

Reflecting on the Innocenti Research Digest – Adolescence: One youth perspective



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As a young student about to begin higher education, I found the Digest extremely useful and interesting: Education, Violence and Adolescent Health are important topics and provide an informative starting point for students eager to know more. While the Digest includes a wide range of themes already, I feel there are some missing that are particularly relevant at the moment and could be matter of future research. It would be interesting to also understand **what other young people think is important for research, from their perspectives.**

One of the missing topics is **the realisation of rights for LGBTIQ adolescents** (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer/Questioning or those perceived to have different gender identities than the norm¹). While the discussion on LGBTIQ adolescents' rights is increasing, there is still "a lack of research on this population relative to other adolescents."² This is particularly the case in low and middle income countries where other issues, such as nutrition and education, are often regarded as more urgent. I have seen the difficulties my peers go through when they decide to open up about their gender and sexual orientation. How do LGBTIQ adolescents in other parts of the world feel? Are they discriminated against by their peers? What can be done to ensure their freedom to express their sexuality? How big is the LGBTIQ population in different countries? Careful, sensitive research to give us a more complete picture would allow us to better comprehend social dynamics.

The impact of **climate change on the wellbeing** of adolescents in low and middle income countries (LMICs) is also important. Climate change is becoming more and more central in public opinion in more developed countries, but its global nature and disproportionate effects on children and adolescents in the Global South deserves more attention. There is a duty for inquiry around this issue for children - "their rights and interests should loom large in climate change policy, advocacy and research - yet this has manifestly not been the case up to now".³ In this respect, I wonder about: How are adolescents coping in vulnerable areas and communities? Do they have to embark on longer journeys to collect water because of it? Does it influence the quantity of food? Does it affect access education? How does it impact their physical and mental health? And what are our responsibilities to act? What actions can young people like myself undertake to help peers in other places? Would individual projects have a positive impact, or would they be irrelevant without consistent governmental actions on a global scale?

Finally, I have been struck by the difficult experiences of friends facing **racial discrimination** and whom are trying with great difficulty to improve the situation on their own. A number of studies have shown the link between health outcomes and racism, but more research on this topic should be pursued, taking into account "more ethnically diverse groups (...) and younger children."⁴ How does racial discrimination affect adolescents' lives, mental health, employment, education? and how can the situation be improved?

¹ See: https://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/PDFs/Current_Issues_Paper_-_Sexual_Identification_Gender_Identity.pdf

² Mustanski, B. Arch Sex Behav (2011) 40: 673. doi:10.1007/s10508-011-9745-1 by Dr. Brian Mustanski is the current Director of Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health and Wellbeing at Northwestern University

³ "The Challenges of climate change - Children on the front line", UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti, 2014, page 3

⁴ Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics. 30(3):255-263, JUN 2009 Lee M. Pachter; Cynthia Garcia CollDOI: 10.1097/DBP.0b013e3181a7ed5a "Racism and Child Health: A Review of Literature and Future Directions"