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**Review of *Human Rights and Adolescence*. Jacqueline Bhabha,
Ed. Reviewed by David Tobis**

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agencies into finding kin to take over care of the children. This seemingly family-friendly diversion policy, generally seen by child welfare authorities as identical in spirit to the subsidized guardianship programs that Huntington admires, arguably denies parents the right to rehabilitative services.

Unfortunately, Huntington's argument in part two often reads like a laundry list of policies and programs, and the level of evidence supporting the potential impact of these ideas varies widely. While the overall vision provided here is broad and optimistic, Huntington's concluding chapter will likely bring the reader back to the reality that today's politics make it very unlikely that the vision will be realized anytime soon.

*Mark E. Courtney, School of Social Service Administration,
University of Chicago*

Jacqueline Bhabha, Ed., *Human Rights and Adolescence*.
University of Pennsylvania Press (2014), 376 pages, \$69.95
(hardcover).

This is an advocacy book to advance policy and practice for adolescents from a rights-based perspective. Its goal, as the introduction states, is "to achieve what has so far eluded policy makers and practitioners [to make] real progress on protecting and enabling the realization of adolescent potential across the globe." The book argues for equity in the treatment of adolescents in spite of their limited political leverage. The book will contribute positively to that goal, though based on the information in the book, the goal appears illusive.

The book pulls together a great deal of the existing policy proposals, research and some legislation on adolescence from a rights-based perspective. As such, it is more of a reference than a book one sits down to read cover to cover. The book is divided into three useful sections: (I) an overview defining adolescence, adolescent rights, and cross-cutting topics such as the science of brain development and sociocultural differences; (II) the experience of growing up with violence, covering children in armed conflict, child soldiers and post-conflict situations; and (III) social interventions that have strengthened or tried to improve adolescent rights. The 17 chapters cover a

wide swath of child rights, though I would have liked to see a chapter or a discussion of the intractable and politically volatile problem of rights of unaccompanied minors passing through Mexico to the United States. While there are chapters on Roma in Romania, urban adolescents in Brazil, and adolescents with disabilities throughout the world, only one chapter focuses on an industrialized country—the late departure of Italian adolescents from their paternal nests. As a result, the book misses the rights' violations of millions of adolescents who are homeless, trafficked, abused, marginalized or have attempted suicide in the industrialized world.

The chapters are written by analysts working in senior positions in United Nations agencies (WHO, UNICEF), well-regarded U.S. and international academic institutions (many connected with Harvard), the International Labor Organization, Oxfam and other human rights advocacy organizations. The training of the authors is similarly varied and relevant including public health, medicine, psychology, sociology, and international relations, and authors include a judge and human rights activists, though grass roots organizers are not among the contributors.

The book has many other strengths. The contributions generally propose an integrated, holistic approach to achieving adolescent rights. The chapters present the view that education, health, employment, security and rights need to be addressed simultaneously. The editor wove in references in almost every chapter to chapters in other parts of the book that deal with similar issues. Some of the contributions are well written, presenting concise and engaging summaries of the subject under review. Steinberg's chapter on adolescent brain development uses current research in neuroscience and clear and compelling logic to refute common misunderstandings about adolescent behavior. DeJong and Kawar present a long and engaging review of the situation of adolescents in the Arab region. Naeve's chapter on adolescents in Colombia's armed conflict shows how complicated solutions are. In one study, 70.5% of demobilized children joined armed groups voluntarily, motivated by poverty, lack of opportunity and rights violations.

The book reflects the severe limits to which social policies toward adolescents can realistically be pushed in the world

today and in the foreseeable future. Even nudging our social policies and our budget allocations further toward their politically possible limits will only marginally improve the conditions of adolescents, given the magnitude of their problems. One in seven girls in developing countries is married before the age of 15, with only small improvements in some countries and no progress or deterioration in others. Adolescent unemployment remains intractable. One in five adolescents suffers from mental illness, most often depression. Virtually all women in Egypt still experience some form of female genital mutilation.

The real solutions to human rights abuses of adolescents require major social transformations that address the overwhelming poverty, unemployment, racism, sexism and family violence that afflicts the world. While the book's chapters present reasonable recommendations, the likelihood of their implementation to the degree required is low. The recommendations in the book are punctuated with "should" and "must," imploring people of good will in high positions to do more to respect the rights and needs of adolescents. Except for one author who sees brutal conflicts and the harm to adolescents as "a challenge whose solution might only lie in divine hands," there is almost no guidance for how to influence or pressure people in power to act in the interests of adolescents or for those outside of power to act on our own if those in power don't respond. As is often said, "Hope is not a plan." The recommendations in this book are wise; the strategies to achieve them are lacking.

David Tobis, Senior Partner, Maestral International

Susan Starr Sered and Maureen Norton-Hawk, *Can't Catch a Break: Gender, Jail, Drugs, and the Limits of Personal Responsibility*. University of California Press (2014), 216 pages, \$29.95 (paperback).

Gender, race and income inequality remain huge problems in American society. These issues have drawn widespread attention through the recent Black Lives Matter and Occupy Wall Street movements. It is also well understood that women face