

References

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Andy Furlong: Youth Studies: An Introduction

London 2012: Routledge, 300 pp.

This book aims to provide undergraduate students with a source from which to obtain a first idea of the concepts, theories, and trends within youth studies. At the end of each chapter it offers a summary of key facts and findings, further questions, recommendations for further readings, and other sources of information, such as Youtube clips. Although not explicitly specified in the book, the roots of youth studies lie in various disciplines. Furlong takes into account the field's multidisciplinary character and focuses on different aspects, such as distinctions in youth, education, employment, family and friends, identities, youth cultures and lifestyles, health and well-being, crime and justice, and citizenship, from different angles. The target group of this book are students in sociology, politics, criminology, social policy, geography, and psychology.

Andy Furlong defines youth as a social construct, detached from biological criteria. Youth is the phase between childhood and adulthood and more broadly defined than adolescence. He points out that the definition of youth is constructed differently across time and space. Following a definition by Heinz [2009], youth is one com-

ponent in the life course and is greatly defined by the economy and the educational and social policies of a state. Furlong sketches two basic research streams: those that focus on a transitional perspective, such as the transition from education to the labour market, and those that emphasise cultural aspects, such as youth subcultures and lifestyles. However, youth studies are not only relevant for analysing youth per se, but also for studying social change and changes to welfare states. As Furlong states, the situation of youth provides 'a unique window on processes of social and economic change and facilitates the exploration of some of the big theoretical concerns in social science' (p. 5).

The leitmotif of the chapters is the delinearisation of social processes. Thus, the book mainly takes up a transitional perspective, while the cultural approach is only taken up in chapter 7 on 'youth cultures and lifestyles'. The various examples of social change outlined in the chapters highlight the move from a paradigm of normal biography to a paradigm of choice biographies. They show the pluralisation of life courses and underline the difficulties of defining youth based on specific life events. Simultaneously, the change from a typical life-course to the multiplication of life-courses has accelerated, as a result of which youth cannot use their parents' life as a reference point for their own biography. Driven by technological progress as well as economic, social, and other factors, social change in contemporary societies has speeded up. The accelerating tempo of social transformation forces younger generations to quickly adapt their attitudes and life concepts, while the continuous adaptation of traditional life patterns becomes more and more challenging [Mannheim 1928]. There is no longer a clear delineation between the phase of formal learning and the start of vocational career. Furlong characterises the education-to-work transition as manifold, involving phases of uncertainty and even reverse transitions back into

educational programmes. What is perhaps not pronounced enough is the role of political intervention in that context. Ball et al. [2000] argue that social and educational policies are turning into economic and industrial policies. The young population is expected to be trained, technically well-versed, and above all flexible in order to contribute to the economic competitiveness of their nation state. Based on White and Wyn [2004], Furlong identifies education as an investment and highlights that young people need to be aware of their educational returns; but precisely these returns are very uncertain in times of qualification inflation. One characteristic of the de-linearisation of social processes is the paradox that higher education is more and more a prerequisite for finding a job yet does not guarantee one. De-linearisation not only takes place in institutional and labour market settings, it also influences private life. And not only have longer educational careers and precarious employment situations led youth to leave the parental home at a later age, the individualisation of timetables also poses a challenge for maintaining private contacts with friends and family. The timing of private events, such as getting married or becoming a parent, has also become more individualised and can no longer be used as a 'normative timetable' (p. 111) for the transition from youth to adult. De-linearisation also has an impact on the psychological condition of young people who have to cope with the uncertainty and multiple possibilities of planning their life. Furthermore, Furlong draws a line from the de-linearisation of education and working life to the political participation of youth. He argues, based on theories put forth *inter alia* by Inglehart [1977] and Pattie et al. [2004] that the former processes have led to a destabilisation of collectives. Due to the lack of identification with others—the basis for a collective politics of class during the industrial age—political participation and citizenship have become more individualised.

A key question for youth researchers is how social inequalities are reproduced across generations. In chapter 2 on 'divisions of youth', Furlong presents characteristics that influence the standing of a young person within society. He explains basic terms such as class and ethnicity in a detailed and comprehensive way and relates these terms to the concerns of youth researchers. The theoretical discussion is complemented by concrete examples in the subsequent chapters. The role of education for social mobility is discussed in the light of vocational pathways. Based on Shavit and Müller [2000], Furlong discusses the potential of vocational training programmes to reduce marginalisation but points out that the vocational training pathway may also limit opportunities for social mobility. Social reproduction is often underpinned by education systems. In the context of social mobility, some argue that in contemporary societies education is more relevant than social class. This calls for education systems that not only allow but also promote social fluidity. Furlong connects education and social class with each other and argues that social class still plays a role as an inherent part of education systems, calling it a hidden curriculum that 'incorporates a wide range of practices and sets of assumptions that ultimately contribute to the reproduction of inequalities through educational practices' (p. 62).

The final chapter shifts the perspective from youth studies to working with young people. This chapter moves away from concepts, theories, and trends within youth studies to a more practical focus on models and ethics of youth work. However, this extra dimension seems to be outside the scope of this publication. A link to other chapters as well as to the overall aim of the book is missing. A focus on practical issues concerning youth research—such as key conceptual and methodological considerations—could have been a useful way of completing the theories and research results presented in the publication.

At the beginning of the book it is rather unclear whether or not the focus is on a specific geographical area. The examples and data presented mostly focus on European Union Member States, Australia, and the United States. Chapter 11 discusses youth 'beyond the first world'. The author admits that literature on youth, including this book, often ignores the fact that the majority of young people are living in developing countries. It is pointed out that, because the living conditions of youth in these countries are not comparable to those living in developed countries, many theories developed in industrial countries may not apply for developing countries. Thus, it is very important, especially for a textbook, to better define from the start the scope of the publication. Who are the young people studied? The first chapter could have been better used as an introduction to both the topic as a whole and to the contributions in the book's chapters. As it stands now, different topics concerning youth studies are presented often only loosely linked with each other. An introductory 'frame' and the contextualisation of the chapters within this 'frame' are missing.

On the other hand, the book does present broad insights into the field of youth studies. This endeavour does not always leave room to cover every aspect in detail, instead presenting theories and results from sociological, political, psychological, and educational perspectives. The political implications presented at the end of each chapter highlight the timeliness and importance of youth studies. The balance between the presentation of theories from classic scholars and empirical results provides a good overview of the foundations of youth studies and its applications. In a nutshell, Furlong presents youth studies from very different viewpoints, covering perceptions of youth themselves, perceptions and misperceptions of society, and the role of the welfare state. *Youth Studies: An Introduction* offers a unique possibility for

undergraduate students to become familiar with this multifaceted topic. For youth researchers, it might serve as a reminder to look beyond their own research field and to keep the multidisciplinary roots and theories of youth studies in mind.

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Dorothee Bohle and Béla Greskovits: *Capitalist Diversity on Europe's Periphery*

Ithaca, NY, 2012: Cornell University Press,
304 pp.

This extremely rich book is a landmark contribution to our understanding of the post-communist transition. I will first present an unfairly simplistic version of the main argument of the book. Then I will lay out my