

Cambridge University Press  
0521809088 - Youth in Cities: A Cross-National Perspective  
Edited by Marta Tienda and William Julius Wilson  
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## YOUTH IN CITIES

### A Cross-National Perspective

Whether in the inner-city ghettos of the United States, the barrios of Brazil, or the ethnic neighborhoods of Germany and Lebanon, a growing number of urban youth find themselves marginalized from the social mainstream, facing the familiar problems of fragile families, residential segregation, limited or no access to education, premature entry into the world of work, and involvement in illegal activities. Both rich and poor countries are failing to meet the social and developmental needs of their urban youth as a result of weak institutional frameworks coupled with global economic restructuring that undermines traditional ways of earning a living. This volume compares the circumstances of urban youth from a cross-national perspective, illustrating the formidable challenges faced by young people trying to define their place in a rapidly changing world. Using both comparative evidence and case studies, this volume illustrates the common needs of youth throughout the world, despite the highly varied sociocultural circumstances in which they develop, and makes a case for the role of youth as creative social assets and positive forces for social change.

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Edited by

**Marta Tienda**

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## Foreword

Whether in the ghettos of the United States, the barrios of Brazil or other South American countries, or the ethnic neighborhoods of Germany, France, or other European countries, a growing number of urban youth find themselves marginalized from the social mainstream, facing the familiar problems of fragile families, residential segregation, limited or no access to education, premature entry into the world of work, and involvement in illegal activities. As the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child testifies, both rich and poor countries are failing to meet the changing social and developmental needs of their urban youth as a result of weak institutional frameworks coupled with global economic restructuring that undermines traditional ways of earning a living.

For this reason I am pleased to present the volume *Youth in Cities: A Cross-National Perspective*, which is the first in the new Jacobs Foundation Series on Adolescence, to be published by Cambridge University Press. The volume is based on a conference, “Youth in Cities: Successful Mediators of Normative Development,” sponsored by the Jacobs Foundation of Switzerland at their Communication Center, Marbach Castle (Germany), on October 22–24, 1998. More than 40 international scholars and practitioners of youth programs assembled to portray the circumstances of urban youth throughout the world and to illustrate the formidable challenges young people face as they try to define their place in a rapidly changing world. Documenting the condition of youth living in cities and identifying interventions that are most successful in ameliorating the pernicious effects of urban poverty are the first steps to improving the life circumstances and opportunities of the vast majority of the world population.

In addition to addressing a relatively ignored, rapidly growing, and highly vulnerable population throughout the world, several features of the chapters in the volume are noteworthy. First, assessing youth from both the standpoint of the researcher and the practitioner yields a grounded base from which to draw policy lessons. Stronger than either approach alone, this hybrid tack strikes a balance between theory and application. Second, the use of cross-national comparisons and case studies allows for an analysis of differences and similarities among strategies devised to improve the state of youth the world over. Third, by evaluating the efficacy of an array of interventions, important policy lessons can be culled. Finally, the conviction that the views of young people must be integral to the formulation of policies aimed at improving their life chances is a common thread apparent throughout this volume.

It is my hope that the volume will have the wide acceptance it deserves. Academics from developmental psychology, sociology, political science, and legal scholarship will find novel insights from case studies that either support their prior conceptions or modify them in new ways with concrete evidence from practitioners. Lay audiences, including policymakers and attorneys and practitioners who develop and operate programs to promote healthy youth development, will also find creative ideas to bolster their successful interventions on behalf of youth.

Klaus J. Jacobs, Chairman  
Jacobs Foundation

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