

YOUTH IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD

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Abstract

Young peoples experience with globalization constitutes a delicately balanced struggle for independence and success that is as much about constraints and limitations as it is about freedom and opportunity. It is important to understand that globalization has a direct and powerful influence on youth in so far as it actively extends the kinds of social divisions to which young people are all too often subjected. The present study focuses on the ambiguous relationship between globalization and youth, it also explores the economic impact of globalization on young people. Globalization involves a range of contradictory and contested process as well as threats to young people concerned with promoting relationships of diversity, solidarity and sustainability. Young peoples experience with globalization appears to be fraught with the uncertainty varies according to cultural and social contexts. The study also examined the phenomenon of cultural globalization and its connection with youth. It is generally agreed, that globalization is having a tremendous impact on youth; the present study will seek to assess the nature of that impact. It could equally be argued that globalization universalize culture because it is in the interest of commodification to do so. Globalization is underpinned by a desire to create uniform global culture. Whether a person is living in urban or rural areas, the global culture appears to offer something special - and above all, the chance to feel a sense of belonging.

Key words

Globalization, ambiguous, youth, impact, culture, universalize.

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Introduction

In today's world, "growing up" is not what it used to be. The lives of youth today present a wide range of educational, family, employment, and health experiences that depart in major ways from those of youth one or two generations ago. These different experiences can be attributed to the effects of globalization, technological advances, and widespread economic development.

There are more youth (also referred to as "young people") in the world now than ever before, and they are concentrated in developing countries. Youth spend a longer time in school, begin work at a later age, and get married and have children later than their counterparts did 20 years ago. While in many ways the lives of young people are more complex and challenging than ever, in most countries they are also more varied, full of opportunity, and more secure than in the past, however, the youthful time of is also laden with risks and challenges.¹

Table 1: Youth Population Ages 10-24, Total and as a Share of Population, 2006 and 2025

| Region | Share | | Share | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Number In 2006 (millions) | In 2006 (% of pop.) | Number In 2025 (millions) | In 2025 (% of pop.) |
| World | 1,773 | 27 | 1,845 | 23 |
| Developed Regions | 236 | 19 | 207 | 17 |
| Developing Regions | 1,537 | 29 | 1,638 | 25 |
| Africa | 305 | 33 | 424 | 32 |
| Asia | 1,087 | 28 | 1,063 | 22 |
| North America | 71 | 21 | 74 | 19 |
| Latin America/Caribbean | 161 | 28 | 165 | 24 |
| Europe | 140 | 19 | 111 | 16 |
| Oceania | 8 | 24 | 8 | 20 |

Source: L. Ashford, D. Clifton, and T. Kaneda, *The World's Youth 2006* (Washington, DC:Population Reference Bureau, 2006).

Young people are growing up in a world of globalization and inequality, taking part in a development process that is simultaneously bringing people closer together and widening the divisions between them. Many commentators argue that globalization is primarily an economic process, but it is one that clearly has profound social implications. There is evidence suggesting that, at least in some cases, the higher wages and employment characteristics of globalizing countries such as China, India, Uganda and Viet Nam are closely linked to poverty reduction. Health and education provision has improved in many developing countries that have been more actively involved in the globalization process; in Brazil, Egypt and Malaysia, for example, infant mortality was reduced by an average of more than 30 per cent during the 1990s, compared with an average decline of 12 per cent for all developing countries. However, in the least-developed countries (with a combined population of 2 billion), overall economic growth has declined and poverty has been rising, which are critical considerations in the larger context of global development. Along with the loss of jobs and low incomes, such countries suffer from poor health and education provision, both of which are crucial factors in the climb out of poverty.²

World statistics reflect the fact that globalization is a double-edged sword; it offers substantial economic benefits, but those benefits, perhaps inevitably, are accompanied by social costs. What do the statistics really indicate about the globalization experience, and how is the process directly touching young people's lives? The relationship between youth and globalization is inherently ambiguous; in fact, the single word "globalization" and all it represents perhaps best sums up the uncertainty of what it means to be a young person at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Many sociologists specializing in youth affairs have portrayed young people as being at the forefront of social and even economic change. Globalization is widely seen to be the dominant tendency in 21st century as it is a shorthand expression for a variety of processes encompassing worldwide integration of financial systems, trade liberalization, deregulation and market opening, as well as pressures towards cultural, economic, and social homogeneity. In one sense it refers to the emergence of a single, global business civilization—a remarkable event, but one that is feared as much as it is celebrated.³ Being at the forefront does not mean that they are in any position to control that change; nor should it be assumed that youth are necessarily controlled by it. Christine Griffin points out that youth are "treated as a key indicator of the state of the nation itself."⁴ Young people might well be

described as a barometer of social change, but this reveals little about the nature of their involvement in the process of society's evolution.

Globalization is a hotly debated issue within the sociology. There is a broad consensus in the literature that some of the old certainties of the modern world have been undermined or invalidated, and that young people's life experiences are increasingly tenuous as a result. The young people's experience with globalization constitutes a delicately balanced struggle for independence and success that is as much about constraints and limitations as it is about freedom and opportunity. It is important to understand that globalization has a direct and powerful influence on their lives insofar as it actively extends the kinds of social division to which young people are all too often subjected.⁵

Economic Effects of Globalization on Young People

In its broadest sense, globalization refers to the extension of a whole range of economic, cultural and political activities across the world landscape. As Anthony Giddens suggests, "Globalization can be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa".⁶ In this context, the increasing economic and cultural interdependence of societies on a world scale is of particular interest. Because it involves interaction in so many areas and at numerous levels, it is virtually impossible to conceive of globalization as a singular concept. John Allen and Doreen Massey argue that there are many "globalizations" occurring in various sectors and fields of activity, including telecommunications, finance and culture. A key contributing factor in this regard has been the declining influence of the nation-state, which is in turn intimately linked to what David Harvey refers to as "time-space compression"- the way the world has in effect been de-territorialized by the acceleration and wider dissemination of capitalist practices, simultaneously creating ever-higher levels of stress.⁷

Young people are in the process of establishing a sense of identity in what is essentially an insecure world, and this underlying instability may serve to magnify the tensions and lack of control they experience on a daily basis. As Zygmunt Bauman a note, what is interesting about globalization is that the uses of time and space are "sharply differentiated as well as differentiating". The danger is that globalization may produce all sorts of (unintended) local consequences. Most worrying is the following:

In this analysis globalization inevitably leads to exclusion. Globalization is characterized by spatial segregation, in that it actively increases the disparities that already exist between global elites and the localized majority. In the past, colonial powers exported raw materials from their colonies in order to strengthen their own power base while ignoring the broader implications for the industrial base of the areas whose resources they were exploiting. What developed in this context was a multitude of core-periphery relationships at the international level; of equal concern, however, was the effect of economic disparities on class divisions domestically.

In effect, globalization can intensify social divisions, and as young people are struggling to establish themselves in a new social context-the sometimes intimidating adult world-they may be perceived as being particularly vulnerable to the threat of segregation or exclusion. However, in any analysis of young people's relationship with globalization, two key points must be borne in mind. First, there is a tendency to assume that the effects of globalization are unstoppable, and that globalization is a process young people react to rather than actively negotiate. Stephen McBride and John Wiseman warn of the dangers associated with this position, criticizing the failure to move beyond theory to address the more practical aspects of globalization. There is some concern that debates over globalization will remain at a conceptual rather than a grounded level, thereby leaving the political disparities associated with this phenomenon under explored, as elaborated in the following:

“Globalization involves a range of contradictory and contested processes which provide new possibilities as well as threats to communities concerned with promoting relationships of diversity, solidarity and sustainability. The central challenge is to recognize the connections between action at different levels of geographical space and political governance and to think and act at a range of levels without losing our grounding in the particularity of our own home place”.⁸

Globalization and Young People's Culture

The attitudes of young people towards global economic change are worth considering. Vladimir Dubsky, citing the results of surveys conducted in the early to mid-1990s, notes that while 90 per cent of young Czechs supported the transition to a market economy, only 22 per cent advocated rapid change, compared with 71.8 per cent who stressed the need for prudence in

order to avoid social unrest. Young people, stereotypically considered impatient or impulsive, are not necessarily in favor of fast-paced global change; they recognize as readily as their elders that globalization, at its most fundamental level, should be more about cementing long-standing geographical and social divisions than about providing them with new opportunities.⁹

As mentioned, young people's experience with globalization appears to be fraught with uncertainty. However, the degree of that uncertainty varies according to cultural and social contexts. Much depends upon the extent to which individuals have the cultural and financial resources to offset the risks associated with strengthening patterns of inequality.¹⁰

Bearing in mind geographical and cultural variations, one might ask what active measures, if any, should be taken to offset the uncertainty and risk engendered in globalization. An important point Kelly makes is that it is not enough to understand the precarious situation of "global youth". Experts construct conceptions of youth on the basis of multiple criteria, and it may be the case that such conceptions are far too rigid. A more realistic balance might be achieved with a better understanding of the cultural contexts that underpin young people's experience of globalization. This contrast highlights the paradoxes inherent in the global youth culture. The local youth culture as a product of interaction - a culture that is not entirely closed, localized or global. Global culture, from this perspective, derives from a combination of self-focused efforts to carve up and claim some of it for one's own benefit and more interactive efforts that contribute to the immense interconnectedness of global space.¹¹

Developments in education and employment are occurring in an environment characterized by broader cultural changes. Many developing countries steeped in tradition have to reassess their relationships with the outside world, as "outside" is not as clearly defined as it once was. A clear trend towards the global circulation of cultural goods has been developing for decades, facilitated in great measure by the increased access to audio-visual communications media. Globalization is as much about culture—and how economic and cultural change is culturally negotiated—as it is about economics. The two are inextricably linked, especially insofar as patterns of ownership of domestic communication devices exemplify the nature of global inequality and the intensification of what Mackay describes as the growing gulf between the "information rich" and the "information poor".¹²

In this context, it might be argued that much of global culture is youth culture, as global consumerism has linked young people around the world to the extent that it has guided the

construction of a dominant value system. Some argue that global audio-visual media have made many young people more familiar, in the continuous, day-to-day process of identity formation.¹³

Labour market trends for youth

From 2000 to 2010, the world's population grew at an average annual rate of 1.2 per cent, from approximately 6.1 to 6.9 billion people. The highest average annual population growth rates over the last ten years were registered in Sub-Saharan Africa (2.5 per cent), the Middle East (2.1 per cent), North Africa (1.7 per cent) and South Asia (1.6 per cent). The global population growth rate is expected to remain relatively unchanged (an average annual rate of 1.1 per cent) through 2015. Sub-Saharan Africa will continue to have the fastest population growth, with an annual average of 2.4 per cent, while population growth will remain lowest in the Developed Economies & European Union region, at 0.4 per cent

Globally, the share of youth in the overall population is declining... In all regions (but not in all countries) the share of youth in the overall population is currently declining, a clear sign that the developing world is nearing the final stage of the demographic transition. This process began at different times in each region, and there remains a marked difference in youth population shares across regions in 2010. In those with a low share of youth in the overall population, especially in the Developed Economies & European Union (12.5 per cent), the ageing of the population has become a particular concern. In contrast, youth continue to make up approximately one-fifth of the total population in many developing regions, including the Middle East (20.5 per cent), Sub-Saharan Africa (20.3 per cent), North Africa (20.0 per cent), and South Asia (19.5 per cent). In these regions, the share of youth in the population started to decline only as late as 2005 or, in the case of Sub-Saharan Africa, even more recently.

Globally, almost 90 per cent of youth are living in developing economies in 2010, with the three Asian regions accounting for more than half (55 per cent) of the world youth population. In the next five years the share of youth living in the developing world will remain unchanged, as decreases in the youth population in East Asia and Central & South-Eastern Europe are balanced by large increases in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Between 2010 and 2015 the number of youth living in Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to increase by 19.4 million, which translates to an increase in the share of Sub-Saharan Africa in the global youth population from 14 to 15 per cent. Similarly, the number of youth in South Asia will increase by 12.1 million, or from 27 to 29 per cent of the global number of youth. Latin America & the

Caribbean is the only other region where an increase in the number of youth is projected, but this increase is much smaller in relative terms.

The increase in labour supply that results from population growth can be examined by considering the labour force participation rate for young people, which is the percentage of the working-age population that is economically active (employed or unemployed). Labour force participation rates can be high or low depending on cultural traditions, social norms, educational attainment and the type of inactivity (voluntary or involuntary) in a country. Youth labour force participation rates are highest in East Asia (59.2 per cent) and Sub - Saharan Africa (57.5 per cent). The lowest rates are those of the Middle East and North Africa (36.4 and 38.0 per cent, respectively).

As shown in table 2, youth labour force participation rates decreased globally from 53.8 per cent in 2000 to 50.9 per cent in 2010, which means that today only every second young person is active in labour markets around the world. The global decrease in youth labour force participation between 2000 and 2010 reflects the decreases seen in all regions, and in most regions applies to both young men and women. Labour force participation rates for young women are lower than for young men in all regions except East Asia, mainly reflecting differing cultural traditions and the lack of opportunities for women to combine work and family responsibilities not only in the developing world but also in the industrialized world. In many regions, gender gaps in youth participation rates have narrowed over the past decade, but they remain large in South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. In the latter region, the female participation rate decreased faster than the male rate, actually increasing the gender gap.

Table 2: Youth labour force participation rate, by region and sex, 2000, 2010 and 2015

| | Total (%) | | | Male (%) | | | Female (%) | | |
|-------|-----------|------|------|----------|------|------|------------|------|------|
| | 2000 | 2010 | 2015 | 2000 | 2010 | 2015 | 2000 | 2010 | 2015 |
| WORLD | 53.8 | 50.9 | 50.2 | 62.5 | 58.9 | 58.2 | 44.7 | 42.4 | 41.6 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Developed Economies & European Union | 53.1 | 50.2 | 50.2 | 55.9 | 52.6 | 52.5 | 50.3 | 47.7 | 47.9 |
| Central & South- Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS | 42.4 | 41.7 | 40.8 | 48.9 | 47.7 | 47.0 | 35.7 | 35.5 | 34.3 |
| East Asia | 67.2 | 59.2 | 56.9 | 65.8 | 57.0 | 55.0 | 68.7 | 61.6 | 59.2 |
| South-East Asia & the Pacific | 55.8 | 51.3 | 50.6 | 63.5 | 59.1 | 57.9 | 48.0 | 43.3 | 42.9 |
| South Asia | 48.0 | 46.5 | 46.3 | 66.1 | 64.3 | 64.0 | 28.5 | 27.3 | 27.2 |
| Latin America & the Caribbean | 54.2 | 52.1 | 51.4 | 66.5 | 61.3 | 59.3 | 41.7 | 42.7 | 43.5 |
| Middle East | 36.9 | 36.3 | 34.7 | 52.6 | 50.3 | 48.1 | 20.2 | 21.5 | 20.5 |
| North Africa | 39.4 | 37.9 | 36.5 | 53.4 | 52.5 | 50.2 | 25.1 | 22.9 | 22.3 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 57.8 | 57.5 | 57.4 | 64.1 | 62.7 | 62.1 | 51.4 | 52.2 | 52.7 |

(Source: ILO, Economically Active Population Estimates and Projections, 5th Edition, revision 2009)

From 2010 to 2015 youth participation rates are expected to continue their decrease, but at a slower pace than the previous period, resulting in a global participation of 50.2 per cent by 2015 (see table 2). There is an expected decrease in the global number of young people in labour markets of 15.6 million, with an average decrease over the period of 3.1 million active young people per year (see table 3). This will mark a significant change over the previous five-year period when the global youth labour force continued to grow year-to-year, but is in line with the population dynamics that forecast large decreases in the number of youth in both East Asia and Central & South-Eastern Europe. A decreasing labour force can also be a challenge when labour shortages start to hinder economic growth prospects as has been witnessed in recent years in

many developed economies, (former) transition economies and, to a certain extent, also in East Asia.

Table 3: Five-year average of youth labour force growth, thousands

| | 1995-99 | 2000-05 | 2006-10 | 2011-15 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| WORLD | -1'322 | 4'254 | 2'239 | -3'110 |
| Developed Economies & European Union | -581 | -541 | -373 | -438 |
| Central & South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS | 4 | -21 | -319 | -855 |
| East Asia | -6'364 | -203 | -229 | -4'363 |
| South-East Asia & the Pacific | 434 | 51 | -317 | -194 |
| South Asia | 1'732 | 1'871 | 1'533 | 990 |
| Latin America & the Caribbean | 551 | 160 | -117 | 4 |
| Middle East | 478 | 455 | -52 | -251 |
| North Africa | 424 | 314 | -35 | -198 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 2'001 | 2'167 | 2'147 | 2'195 |

(Source:ILO,Economically Active Population Estimates and Projections, 5th Edition, revision 2009)

A growing labour force can be an asset for labour markets and societies if the economy needs labour and has enough jobs to offer. However, if economic growth is not matched by growth of decent employment opportunities, labour force growth can be a threat since the competition to find jobs among the many young people entering the labour market becomes more intense. In labour markets where an excess supply of jobseekers compete for vacancies, it is the young people who lack social networks and the know-how to market themselves as potential employees who will be the ones left behind to join the growing number of unemployed or discouraged youth. Alternatively, they will accept work under inferior conditions or move into the informal economy. This vicious circle that results when economic growth cannot accommodate labour force growth has been observed over long periods in the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. It is particularly worrying that in the latter

two regions large increases in the youth labour force are projected for the next five years. These increases add to the challenge of creating sufficient decent employment in these regions, both of which already have large decent work deficits for young people.

Trends in youth unemployment

The number of unemployed youth increased by 3.0 per cent between 1998 and 2008 to 74.1 million in the latter year. The average annual growth rate of youth unemployment over the period was 0.3 per cent while the average annual growth rate of the youth labour force was 0.6 per cent, hence the overall declining trend in the youth unemployment rate. A closer look at the different regions shows an increase in the number of unemployed youth between 1998 and 2008 of 27.5 per cent in South Asia, 25.0 per cent in the Middle East, 21.1 per cent in South-East Asia & the Pacific and 14.7 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa. There were slight decreases in East Asia, Latin America & the Caribbean and North Africa, and considerable decreases of 11.4 and 25.8 per cent in the Developed Economies & European Union and Central & South-Eastern Europe, respectively (see table 4).

Worldwide, the youth unemployment rate stood at 12.1 per cent in 2008 (compared to 5.8 per cent for the total unemployment rate and 4.3 per cent for the adult unemployment rate). The rate increased from 2007 by 0.2 percentage points, while compared to the rate in 1998 it had decreased by 0.4 percentage points. The highest regional youth unemployment rates were observed in the Middle East and North Africa at 23.3 per cent. Central & Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS had the third highest rate in the world with 17.3 per cent. The rate in South-East Asia & the Pacific was 14.5 per cent, followed by Latin America & the Caribbean (14.3 per cent), the Developed Economies & European Union (13.1 per cent), Sub-Saharan Africa (11.9 per cent), South Asia (10.0 per cent) and East Asia (8.6 per cent).¹⁴

Table 4: Change in youth unemployment and unemployment rates between 1998 and 2008, by region

| | Change in youth unemployment (%) | Change in youth unemployment rate (percentage point) |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| WORLD | 3.0 | -0.4 |
| Developed Economies & European Union | -11.4 | -1.0 |

| | | |
|---|-------|------|
| Central & South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS | -25.8 | -5.7 |
| East Asia | -9.3 | -0.5 |
| South-East Asia & the Pacific | 21.1 | 2.2 |
| South Asia | 27.5 | 1.1 |
| Latin America & the Caribbean | -5.9 | -1.2 |
| Middle East | 25.0 | 0.5 |
| North Africa | -1.5 | -3.2 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 14.7 | -1.7 |

(Source: ILO, Trends Econometric Models, April 2010)

Conclusion:

It is perhaps impossible to make any valid generalizations about young people's experiences with globalization. The cultural impact of global economics will be very different "Globalization takes place in different spatial-historical contexts, providing it with very different meaning and implications in different parts of the world." The impact of globalization is still evolving and uncertain, as the transformations that many countries are undergoing remain incomplete. The only certainty is that globalization is characterized by increasing market power, and there is always the danger that such power will be abused. Overly hasty privatization, unaccountable corporations and companies, a weakened public sector, and an imbalance between individual private interests and collective public interests are all symptoms of globalization that may have a direct or indirect impact on young people's lives. The argument is that although young people are not powerless, their economic position is such that they are more vulnerable than any other social group to the uncertainties and risks associated with economic and cultural globalization, though it might also be suggested that young people's globalization experience is paradoxical. Young people are not fully integrated members of the global culture; in a multitude of ways, both economically and socially, they are excluded from it. At the same time, however, a good number of young people, especially those in the developed world, are absolutely dependent upon it. It is this that makes young people's relationship with globalization so fragile. Precisely because of the nature of the fragilities and delicate balances associated with globalization. In one sense, young people's experience with globalization is rhetorical; it is tempting to assume that

youth are at the forefront of the sort of technological and cultural changes that might be associated with globalization, .Many young people have adopted a world view in which the whole globe represents the key arena for social action. Young people are in one sense citizens of a global culture but at the same time struggle for a sense of acceptance in the societies in which they live.

Findings

Globalization is ultimately as complex as young people's lives are multidimensional. The combination of the two inevitably creates an explosive and heady mix. Young people's transitions are to varying degrees becoming increasingly open-ended, but that open-endedness is introducing an enormous assortment of complication that are making young people's lives more difficult than ever. Young people's current experience of globalization is largely and inevitably negative. Globalization does offer opportunities, but one young person's opportunity will inevitably be another's loss. The key question is whether this represents a price worth paying. In the years to come the relative achievements of globalization will be judged, in part, by how far young people have been successfully assimilated into the global processes of social, economic and cultural change

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