service in 2005 *(percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing)*

The government should require all young people to perform one or two years of national service

	Albania	Bangladesh	Ethiopiaᵃ	Iraq	Malaysia	Romania	Tajikistan
Ages 25+	77	84	54	38	76	75	90
Ages 15–24	**51**	**84**	**44**	**46**	**69**	**59**	**84**
Male	43	86	44	44	67	55	79
Female	60	82	43	48	72	64	89
Working	53	88	43	46	70	60	83
Not working	50	82	44	46	69	58	92
High socioeconomic status	57	79	—	21	93	54	86
Low socioeconomic status	48	86	—	39	70	60	82

Military service is a good experience for young people

	Albania	Bangladesh	Ethiopiaᵃ	Iraq	Malaysia	Romania	Tajikistan
Ages 25+	89	86	54	43	88	81	90
Ages 15–24	**70**	**90**	**46**	**54**	**84**	**69**	**85**
Male	60	91	43	48	85	61	79
Female	81	90	49	60	83	78	91
Working	71	94	42	56	85	63	91
Not working	70	89	49	52	84	70	84
High socioeconomic status	81	89	—	60	93	61	89
Low socioeconomic status	65	92	—	80	87	72	78

Source: WDR 2007 InterMedia surveys.
— = Not available.
a. Not a representative sample—Addis Ababa and Tigray regions are not included in the survey.

a democratic conception of citizenship premised on equal rights and obligations.[56] The military draft is equivalent to an income tax on conscriptees, with an associated decline in annual earnings of as much as 15 percent and a reduction in the incentive for families to invest in their children's education. The tax is also regressive because many developing countries establish exemptions to conscription, such as medical eligibility and deferments for continuing education, and because wealthier families are better positioned to take advantage of these exemptions, either directly or through connections and bribes. In Russia, poor, low-educated, and rural households were much more likely to have their sons enlisted, and the lifetime losses they incurred were large—about 15 percent of annual income. The costs are not limited to conscripts themselves. Research conducted for this report suggests that military service significantly increased the likelihood of subsequent criminal activity.[57]

The effects are compounded if one considers the risk of military service for health and well-being: even in the absence of combat participation, military service can result in rape, physical assault, and psychological trauma.[58] Data from the United States show that military service also has significantly adverse consequences for later (post-service) health. Cohorts with higher participation in military service subsequently suffered higher premature mortality, primarily due to ischemic heart disease and lung cancer.[59]

Community and national service: Involve young people in design, and give them choices

Some countries, such as Brazil, France, Germany, and Israel, offer young people service programs as alternatives to voluntary or required military duty. In other countries, among them Ghana, Indonesia, Nigeria, South Africa, and a number in Latin America, governments have required skilled young

people, such as newly educated physicians or university graduates, to perform national service. In some cases, NGOs sponsor voluntary service programs (Servicio País in Chile), and in others the government contributes financing (Green Corps in Australia). The Mathare Youth Sports Association in Nairobi, Kenya, and the Cambodian Volunteers for Community Development were both established by young people. Service programs also vary in the length of service, compensation for participants, the extent to which different social groups mix, the activities youth engage in, the structure of supervision, and extent of youth input. Their objectives are to provide youth with opportunities for civic participation, instill civic virtues, build livelihood skills, and contribute to community well-being.

Voluntary service programs promote civic engagement. A rigorous longitudinal study of the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps program in the United States compared civic and political outcomes for program participants with those for young people who applied to the program but did not participate. It found that the program increased civic engagement (though not the likelihood of voting). Systematic evaluations of community service programs are difficult to conduct because the very characteristics of successful programs—organizational autonomy and youth initiative—are confounded by selection effects that make impact hard to measure. Nevertheless, many service programs from around the world, such as VivaRio in Brazil, have produced passionate advocates and highly supportive former participants.[60]

One risk for service programs is that mandates applied to young people can become mandates for institutions, such as schools, to produce services (in this case opportunities for civic engagement), with many of the general problems associated with the delivery of public services. This underscores the importance of flexibility, youth input, and organizational autonomy in the design of service programs (box 7.5). In addition, elements common to successful youth service programs appear to include recognition afforded to youth for socially valued (as opposed to token) work, a manageable size so that par-

ticipants know each other and staff, and the presence of accountability standards.[61]

Acquiring an identity and a sense of belonging

Youth is the period of acquiring an identity. Erik Erikson put the challenge of identity this way: "from among all the possible and imaginable relations, [a young person] must make a series of ever-narrowing selections of personal, occupational, sexual, and ideological commitments."[62] Children typically make any number of imaginary choices, but for young people the choices are real and in some respects irreversible. Success in the transition to active citizenship entails, in Erikson's words, feeling "at home" in one's society, knowing "where one is going," possessing the "inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count." For youth, who are *those who count*? Families are important, of course, as are peers. As young people grow older, however, those who count are increasingly drawn from institutions of society—teachers, police, employers.

A young person, viewed favorably, is more likely to feel invited to participate in public and economic life—social recognition promotes active citizenship. A longitudinal study of youth in Estonia found that a measure of a young person's self-esteem predicted the likelihood of starting a business years later. Similarly, having a goal of attending secondary school, controlling for family background, was related to secondary school completion. Conversely, social invisibility, discrimination, mistreatment at the hands of powerful institutions, and stark inequalities of opportunity can lead young people to suffer not only in material terms but in their sense of who they are and what they can do. Commenting on the need for spending money, a young Malagasy man said, "If I go out without shoes, it's as if I'm not a man." A sense of belonging is important to the performance of any organization, whether family, firm, or nation: "from the classroom to the boardroom, . . . a sense of identity and attachment to an organization is critical to well-functioning enterprises."[63]

At the extreme, young people can assume that the labels society applies to them are in

fact true because, for most people, it is better to have a negatively valued identity than no identity. In addition, when states fail to establish, or actively repress, inclusive identities for youth, or fail to provide for the needs of citizens, resentment and oppositional identifications emerge. For example, the marginalized young descendants of North African immigrants to France speak a countercultural antilanguage, *verlan*, which arose in the politicized *banlieues* (suburbs) of the 1970s, because it deliberately obscures meaning, and carries elements of defiance, indifference, and heroism. On the computer of a young man arrested in Italy for alleged political extremism was a song that repeated the words "I am a terrorist, I am a terrorist," over and over, suggesting an aspect of glory even in that label.[64]

Social organizations provide spaces for young people to develop a sense of belonging. They include social and civil organizations, such as religious groups, rural associations in West Africa (*kafoolu*), samba schools and sports teams in Brazil, clubs such as 4-H and Scouts, and environmental protection movements. To promote a sense of belonging and active citizenship, public policy for social organizations should be permissive, with few requirements for formation and reporting.

This section examines four institutions that young people encounter, through which they learn how others regard them, and with or against which they begin to identify themselves: the state and the documents of formal citizenship, schools, employers, and official and NGO youth groups. Young people sometimes turn, when these and other formal institutions fail to recognize them, to informal groups whose identities include opposition to society's formal institutions. So the section also examines the motives and consequences of gang membership and political extremism.

A legal identity

Actions, or omissions, on the part of the state affect whether, and how, a young person comes to feel recognized in society. These include a legal identity—a passport, an identification card, and other basic documentation often crucial for access to basic

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BOX 7.5   *Promoting voluntary and independent opportunities*

More research is needed on the kinds of opportunities that best stimulate youth citizenship and on government initiatives promoting them. The research so far suggests that conscription, while an instrument of nation-building in some contexts, is often applied inequitably, with negative consequences for poverty alleviation and solidarity. Service programs to promote civic engagement are more effective when young people have choices about the activities they want to participate in and are involved in their design.

Too often, political leaders have used the energy and vitality of young people as instruments of state power. The Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth) in Germany was a notorious instance of state-sponsored opportunities for youth civic engagement that destroyed, rather than created, the kinds of state-society relationships that facilitate accountability and transparency. Less well known, but perhaps for that reason more striking, were youth-led groups, such as the Edelweiss Pirates and the White Rose, who despite the threat of execution, resisted the National Socialists.[65] The exploitation of the energy and strength of young people for state power is evident in the youth wings of political parties—associated with attacks on rival groups in Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Russia, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere.[66] Precisely because state-sponsored youth participation has been (and can be) exploitative, participatory programs must promote youth involvement in their design and objectives, and emphasize organizational autonomy for the coordinating institutions.

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services. According to UNICEF, more than half of all births in developing countries are unregistered.[67] A study in Brazil using data from 2001 found that of children not enrolled in school, 8 percent did not enroll for lack of documentation, about the same percentage who did not do so because they lacked money for school-related expenses.[68]

At older ages, the lack of documentation impedes young people's entry into the formal labor market (chapter 4). The high cost of obtaining passports in many countries bears especially heavily on poor and credit-constrained young people (chapter 8). Internal migration in China, Vietnam, and elsewhere results in "floating populations," composed significantly of young people who lack residence cards and other identity cards legally required to obtain housing, education, and health care—and without which they remain excluded from society (see spotlight on Vietnamese youth—managing prosperity, following chapter 3).[69] Taking steps to make basic legal identity more available to young people could increase their sense of belonging to society by opening crucial services and social institutions to them.

The mixed impact of schools on citizenship

Aspects of civics in school policies—whether to pledge allegiance to the flag or

"When a youth gets citizenship, he or she needs to realize that he or she has now transited from a nobody to a somebody."

Young person, Nepal
January 2006

sing the national anthem—are political flash-points in Japan and elsewhere. The reason: schooling is inherently political in the sense that, over the long term, it establishes a particular understanding of citizenship and the nation. Both directly through school policies and social science classes—and indirectly through the practices and choices of educators, communities, and peers—schools endorse certain virtues for students (chapter 3). Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, in a discussion of multiculturalism, education, and nation-building, argued that a good citizen defends his country, protects his wife and children, respects elders, is a good neighbor, and is "clean, neat, punctual, and well mannered." Advocates of democratic education emphasize nondiscrimination, respect for the rights of others, holding public officials accountable for actions, the ability to deliberate and state publicly the reasons for choices, respect for the rights of others, and shared solidarity.[70]

Although schools promote national identity over the long run, it is not clear whether civic education promotes citizenship in the short run. Most recent studies on the impact of civic education rely on self-reported student behaviors and have difficulty establishing causal relationships. Data from the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement Civic Education Study, based on nationally representative samples of 14-year-olds in 28 countries, showed that increased civic knowledge was correlated with self-reported engagement and citizenship-oriented attitudes.[71] In the United States, students who took at least three courses in social studies were more likely to register to vote, to vote, and to perform volunteer work.[72]

Evaluations have repeatedly found, however, that civic education classes have a weak effect on school-age children.[73] Out-of-school civic education in Zambia changed knowledge rather than behavior, and the impact was mediated by educational attainment. Civics lessons in South Africa were effective only if the methods were participatory, if civics classes met more than once a week, and if students found their teachers charismatic.[74]

In the South African program, obstacles to participation included resistance by school officials and teachers to allow an NGO to conduct the civics sessions, despite the stated goal of weekly sessions; and crime and political struggles within the provincial and local governments. Those obstacles suggest a general problem that might explain why civics courses, although able to promote civic knowledge, have almost no impact on "the development of democratic attitudes and behaviors."[75] Students learn as much, and probably more, about citizenship from the broader school culture than from civics classes, and the broader school culture usually replicates the patterns of exclusion and hierarchy in society.

In service-learning programs, students work outside the school to meet real community needs. Teachers incorporate those outside activities into the curriculum, and students examine what they have experienced and receive recognition for their contributions. Service learning can promote social awareness, increase social connectedness, and reduce smoking, alcohol abuse, and unwanted pregnancies. The programs appear promising, but almost all available studies have been in high-income countries, and outcomes seem to vary with the quality of the program offered.[76]

Religious schools, which typically enjoy a degree of curricular autonomy from the state, often address values and social ideals more directly than state schools. The Jesuit Fé y Alegría schools in República Bolivariana de Venezuela and elsewhere in Latin America attempt to integrate community building, skills training, and leadership development into many of their programs. In many of the Mujahid group of *madrassas* in the Indian state of Kerala, girls outnumber boys, and the schools stress women's rights and empowerment for girls.[77] There is a danger, however, that some religious schools indoctrinate students, vilify outsiders, or undermine equality of opportunity for boys and girls. In Jordan, the government is promoting a new religious curriculum and textbooks that would highlight human rights and democratic ideas within Islam and eliminate negative references to adherents of other religions.

Recognition through work

Employment can instill a sense of competence, autonomy outside the home, and social standing. It facilitates the develop-

ment of social capital and the means to start one's family, which itself promotes social belonging and confers a protective effect on youth (chapter 6). In rural Botswana, working is the crucial element of *go itirela*, or "making oneself socially" a part of the community. There is evidence that higher rates of youth unemployment lead to more burglaries, thefts, and drug offenses. Unemployed young people are more likely to feel alienated, express less confidence in existing political systems, talk less about politics, and more frequently support revolutionary ideas than their employed peers.[78]

Work is particularly important for young women, for whom it is sometimes the only culturally acceptable experience in the public sphere. Expanding women's access to credit and targeting agricultural extension and technology to women can enhance their sense of belonging and value (chapter 4). Working adolescents, especially young women who are engaged in intense or solitary occupations, such as domestic or household labor, may feel isolated if they are unable to socialize with their peers.[79]

Youth development and youth action programs

Youth development programs combine sports, mentoring, theater, life skills, leadership training, peace building, and livelihood skills, usually in a defined geographic area. Typically, their goals are to build self-confidence, trust, and problem-solving skills. However, there are few persuasive evaluations of these programs, and most do not link program characteristics to the assets and developmental processes believed important for youth development.

Short-term or intermittent contact, such as that characterizing "part-time, uniformed clubs," may not provide the sustained environment to develop relationships of trust, perhaps because of the lack of opportunities for one-to-one contact.[80] A U.S. program that focused on poor adolescents in high-risk neighborhoods—and included education, community service, skills development, and financial incentives over four years—increased positive attitudes and community service, though it was prohibitively expensive for developing countries.[81]

Youth development programs have been implemented in municipalities in Colombia and more widely in FYR Macedonia, but evaluations are not yet available. Obstacles to the successful application of youth development programs in developing countries include skepticism of parents, a tendency to focus on young men in urban areas, and a social reluctance in many places to mix with individuals of other classes and ethnic groups.

Youth action programs encourage social activism and community involvement more explicitly than youth development programs (spotlight on youth action following chapter 9). Young people have been key participants in political movements as diverse as street demonstrations in support of the adoption of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in Brazil and school-based clubs that advocate evaluations of teacher performance in Romania. But programs encouraging activism are fairly new and remain unproven. Many rely on education, and while there is evidence that peer education benefits the educators, there is less evidence that it benefits the target group.[82] The programs tend to focus on a small core of youth, such as those with proven leadership skills, and might not reach those most in need.

Youth, gangs, and crime

Identity, status, and belonging are important reasons for young people, usually young men, to join gangs. Membership can provide prestige or status among friends, opportunities for association, excitement, and money, and a sense of belonging and identity for marginalized young people. In some areas young people are actively recruited into gangs.[83] Fieldwork from urban Nicaragua illustrates the commonly observed phenomenon that poor and marginalized young people band together to create opportunities and identities denied them by prevailing social structures.[84]

Some young people join gangs to rebel against authority. Others want to be accepted by a group of peers. Still others are attracted to the group's rituals and roles. Gang members may feel better after joining—with more self-esteem, fewer symptoms of depression or anxiety, and an improved sense of physical health, as well.

They may also feel competent, optimistic, in control, and accepted by their peers.[85]

The few long-term studies of gang membership have identified "risk factors" for belonging to a gang and committing a crime. These include community characteristics (weak social integration and the prevalence of violence and availability of illegal drugs), family characteristics (poverty, poor parental supervision, or parental absence), and individual characteristics (depression, poor commitment to school, illicit drug use, and peers who are gang members).[86] Young women, in particular, might turn to gangs for protection, even where gangs are not widespread. A recent survey reveals that 88 percent of young sex workers in Nicaragua reported being friends with a gang member, and in Panama 92 percent. Among those who were not sex workers, only 37 percent in Nicaragua reported having gang members as friends, and 47 percent in Panama.[87]

The state, or its local police and politicians, can fuel gang activity. In the 1980s, politicians in Rio de Janeiro armed supporters and gangs in their garrison communities, and local police were caught negotiating an arms deal with drug traffickers in 2004. In other countries gang leaders pay extortion money or bribes to police. In Jamaica, Nigeria, the Philippines, and elsewhere, local governments, the military, and senior politicians have directly armed and collaborated with ganglike militias.[88]

Where the state or local authority and other formal institutions appear to have broken down, and where the incidence of crime is high, young people may band together for protection, or to provide services. In some cases, these groups—which can include "youth patrols" and other service-oriented associations—can evolve into criminal gangs. The Bakassi Boys began in 1998 in the Nigerian city of Aba as an officially sanctioned response to petty crime in the market. A group of young people was organized by local traders, with the support of local politicians, to patrol the market and chase out criminals. This group quickly turned vigilante and took the initiative to summarily execute those they suspected of crime. By 2002 the Bakassi Boys had themselves begun to commit organized crimes, including kidnapping and extortion.[89]

Serious offenses by gang members are infrequent—on average, fewer than 10 percent of boys are charged with violent crimes, and an even smaller number of boys (6–7 percent) is responsible for the majority of serious violent crimes. Most offenses involve boys who commit minor crimes against property, and most boys grow out of it.[90] But gang membership is dangerous—the likelihood of being killed is many times higher for gang members than for the general population.[91]

Young gang members commit a disproportionate share of offenses, both violent and nonviolent, and the influence of gang membership on violence is greater than the influence of violent nongang peers. Youths commit more serious and violent acts while they are gang members than they do after they leave the gang. In some countries, the number and share of crimes committed by young people have increased significantly in recent years. In Eastern and Central Europe, youth crime more than doubled in the first six years after transition. Similarly, juvenile offenses increased after apartheid restrictions were lifted in Namibia.[92]

Evidence of the efficacy of interventions—diversion programs—to prevent young people from joining gangs, to encourage them to leave, or to prevent gang violence is limited. The few programs properly evaluated show ambiguous effects. Criminalization and suppression are the most common official responses to gangs, but they are the least effective. Successful interventions must address the underlying marginalization, discrimination, lack of opportunities, and hopelessness that afflict young people.[93]

For those who have not yet joined a gang or even committed a crime, but are at substantial risk of doing so, several diversion programs have been designed and evaluated in the United States. Some have even shown measurable benefits. However, the resources and time they require—in costs and in trained individuals to provide services to at-risk youth and their families—make them less than appropriate for most developing-country contexts.

Peace education programs promote tolerance and conflict resolution skills among youth living in areas of potential conflict, whether among rival gangs or rival ethnic or religious groups. One such program in Ecuador provided students with extracurricular training in creative arts as well as workshops on the risks of teenage pregnancy and drug and alcohol use. Interviews with beneficiaries of this multipronged approach revealed that students who participated in the project developed an awareness of the sociopolitical landscape around them and had much greater confidence in expressing their opinions and a higher sense of self-esteem than before.[94]

Juvenile crime is positively associated with local unemployment and poverty, and decreases with family income and education.[95] Youth crime also responds to jobs and changes in wages. Falling wages in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s were partly responsible for the increase in youth crime.[96] Programs to combat crime are less effective if they do not take into account the alternative opportunities for schooling and work.

The widespread availability of guns increases death rates from violence. Reducing the spread of small arms would have a significant impact on violence. Most of the trade in guns among youths is already illegal, but possible interventions include licensing, regulation, and a ban on carrying guns. Youth homicide rates are highest in Latin America. In 1995, there were nearly 13,000 homicides among young people ages 10 to 29 in Colombia, or 84 per 100,000. The municipal governments of Cali and Bogotá, Colombia, banned the carrying of guns on certain days known to have higher homicide rates (weekends and holidays), and there were fewer homicides when the ban was in effect. In Bogotá that effort was part of a comprehensive set of interventions to reduce youth violence that included administrative reform and municipal accountability; public awareness and antiviolence mobilization; reduction in alcohol consumption; public order and the restoration of urban spaces; local community-based security councils; additional funds for policing, domestic violence, and child abuse prevention; and alternative conflict resolution.[97]

Young people and political violence

There appears to be no single reason for individuals to join organizations promoting political violence. Most who engage in political violence are young men, and many—though not all—are students. Many members of the Taliban (*taliban* means "students") were recruited from madrassas in Pakistan and Afghanistan, although the vast majority of madrassas do not foment conflict or hatred, and only a small minority of madrassa students become involved in political violence. Studies conflict on the propensity of young people to be involved in terrorism. Some argue that the majority are under 25, others that young people are not more likely to be involved. Yet even in widespread violent political movements, young people play a small role. Of course, the vast majority of young people are not involved. And as with crime, their involvement in radical movements, even with terrorism, is often temporary.[98]

A study of 250 West German terrorists found that as many as a quarter had lost at least one parent by age 14, suggesting that the disposition toward political violence might be related to a kind of psychological loss. Other studies argue, however, that neither psychopathology nor socioeconomic deprivation drive people toward political violence. In some cases, participants in political violence were more educated and wealthier than their counterparts in the general population, and in others they were more likely to come from working-class backgrounds.[99] Terrorist organizations might be selecting more educated individuals for difficult operations or leadership.

This suggests that interventions to prevent political violence need to go beyond providing educational and economic opportunities. Social and political inclusion, in addition to improved economic opportunities, can drain crucial support for violent groups. Organizations promoting political violence resemble gangs and cults in the socialization process: social contacts and the social environment promote a sense

of belonging to the organization. This has been observed among immigrants in England, global terrorists, and the Weather Underground in the United States. In addition, the calling to political violence might, like gang membership, be a way to overcome a fragmented inner identity with something believed to be more transcendent and higher. Young people "want to believe, with every sinew of their existence."[100]

Young people need legally recognized second chances

Young people develop their identities by joining an organization, trying a job, or falling in with a crowd. They discover how well those roles fit with their self-conception and their aspirations, trying on new roles that fit better, and then adjusting their aspirations again. Sometimes the most dangerous roles and identities seem most real, a precarious moment for youth. Erikson puts it this way: if societal authorities "diagnose and treat as a criminal, as a constitutional misfit, as a derelict doomed by his upbringing, or indeed as a deranged patient a young person who, for reasons of personal or social marginality, is close to choosing a negative identity, that young person may well put his energy into becoming exactly what the careless and fearful community expects him to be—and make a total job of it."[101]

Two of the most dangerous roles for youth are criminals and soldiers. And two practices of legally recognized second chances for their social belonging and political inclusion are criminal due process and the reintegration of child soldiers. It is important not to criminalize young people's experimentation. It is also important to avoid, whenever possible, their incarceration—not only because it promotes stigma and a negative identity but because of the effects on the health and well-being of young inmates and detainees. Where criminal justice systems are underdeveloped, many youth wait in overcrowded and dangerous prison for months, even years, before seeing a lawyer or a judge. Many child soldiers joined insurgent groups because they were abducted or because their choices and abilities were severely circumscribed by poverty and social dislocation. While they engage in (and suffer) extraordinary violence

"Youth rebel because we have a different perspective, different tastes, and because we've grown up within different cultures."

Young person, Honduras
January 2006

as combatants, measures to reconcile them to their home communities, and to assist in their reintegration, are critical for them and, in some cases, for regional stability.

Restorative justice for young people

Experimenting with social defiance is almost universal. Between 70 percent and 80 percent of children have committed at least one—usually petty—offense, most often unreported and undiscovered. Young people are often vulnerable to arrest and detention for "status crimes," offenses that stem from the status of the offender rather than the offense committed. Most common among these are statutes against vagrancy or loitering. A 1997 report by Human Rights Watch found that 1,800 young people were imprisoned in Kenya for "destitution and vagrancy," and a further 500 for being "beyond parental control." Egyptian police often arrest children they deem "vulnerable to delinquency" or "vulnerable to danger," categories delineated in Egypt's Child Law.[102]

Criminal behavior does begin in youth.[103] Data from South Africa show that 60 percent of repeat offenders committed their first crimes by age 19, and 82 percent by age 25.[104] But the evidence is clear that the way to prevent continued criminal behavior is not to punish young criminals excessively: do not impose harsh penalties, do not incarcerate youths with adults, provide access to justice, and promote restorative justice rather than incarceration.

Avoid harsh penalties. Many countries impose harsh penalties for the young. Between 1996 and 2001, 11 individuals are known to have been executed for crimes committed when they were under age 18, eight in the United States. (In 2005 the U.S. Supreme Court abolished the death penalty for offenders younger than age 18.) The Democratic Republic of Congo, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Nigeria each carried out one such execution; each has since expressly renounced the practice, which violates the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.[105] Other harsh penalties often inflicted on young people include severe corporal punishment and excessive, long-term imprisonment, particularly

for victimless crimes. The rate at which young people are imprisoned varies enormously across countries (figure 7.5). Some countries have fewer youth in prison than expected given the size of the youth population, average income, and schooling. This may be because youth crime rates are low, or because they have established alternative methods to deal with young criminals.

Young people respond to increases in the severity of punishment and the likelihood of punishment by reducing criminal behavior. But juvenile punishment does not deter later criminal behavior, and even in the short run individuals with either the most minor or the most serious criminal histories are not significantly deterred. Premature or excessive punishment, including incarceration and social stigma, can lead young people to continue to participate in criminal activity or violence. Harsher prison conditions are associated with higher recidivism rates. Reintegration, treatment, and restoration help young people find ways to belong, to feel both personally and socially valued. Obviously, policies allowing second chances need to be balanced with the legitimate purpose of deterring violence.[106]

Do not incarcerate youths with adults. Many countries have laws or regulations forbidding the incarceration of young people with adults, but the laws are routinely ignored—either deliberately or because of insufficient capacity in juvenile or adult prisons. Estimates suggest that more than 10,000 U.S. juveniles are housed in adult criminal justice settings each year. Juvenile offenders sentenced to adult prison are more likely than both their peers within juvenile facilities and adults serving time alongside them to re-offend on release from prison. Peer effects for various categories of theft, burglary, and felony drug and weapons crimes suggest limiting the exposure of less experienced criminals—the young—to those with more "criminal capital."[107]

Prisons are also extremely high-risk environments for the transmission of HIV and other communicable diseases. They are overcrowded, provide poor nutrition and limited health care, promote unprotected sex and unsafe tattooing, and continue illicit drug use

Figure 7.5   Countries incarcerate young people at very different rates
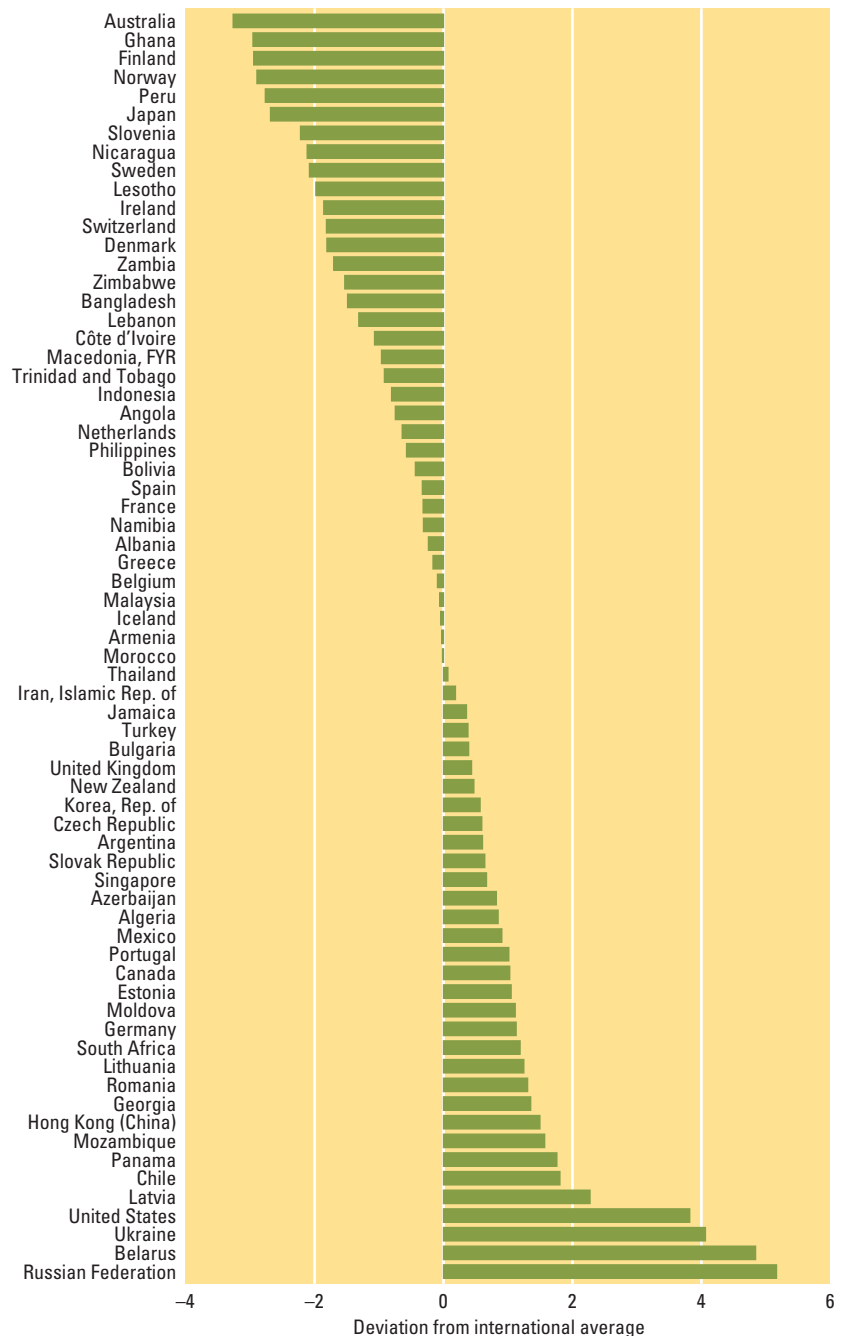
Source: Authors' calculations based on data from International Center for Prison Studies (2003).
Note: This figure shows international differences in incarceration rates among youth, in standard deviations from the international mean, controlling for youth population size, GDP per capita, and gross secondary enrollment.

and unsafe injecting practices. Syringe-sharing rates are higher in prisons than among injecting drug users outside prison.[108] Juvenile inmates in adult facilities were five times more likely to be sexually assaulted, twice as likely to be beaten by staff, and eight times

more likely to commit suicide than juveniles held in juvenile facilities.[109]

Provide access to justice. Many young people in developing countries languish in prisons for months, sometimes years, before encountering a lawyer, a judge, or anyone who might establish their innocence. Most countries do not have even basic data on access to justice for youth, such as the number of young people in pretrial detention. Initiatives that attempt to overcome limited court capacity and bring legal support to incarcerated youth—such as the Justice on Wheels Program in the Philippines, where judges travel to correctional facilities and process detainees—appear promising. Also important are efforts, such as those recommended in a South African Criminal Justice System White Paper, to separate those awaiting trial from sentenced criminals, to separate organizational responsibility for detainees from responsibility for inmates, and to monitor the length of stay of detainees.[110]

Promote restorative justice rather than incarceration. Other interventions make young offenders aware of the future they face if they continue their criminal behavior. The most famous are the "Scared Straight" programs, which expose young people to inmates in adult prisons. However, they appear to do more harm than good. A review of nine randomized controlled trials finds that, relative to doing nothing, these programs are likely to increase delinquency.[111] Similarly, alternative residential camps that impose military discipline on residents ("boot camps") do not reduce recidivism.[112]

Restorative (in contrast to retributive) justice provides opportunities for victims and offenders to meet face-to-face, talk about the crime, express concerns, and work out a plan for restitution (box 7.6). Almost unknown 30 years ago, it is widespread today, both for adults and young people, with thousands of programs in individual jurisdictions in more than 80 countries.[113] These programs, and their requirements for offenders, differ across jurisdictions—for example, they are not universally a substitute for incarceration. Best known among them is the South African "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" following the transition to democracy in the 1990s.[114] Other examples include victim-offender mediation programs in Bucharest and Craiovia, Romania, and a public-private alliance supporting alternative justice programs managed by the AlvarAlice Foundation in Cali, Colombia.

Recent reviews of the impact of restorative justice programs on participant welfare and the likelihood of recidivism show

"Ocassionally they call us rebels because we dress poorly or ridiculously."

Young person, Honduras
January 2006

B O X 7 . 6   *Last chance in Texas*

Candace's parents were drug dealers. By the time she was nine, her father was dead and she had been raped and injected with heroin. Forced to steal to keep her younger siblings from starvation, Candace ended up with a friend of her mother's who exposed her to crack cocaine and tried to lure her into prostitution. At 13, she ran away with her 23-year-old boyfriend; together, they robbed 120 convenience stores in six months. Candace was arrested and sentenced to the Giddings State School in Texas—home to the Capital Offenders program for rehabilitative youth justice.

The school seeks to make youth offenders confront defining events in their lives and the crimes they have committed. It teaches students to take responsibility for their lives. This can be difficult for students whose traumatic early experiences have shaped their senses of right and wrong (see box 2.9 on brain development).

Guided by therapists, youth immerse themselves in detailed accounts of their lives and crimes. Students repeatedly reenact their crimes, playing both themselves and their victims. Participants are thus taught to empathize both with their victims and their inner selves. Students spend their time in Giddings learning things that were not taught in their homes—communication, introspection, and the ability to accept criticism without reacting angrily.

Youth who go through the Capital Offenders program demonstrate lower recidivism rates than those incarcerated elsewhere. Only 10 percent of students released from Giddings had been rearrested in the 36 months after their release, compared to 74 percent of all youth parolees in a recent study in California.

While these findings are impressive, the program is costly. However, the average young person incarcerated for a 40-year sentence in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice costs the state $626,000, not including the cost of crimes committed by those who reoffend. The average cost of rehabilitation at Giddings for that same person would come to about $160,000—a quarter of the cost of incarceration.

Candace spent 70 months in Giddings. After she had struggled to complete the Capital Offenders program the first time, she asked to repeat it. The parole committee at Giddings asked her, "How are you a different person than when you arrived?" She replied "I came here so locked in my feelings, there was no way I could understand them. Everything Giddings has to offer, I took advantage of. I earned myself some distance from myself."

Source: Candace's life story and Giddings program details excerpted from Hubner (2005).

On February 15, 2003, three members of a youth gang known as La Placita entered the grounds of C.A. Ron de Santa Teresa (CARST), a rum distillery in the town of El Consejo, Aragua State, República Bolivariana de Venezuela, and assaulted a security guard. One of the youths was found by the company's security manager. The chief executive officer of CARST, 34-year-old Alberto Vollmer, describes the event:

Our head of security, Jimin, caught one of the guys after three days, and took him to the police. But the police here, it's not like the States. They look on the computer: "Wanted for this, this, and this. Ah." The worst prison you can imagine is the best alternative. Otherwise, they take you out in the jeep—which means you're dead. Jimin calls me up and says, "Listen, the police are taking this guy out to execute him. Green light or red light?" I said,

"No, no, red light. Bring him over here." They didn't want to give him over. But Jimin finally bought the guy for 50,000 bolivares. That's something like 23 bucks. Amazing, no? Twenty-three dollars, the difference between life and death.[116]

Alberto met with the young man, and proposed that the youths pay for the damage they had caused by working for the company without pay for three months. He accepted the offer, and on the following Monday showed up at the company's doors together with 22 other members of the gang.

The company responded by starting the Alcatraz Project. Many of the young people were poorly educated, many had drug problems, and many had committed serious crimes, including murder. They agreed to work for the company during the mornings; in the afternoons they were given basic education, instruction in values and legal issues, drug counseling, and sports activities.

At the end of the first three months, the project recruited a second cohort from a rival gang, and then a third gang came asking to join the project. More than 100 young people have gone through the program. State Police report a 35 percent drop in crime in the district; but as of April 2004, only one of the project's graduates had found outside employment. The rest were working temporary jobs at Hacienda Santa Teresa.

Sources: Brandt (2005); de Cordoba (2004); and Gonzalez and Marquez (2005).

fairly consistent results, both from randomized controlled trials and other methods. Victims and offenders who participated in restorative processes were more satisfied than those who went through the courts. In general, offenders in restorative justice programs were more likely to complete restitution agreements, and less likely to reoffend, than those in control groups. Of the studies that matched participants to nonparticipants, only one found that participants had a slightly higher risk of reoffending than nonparticipants. The evaluation and adoption of restorative justice programs are complicated by the fact that they are almost always voluntary. Those who refuse to participate may not have benefited from the program even if they had participated. Some may refuse out of fear that these extrajudicial programs do not guarantee legal due process: the accused must admit guilt to avoid trial, and may not be informed of their legal rights.[115] Restorative justice programs need not be administered by the state. They can be initiated by private firms or individuals, as a complement or alternative to official justice systems (box 7.7).

Rehabilitation for young combatants

An estimated 300,000 children under age 18, who represent 10 percent of global combatants, either are fighting in wars or have been recently demobilized. (If the age group were expanded to include youths to age 24, the figures would be substantially larger.)

Between 30,000 and 50,000 child soldiers are engaged in the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 30 percent of all combatants there. About 100,000 children have fought in Sudan's two-decade civil war. Some 100,000 Iranian children fought and died in the war with Iraq. Myanmar has more than 75,000 child soldiers serving both in the state army and with its armed rivals. Some 70–80 percent of combatants in Colombian guerilla and paramilitary units were under the age of 25. The UN estimates that more than 50 states have actively recruited another 500,000 children into military and paramilitary forces.[117]

A large percentage of child combatants—as many as one-third—are abducted or otherwise pressed into fighting. Other young people join because of family poverty and social marginality: armies and militias offer youth employment, food, shelter, and social membership—and in many cases the promise of booty, including sex, drugs, and material goods. A third of the fighters in the civil war in Sierra Leone had lost at least one parent, and 60 percent had been displaced from their homes before the war started; most were uneducated and poor. Political marginalization and the lack of economic opportunities encouraged the formation of factions among rural youth. Some young people are motivated by revenge: 15 percent of young recruits in Colombia had a sibling who was killed before their recruitment.[118]

The range of pain and loss for surviving ex-combatants includes almost every dimension of social and economic well-being: injury, exposure to disease, psychological trauma, sexual abuse, social isolation, poverty, lost education. Strikingly, there is some evidence that these effects might be worse for youths than for children, possibly because children are more resilient, or perhaps because they suffer fewer stigmas, than youths (box 7.8).

Programs to give these soldiers a second chance in life usually comprise disarmament, demobilization, and rehabilitation (DDR). To prevent re-recruitment, revenge, and abuse, it is important during the demobilization process to house underage combatants separately from older youth and adults. Rehabilitation should also include medical and psychosocial support. A sur-

vey of child soldiers in Africa found that 50 percent regularly had severe nightmares, and 25 percent suffered some form of mutism. At camps in Uganda, 70 to 80 percent of female child soldiers and 60 percent of males tested positive for one or more sexually transmitted diseases. Drug addiction and battle injuries such as amputation are common, as are the sexual abuse and rape of girl soldiers, often recruited to serve the militia leaders.[119]

Linking programs to development planning is particularly important in countries such as Liberia, where as many as 10 percent of the male working-age population will go through such programs. Ex-combatants and potential new recruits need help in obtaining skills, jobs, and self-employment opportunities consistent with foreseeable labor market trends and the needs of their
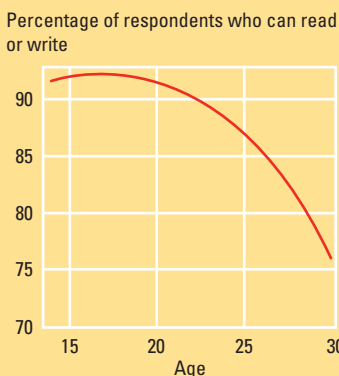

BOX 7.8   *War-affected youth in Uganda*

Youth suffer more than any other age group from war violence, yet not all war-affected youth receive equal attention and resources. In northern Uganda, for instance, services for children are more common than those for young adults. However, according to a recent survey of 750 youth combatants and noncombatants in northern Uganda, young adults are at least as badly affected by war as children (and in some cases more so).

The rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has terrorized northern Uganda for two decades. More than 1.5 million people have been displaced; tens of thousands have been attacked, maimed, or killed; and almost one-third of the population has lost a family member to war violence. At least 66,000 youth are thought to have been forcibly recruited into the LRA. The rebels have focused on abducting males between the ages of 13 and 18, but people of all ages and both sexes have been taken. The duration of abductions ranges from one day to 10 years. Two-thirds of them are severely beaten, a fifth are forced to kill, and nearly 10 percent are forced to murder a family member or friend to bind them to the group.

The consequences of abduction and forced soldiering on youth are severe. Those who had been abducted are more than three times as likely to have a serious physical injury or illness that impedes their ability to work. Abductees are twice as likely to report difficulties in family relations. In a society where kin are crucial to success, such discord can be ruinous. Abductees have nearly a year less education—a substantial amount when median educational attainment is
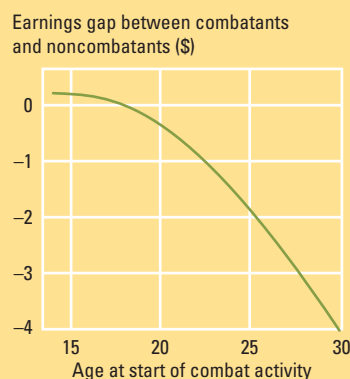
Figure 1   Among ex-combatants in Uganda, adult literacy rates are lower than those of adolescents

Percentage of respondents who can read or write

Figure 2   Postconflict earnings in Uganda decrease more for young adult combatants than for child combatants

Earnings gap between combatants and noncombatants ($)

only seven years—and they are twice as likely to be illiterate. Those who were abducted earn significantly lower wages. Abduction, however, has few long-term psychological consequences on the majority of youth, and is only weakly associated with symptoms of emotional distress.

Although most programs and policies are focused on children, young adults who were abducted seem to have fared at least as poorly as those under age 18. And by some measures, young adults are doing even worse than children. Young adults are less likely to be literate (figure 1); they also earn lower wages (figure 2), most likely because they were pulled out of school at a critical stage and have had fewer

opportunities to return to rebuild their human capital.

There are few resources available to young adults affected by the conflict. Those abducted after the age of 17 were less likely to have passed through a reintegration center (the principal intervention available in the area) before going back to the community. And fewer young adults than children report receiving assistance from NGOs. Some NGO staff complain that donor funds are more forthcoming for child soldiers than young adults.

Source: Annan, Blattman, and Horton (2006), available at www.sway-uganda.org.

local communities. Also needed are complaint mechanisms—to begin to reverse the political exclusion that was itself a source of the conflict and to address injustices that occurred in the conflict. Some of these rights-based approaches could emphasize the needs of youth "floating populations," such as those who worked in the diamond mines in Sierra Leone, by granting computer-generated identity cards.[120]

If large benefits are targeted toward ex-combatants and little to the larger rural populations, young people will have an incentive to become new combatants. Similarly, focusing exclusively on collecting the weapons of ex-combatants without also taking steps to limit arms trading ignores the fact that most postconflict environments are awash in weaponry. DDR programs thus need to think not only about ex-combatants but about the broader young population and the large reservoir of potential new recruits.[121] Female ex-combatants have a distinct set of medical, psychosocial, education, and employment needs, yet DDR programs tend to tailor services for young men.

The few evaluations of rehabilitation and reintegration programs show mixed success. The Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina focused on training and counseling for employment, and included a quasi-experimental evaluation component. It increased wage employment and earnings, even among youth, and the largest impact on employment was among participants with very little education.[122] In Liberia and Sierra Leone, the vast majority of DDR participants reported successful reintegration into economic, social, and political life, but nonparticipants in the DDR process fared as well as participants. Young ex-combatants, like young noncombatants, still face considerable problems, primarily due to their lack of education and skills and the absence of job opportunities.[123]

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Perhaps Kofi Annan put it best:

"No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline."[124]

The task of nation-building is never complete; it must be renewed for every generation. Countries can promote youth citizenship not only by establishing broad liberal democratic principles, but by making every institution with which youth come into contact a venue for inclusion, solidarity, and participation. The participation of young people is important because it builds the capabilities of future decision makers, and because their involvement can improve the quality of services that governments provide.

Which institutions are most important for youth citizenship, and how can they be improved? For many of the policies discussed in this Report, there are few evaluated interventions for youth citizenship. This makes direct comparisons, cost-benefit estimates, and priority setting difficult. Youth programs suffer from the weaknesses of "youth" as an interest group—widespread stigmatization, constrained voice, and short-term identification on the part of its members (chapter 9). Even so, some general lessons emerge from the evidence presented in this chapter (table 7.5). Lowering the voting age, particularly if combined with social and educational support, might help young people develop a pattern of participation at the polls that will persist over their lifetimes. Voluntary service opportunities might be combined with life-skills training, vocational training, and public works programs (chapters 3, 4, and 5) to develop not only civic attitudes, but actual economic opportunities for young people, which can give them the sense that their lives have a purpose and direction. Military service, while widely praised as developing the skills of disadvantaged youth, carries long-term economic and health risks for the young people that participate and is not obviously superior to nonmilitary economic opportunities. Military conscription tends to be inequitably enforced.

Many young people lack any legal identity whatsoever, without which they cannot use basic services, and which contributes to the sense of exclusion and personal inefficacy that they experience. Ensuring that every young person possesses the documenta-

Table 7.5   Summary of citizenship policy directions and examples of programs

	Proven successful	Promising but unproven	Unlikely to be successful
Opportunities			
Fostering active youth participation		Lowering the voting age to 15 or 16 with social support (United Kingdom); local youth councils (Moldova)	
Not all opportunities are equal		Military conscription (U.S. minorities)	Military conscription (Russian Federation)
Giving youth choices		Voluntary service opportunities run by civil society (Kenya, Cambodia, and Chile)	
Capabilities			
Building safe spaces and trust	Ban on firearms (Colombia)	Youth development programs (Colombia and FYR Macedonia), but there are problems of scale	In-school traditional civics education (South Africa and Zambia)
Encouraging activism		Youth action programs including issue advocacy (Romania and Brazil), but there are problems of scale	
Recognizing youth as individuals and leaders		Legal recognition and documentation (Brazil) Service learning (United States)	
Second chances			
Providing alternatives to incarceration	Restorative justice (South Africa)	Access to justice for youth (Philippines)	Harsh penalties, such as capital punishment (Democratic Republic of Congo, Islamic Republic of Iran, Nigeria, and the United States) and prolonged imprisonment for victimless crimes
Providing resources needed for reintegration into society		Disarmament, demobilization, and rehabilitation programs (Sierra Leone and Uganda)	Excessive imprisonment (Russian Federation, Belarus, Ukraine, and the United States)

tion to secure the rights and privileges of national citizenship ought to be a priority for governments. An additional priority is to create secure and safe spaces for young people. The most successful antiviolence and crime prevention efforts have included a comprehensive list of interventions, including the enforcement of a ban on firearms in particularly volatile locales and events. Traditional civics classes tend to have little effect on civic attitudes, probably because those classes are swamped by the wider school culture. School safety and inclusion (chapter 3) can enhance citizenship learning and socialization, as might service-learning programs.

Criminal justice reform should be a top-level priority for governments. Too many young people are incarcerated for indefinite periods, without access to legal assistance, on the basis of obscure or vague charges. For young people, restorative justice programs should be used in place of incarceration wherever possible. In societies emerging from wars or conflicts, programs that demobilize, disarm, and reintegrate ex-combatants, and that provide opportunities to all youth, are crucial for security and development.

Rebuilding lives and institutions in Sierra Leone

After a brutal civil war, young people in Sierra Leone are trying simultaneously to build their lives and their country. Institutions and infrastructure are now being rebuilt, but opportunities are still limited. The country's 1.5 million young people need a second chance to build their skills; they need opportunities to engage in productive employment; and they need the opportunity to help rebuild social institutions for better governance. Youth make up more than a quarter of the population; they are desperate to learn, to work, to start families, and to contribute to their country's growth and development.

Sierra Leone has emerged from a decade-long conflict that displaced nearly half of the population, destroyed much of the economy and its productive capacity, and halted any progress in the development of human capital. The social costs have been incalculable. Sierra Leone is today relatively stable, but overcoming the legacy of the war and of prewar mismanagement remains an enormous challenge. The country's renewal must address widespread corruption, inefficient public services, and low investment in critical economic and social areas.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the indicators of human capital. The country ranks 176 of 177 in the human development index, and 70 percent of the population lives in poverty. Life expectancy at birth declined to 34 years in 2002, from 42 years in 1990.[1] Maternal mortality rates are among the highest in the world; teenage pregnancy rates are high, as are rates of sexually transmitted infection among youth. HIV prevalence is low (1.5 percent), although many of the factors that facilitate explosive increases in HIV can be found in Sierra Leone, including widespread sexual abuse, high unemployment, chronic poverty, and commercial sex work and informal exchanges of sex for goods and services.[2] Roughly 40 percent of 12- to 24-year-olds and 63 percent of 25- to 35-year-olds have never attended school. Only 20 percent of 25- to 35-year-olds have finished primary school.[3] All people, young and old, consistently rank education among their highest priorities, as do ex-combatants in rehabilitation programs.[4]

Sierra Leone defines youth as the period between ages 15 and 35; according to this definition, 34 percent of the population are youth. Using this Report's definition of youth, 26 percent are between 12 and 24, and 16 percent are between 25 and 35. Only 39 percent of these older youth are male, reflecting the impact of violence and migration on male youth during the conflict.[5]

With substantial assistance from the international community, the government is trying to establish three pathways for its 1.5 million young people: improve basic human capital services, enhance opportunities for productive employment, and encourage civic participation to rebuild social capital.

Human development—basic health and education for youth

Private and public investment in human development is increasing, and the government, together with local communities, has rebuilt many of the schools and clinics that were destroyed during the war. To respond to the high demand for second-chance education, programs such as Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools (CREPS) provides condensed education to youth forced to leave school during the conflict, benefiting about 110,000 pupils in 2004.

The government introduced free primary education for all in 2001, but many schools are supported by contributions from parents and their communities.[6] These contributions supplement official resources—paying for supplies and repairs to buildings, and even supporting additional teachers—but they can also deter students of poorer families from attending school. The vast majority of teachers report that they are rarely paid on time; this may contribute to a teacher absence rate of 22 percent and to the practice of holding private tutoring sessions outside of school.

Progress on education is being made in spite of these many obstacles: primary enrollment has doubled since 2001; gross primary enrollment is more than 150 percent. About half of sixth-graders are older than 13, reflecting the return to schooling of many who were denied education when younger, as well as grade repetition. While access to primary school has increased significantly in the last couple of years,

many rural locations do not have qualified teachers, resulting in overcrowding and frustration. The government's target is to provide universal primary education by 2015. Access to secondary education has also doubled since 2001, but the number of places has not kept pace with demand.[7] Besides rebuilding schools, as elsewhere in the developing world, the quality of education must be improved so that graduates are equipped with the skills the market seeks.

Shared growth—youth employment and opportunities

Sixteen percent of the population lives in Freetown; the vast majority live in small agricultural communities. Many rural youth are migrating to urban areas, especially those who feel they have limited opportunities in rural areas. Underemployment is common among both urban and rural youth, and formal-sector employment is extremely rare: 3 percent of youth are employed in the public sector, and 2 percent in the nonagricultural private sector.

While some young people would like more training, especially in areas such as business development, many others are concerned about access to land and credit. Some young people who have received skills training lack the tools required to practice their trades and have no resources to purchase them. In a survey of ex-combatants who had received some training and were working, only 28 percent had used their new skills to secure a job.[8] Young people in focus groups also express the belief that "connections" are needed for formal sector employment. And while land is abundant, elders in many rural areas maintain strict control over land allocation, deterring youth from farming.[9]

The lack of opportunities for young people in Sierra Leone has already had devastating consequences. Are there lessons from elsewhere? In many postwar economies, such as Somalia, Angola, and

Mozambique, much of the population is likely to be engaged in "gray" or informal economic activities as the primary means for survival.[10] These activities are essential for young people who have few alternatives for sustainable livelihoods or entry into the labor market. Participation in the informal sector is also a response to the lack of credit, information, or institutions that are required for a formal sector to function. As one review of the rehabilitation experiences of youth in Croatia concluded, it would be unfortunate if the continued lack of opportunities left youth "with little else but dreams."[11]

These examples show that it is important to focus on today's youth through short-term interventions, such as public works programs. But ultimately investments and policy changes are required for broadly based economic growth in the medium and longer term. Key among these investments is rehabilitating the country's physical infrastructure and social institutions.

Rebuilding trust—youth voice and governance

Traditional society is strictly hierarchical. Village elders maintain control over land, the allocation of labor, and marriage. Young people feel excluded from decision making in many communities. They are significantly less likely to believe that they can change unjust policies or laws; they attend fewer community meetings, and are less likely to speak during meetings. This is especially true among young women (see the figure). Community youth leaders, who are appointed rather than chosen by youth themselves, may not represent the interests of young people: half are over 35, and a tenth are over 50.[12]

Participation and voice are lower among youth and women in Sierra Leone
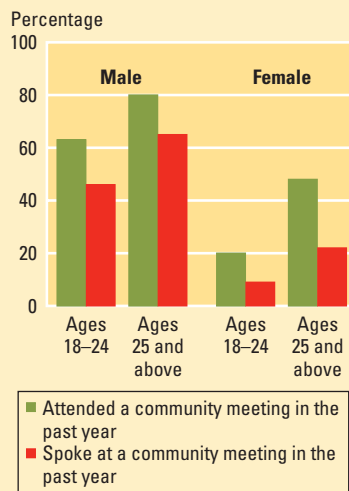
Source: Miguel, Glennerster, and Whiteside (2006) and Whiteside and others (2006).

Opportunities for the expression of voice are growing: many paramount chiefs were chosen in competitive elections following the end of the war, and the country held local elections in 2004—the first in a generation. Participation among young people was very high in these elections, and many local councilors represent a new generation of politicians.

Elders and policy makers often use the term "youth" with disdain and trepidation, to describe those—especially male—youth who are unable to provide for a family and are a potential threat to peace and stability. There is widespread concern that without better opportunities, the resentment may result in renewed violence. A recent social assessment for Sierra Leone found that the conflict was fought primarily by marginal-ized young people, especially from rural areas, who lacked education and access to livelihood opportunities.[13] The rebel forces took advantage of the "void of opportunities," as one young person described it, to recruit soldiers for the war. Another youth, when asked why he joined the rebels, responded, "I had never been offered anything, they provided me new shoes and clothes."[14]

The indescribable violence of the civil war created suspicion and fear, particularly of ex-combatants, making it difficult for some to return home. Reintegrating ex-combatants and other displaced people has been an enormous challenge, yet millions have returned home, and almost all ex-combatants have been reintegrated into society. Many communities have developed strong informal networks and local institutions, partly as a reaction to the breakdown of national structures; and there is some evidence that these social networks and institutions are strongest in those parts of the country that were hardest hit by the war.[15]

Experience in other postconflict countries suggests that the active participation of young people is a significant determinant of their satisfaction with reintegration. Increased participation may also enhance access to basic services, psychosocial well-being, and social capital.[16] In turn, young people are key to postwar economic and political reforms, improving the effectiveness of rehabilitation efforts, and the transition from crisis to development. The experiences of countries as diverse as Mozambique, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam show that addressing the needs of youth and managing the transition from crisis to development requires flexibility, local knowledge, and the inclusive participation of all stakeholders.[17]