

**Book review: “The Oxford Handbook of Global South Youth Studies”
Edited by Sharlene Swartz, Adam Cooper, Laura Kropff Causa &
Clarence Batan, London, Oxford University Press 2021.**

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Abstract

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Keywords

Equality, Global South, Justice, Youth Studies, Policy, Intersectionality

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The Oxford Handbook of Global South Youth Studies brings fresh perspectives on youth studies within the framework of Southern theory. By integrating a robust theoretical understanding of various aspects of youth identities, cultures, and other fundamental topics in the field of social science with case studies from diverse communities worldwide, this book presents expanded viewpoints and the potential for deeper discussions. The book's organisation features three essential parts: "The South and Southern Youth", which sets the general framework; "Southern Perspectives Linking Theoretical Concepts to Contemporary Issues", which provides case studies on the lived experiences of youth in different geographical regions through sociological concepts; and "Southern Representations, Research, Interventions, and Policy", aiming to bridge contemporary approaches in the social sciences. Insights from Global South and Postcolonial Studies offer new understandings in education, social justice, and global youth towards the ultimate goal of reshaping youth studies into a comprehensive "Global Youth Studies" field.

In the search for a comprehensive global youth definition, this book examines various aspects ranging from social practices to social justice issues. Firstly, the authors establish connections between theory and practical knowledge in the pursuit of justice. After a chapter discussing the linkages between theory and practice, the Global South is analysed, and the focus shifts to the youth of the Global South. This exploration establishes the foundation for developing a Southern theory of youth studies. To illustrate, the opening chapter by Adam Cooper *et al.* confronts binary concepts such as structure and agency, objective and subjective knowledge to explore the ways to achieve tools for social change. Through this transformative understanding, they introduce the concept of epistep Praxis, emphasising how knowledge can empower social practices and, in turn, how social practices can reshape knowledge.

This interplay between conceptual analysis and practical methodologies in the social sciences prompts authors to question "for whom and under what conditions" the Global South is relevant rather than simply location. This examination is crucial, as there have been ongoing criticisms of the Global South-North distinctions, suggesting the inadequacy of this conceptualisation or its obsolescence. Therefore, these introductory chapters engender further discussions on these classifications. In the subsequent chapter, Cooper addresses the previously posed questions: "Why, when, and how" do definitions of the Global South become relevant for critical analysis? Through statistics related to the youth population, income disparities, and internet accessibility, regional disparities among continents and areas become apparent. Such assessment demonstrates that youth studies primarily pursues social equality and justice.

The Global South's delineations in politics, economics, and ecology are of significant importance for general readers interested in Southern theory, youth studies, or both, as well as experts, PhD scholars, and lecturers in the relevant fields. The concept of the epistemological South signifies a deeper understanding of why this conceptualisation continues to be relevant in transcending binary frameworks. This notion would have strengthened the central argument that "northern ideas struggle to explain localised knowledge", highlighting how binary thinking regenerates distinctions. Instead, emphasising difference-centred approaches could have made the 'decentering of Northern' knowledge more comprehensible. On the other hand, Latin American studies and Asian contexts have dedicated sections in the book. Cooper also highlights the dominance of

Northern approaches and the prevalence of quantitative research practices, relying on statistics and demographic information, within the field of Asian youth studies.

The subsequent section, which spans the sixth to the thirty-fourth chapters, is subdivided into specific concepts relevant to youth contexts in diverse regions. These concepts include personhood, intersectionality, violence, de- and post-colonialism, consciousness, precarity, fluid modernities, ontological insecurity, navigational capacities, collective agency, and emancipation. Two or three articles explore each concept, with a balanced representation of countries or regions and different perspectives. For instance, the concept of personhood is examined in the context of Maori youth in New Zealand and the formation of youth identity in Indigenous Amazonia. Ormond, Kidman, and Jahnke emphasise that Maori personhood is derived from and strengthened by their cultural heritage, shaped by spatial and temporal factors. The entire article revolves around the experiences of rangatahi, the younger Maori generations, who face a conflict between preserving the unique culture of their communities and integrating into the broader society's global youth culture. Similar challenges related to personhood are also encountered in the construction of youth personhood in the Amazon, primarily due to legal and official concerns such as rights and membership, as explored in Latin American and Global South studies in general by the authors of the next chapter.

The subsequent concepts interconnect several sociological topics as discussed by modern theorists. In Chapter Eight, Collins discusses intersectionality, defining it as the intersection of power relations and highlighting age as a significant category alongside race, class, and gender. The chapter emphasises the necessity of adopting a new perspective on age in relation to citizenship status within society. While underscoring the importance of political agency in youth citizenship, it provides examples ranging from favelas in Latin America to various forms of violence in Asian contexts. Regarding the chapters related to violence in particular, Dasgupta references the concept of symbolic violence developed by Bourdieu and discussed by both Bourdieu and Passeron in the context of dominant groups within the pedagogic system. Sekar Larasati, Wood, and Laksana also employ Bourdieu's sociological insights, particularly his concept of "reflexive sociology", in their chapter exploring Ngadas and the experiences of Indonesian youth. These examples illustrate to general readers interested in sociology or sociology experts from other fields how youth studies engage with fundamental sociological topics, demonstrating that contemporary societal debates deeply intertwine with the lives of young people.

There are other examples of modern sociological approaches in the chapters. For instance, Woodman *et al.* discuss how to define contemporary youth in the context of Bauman's liquid modernities, following references to well-known definitions of second and late modernity by Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, respectively, in the 22nd chapter. Instead, they focus on the concept of "liquidness" due to the "fluid life course transitions and mobility patterns" seen in global youth practices. While describing Indonesian youth compared to young people in the Philippines, the authors refer to Karl Mannheim to apply the sociology of generations, highlighting the term *angkatan* used for generation while demonstrating each crisis as stages in life. Additionally, cultures are emphasised in various ways, sometimes by highlighting popular (and globalised) cultures from the Global South, such as K-pop, and sometimes by addressing social differences among cultures, drawing inspiration from theories related to pluralism and diversity.

When it comes to the real-life stories of young people, issues of precarity and vulnerability also appear to be significant global notions used to construct the field of global youth studies. The case study chapters address precarious working conditions and child labour as a consequence of capitalist development in the Global South. In his realistic and vital chapter, Chavez Cruzado points out that child labour will persist as long as poverty and precariousness exist due to inequalities related to capitalism. He introduces movements of adolescent and child workers in Peru and underscores that their attachment to communities and families may only be possible through working.

At the end of this section, the chapters align at the intersections of resilience, emancipation, and collectivity. On the one hand, specific examples highlight youth-lived experiences and challenges arising from Southern contexts. Elsewhere, connections with larger-scale theories, from Giddens to Bourdieu, as well as contemporary approaches in social sciences, described in concepts such as *precarity* by Guy Standing to understand youth's economic positions in society as consumers, producers, and workers, or *ontological plurality* by Bruno Latour to analyse differences among human actions in diverse cultures, are explored.

The final section continues this exploration by linking the ideas to the Southern frame of the study using a self-reflexive methodology. In the opening chapter of this section, readers encounter embodied examples of young people as entrepreneurs in contemporary society, investigating the representation of young identities. In subsequent chapters, relevant approaches from emancipatory action to critical theory aim to innovate research methods and policies for community development. In the quest for justice amidst neoliberal development, these chapters discuss how Southern youth navigate educational challenges and the work system, becoming agents of change through social movements.

In the final chapters, while summarising the book's structure and sharing the story behind the idea of this Handbook that combines youth studies and global south approaches, Swartz provides demographic information about the book's contributors, including early career researchers from various countries. Precarious experiences of Southern scholars are also open for further debate. In conclusion, from the theoretical framework to practical knowledge construction and the self-critique of the entire book, "The Oxford Handbook of Global South Youth Studies" introduces new paradigms to the field of research and policymaking in the context of Southern regions.