Introduction to the Special Issue: Globalization as a Context for Youth Development

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Twenty-first century technology, travel, and trade have transformed the lives of youth around the world, rendering them members of local and global cultures—whether or not they have traveled beyond their hometown. And yet, little is known about how globalization affects some of the most oft-studied developmental processes. This volume stretches across 10,000 miles and sixteen time zones to show how globalization impacts the cultural values, identity construction, moral reasoning, and well-being of youth.

Globalization is broadly conceived as “the increasing flow of trade, finance, culture, ideas, and people brought about by the sophisticated technology of communications and travel…and its local and regional adaptations to and resistances against these flows” (adapted from Lewellen, 2002, p. 7). This definition is used, first, because it conveys the economic, socio-cultural, and ideological components of globalization. Second, it underlines the degree and intensity of intercultural contact that typifies modern globalization (Arnett, 2002). Third, it highlights local adaptations to and resistances against globalization-related flows—processes of direct developmental relevance. The articles in this volume utilize cutting-edge theoretical, methodological, and analytical approaches to examine how youth adapt to and resist against globalization in locally relevant ways. Collectively, articles
expose the developmental implications of exposure to technology, increasing urbanization and the introduction of commerce, direct and indirect intercultural contact, and migration and multiculturalism.

Manago and Pacheco (Chapter 2) explore the effects of Information Communication Technologies on social networks and views on gender in a Maya community. Drawing from mixed methods analyses of interview data collected with adolescents and young adults in southern Mexico before and after a communication tower was installed, the authors discuss continuities and discontinuities over time in values for gender roles and relations. Their work shows both how traditional patriarchal values and beliefs change as a result of technology, and how these values are reinforced through and reflected in technology. This article shows that communication technologies are at once avenues for the transformation and maintenance of local values.

Ferguson and Dimitrova (Chapter 3) examine adolescent well-being in Jamaica as it relates to remote acculturation to U.S. culture. Quantitative data gathered among adolescents and mothers in Jamaica demonstrate that adolescents’ local Jamaican orientation is associated with better adaptation, and that remote European American orientation is associated with poorer adaptation. Data also indicate that mothers’ local cultural orientation was beneficial for, and European American orientation was negatively associated with, adolescent grades. This article therefore extends remote acculturation theory by addressing its implications for academic and behavioral adjustment.

McKenzie (Chapter 4) discusses variations in adolescent moral reasoning across contexts of globalization in northern Thailand. Quantitative analysis of interview data shows that Divinity reasoning diverges, and qualitative analysis shows how the meaning of Divinity emerges, among adolescents in rural and urban Thai communities. The distinct constellations of moral reasoning reveal that Divinity serves a different function for rural and urban Thai adolescents. In urban settings, McKenzie argues, Divinity is decontextualized from traditional community-driven Thai Buddhism and recontextualized to align with autonomous values that are adaptive in a globalized society.

Huntsinger, Shaboyan, and Karapetyan (Chapter 5) examine variations in adolescent cultural identities, values, and visions of the future across contexts of globalization in Armenia. The authors draw from quantitative and qualitative data gathered in rural and urban settings to show that urban adolescents form a stronger global identity, while rural adolescents maintain a stronger local identity. The study suggests that globalization has influenced Armenian adolescent conceptions of self more strongly in urban than in rural areas; and yet, Huntsinger et al. also point to ways in which local identities—rooted in family traditions and values—are maintained. It therefore complements McKenzie’s article by illustrating urban—rural differences in belief systems, and Manago’s article by pointing to continuity and change.
Shin (Chapter 6) explores how minority youth in South Korea employ multilingual and multicultural resources to construct their identities and navigate society. Her ethnographic study shows how multicultural adolescents understand the stereotypes imposed upon them and how they use globalization to counteract those stereotypes. The vivid stories included in her article illustrate the restrictions imposed upon multicultural adolescents in a monocultural society and the opportunities created by multicultural adolescents as they negotiate the meaning of a “multicultural” label. This article demonstrates the utility of linguistic and ecological approaches to study identity development in contexts of globalization.

Nguyen and Ferguson (Chapter 7) explore how Southeast Asian American adolescents and emerging adults create and navigate multicultural identities in their daily lives. Their mixed methods analyses show that hip hop provides Southeast Asian American youth an additional cultural identity that they use flexibly to adapt to their sociocultural context and connect to a global community. Hip hop, they argue, provides a mechanism for minority youth to internalize and influence global culture. This article extends the concept of cultural variability (Ferguson, Nguyen, & Iturbide, 2017) and complements Shin’s article by pointing to hip hop participation as a form of self-expression and of stereotype resistance.

In his commentary (Chapter 8), van de Vijver integrates special issue articles and argues that they collectively represent a new paradigm to study the psychological consequences of globalization. He discusses both the characteristics of, and the challenges facing, this evolving paradigm.

This volume charts new directions for the future of developmental science by identifying how global youth adapt to, resist against, and agentically draw upon globalization and multiculturalism to construct their developmental pathways. Taken together, the articles and commentary call attention to cross-cultural commonalities and geographic distinctiveness in the developmental implications of globalization.

References

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