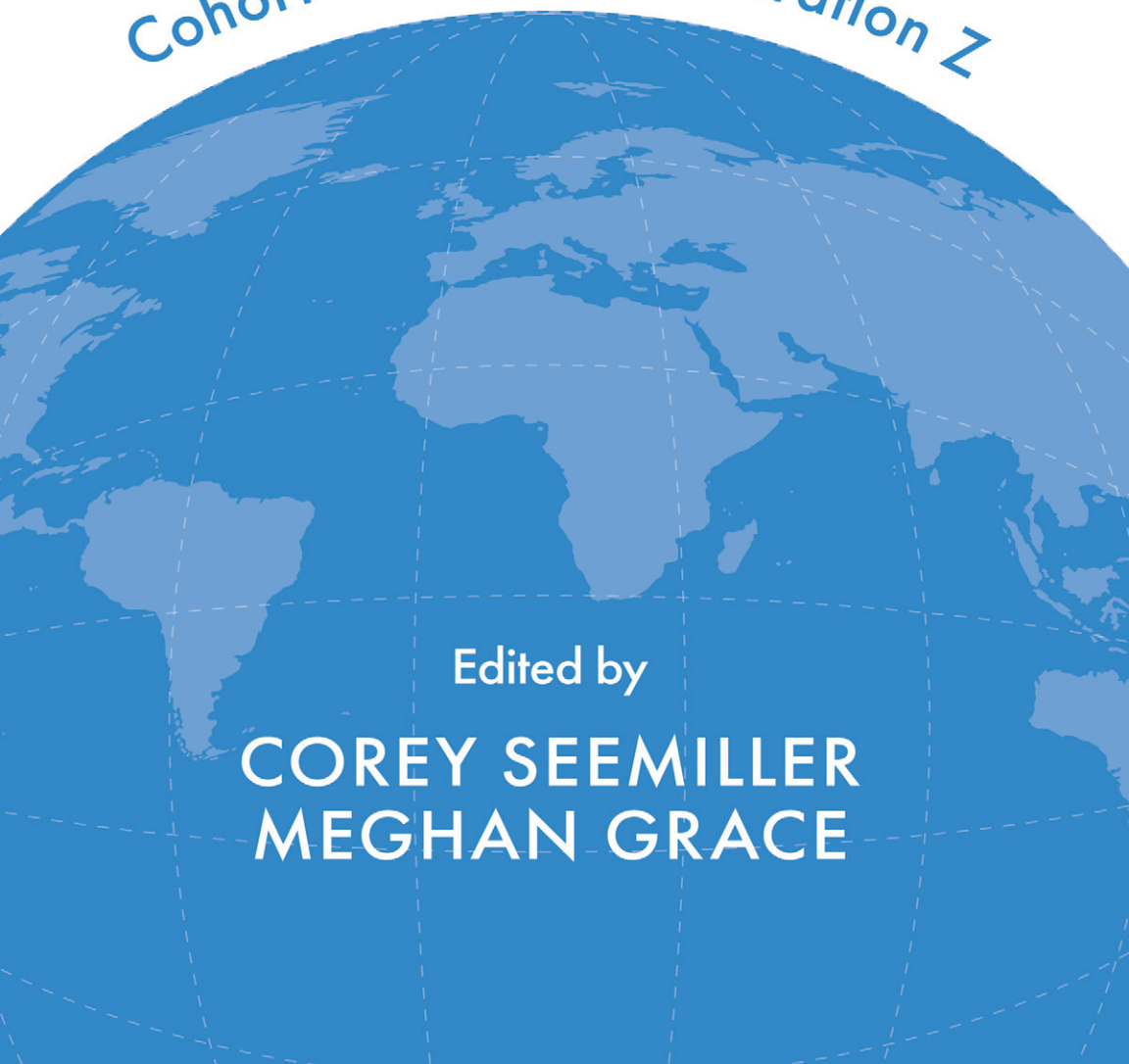


GEN Z

AROUND THE WORLD

Understanding the Global
Cohort Culture of Generation Z



Edited by

COREY SEEMILLER
MEGHAN GRACE

Gen Z Around the World

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Gen Z Around the World: Understanding the Global Cohort Culture of Generation Z

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Chapter 1

Introduction

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Abstract

This chapter offers information about the formation of the peer personality of generations, with a specific focus on the global peer personality of Generation Z as found in the Global Gen Z Study. An explanation of the study's data collection procedures, including existing validated scales used within the survey, and data analysis methods, including the use of regionally disaggregated groups from the World Values Survey ([World Values Survey Association, 2022](#)), is discussed.

Keywords: Peer personality; generations; global; world values; cultural influences; generational cohort

Loyal, Compassionate, and Open-minded. These are just some of the self-described characteristics of Generation Z, those born from 1995 to 2010. Members of Generation Z have a unique set of attributes, experiences, preferences, and expectations that impact how they navigate the world. This book showcases the context within which Gen Zers from around the world have come of age and what we need to know to best engage, mentor, support, and supervise them to leverage their potential for success.

The Concept of Generational Research

The study of generations offers a unique look at trends in attitudes and behaviors of individuals based on age and stage in life. Likened to studies that disaggregate by gender, religion, or race that aim to understand values, behaviors, and perspectives of social identity groups, generational research provides insight in helping

uncover a peer personality of a group of individuals who share a demographic commonality based on the timeframe in which they are born. In this case, generational cohorts progress through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood at the same time, experiencing current events and societal influences during the same stage of life. These experiences contribute to the creation of a peer personality, which can result in members having similar attitudes, preferences, styles, and behaviors (Seemiller & Grace, 2019).

Identifying why differences emerge between generations is the first step in being able to understand the peer personality of a group. For example, what factors, societal events, or influences during one's adolescence and young adulthood may have impacted how different generations approach civic engagement, develop views on diversity, retain in the workplace, or engage in particular spending behaviors? By understanding what has shaped one's experience during a formative time of human development, it may be easier to appreciate and embrace generational differences and provide a context that can help in making larger scale decisions regarding policy, practices, curriculum development, programs, and initiatives that target an entire demographic of individuals.

Global Peer Personality

In looking at peer personality at the global level, themes can develop that help describe the global cohort culture of Generation Z. This is significant in that there is a lack of large-scale, coordinated global research, nation-specific studies using various methodologies, which create difficulties in comparing data, and there is a growing sense of global interdependence which makes the events and influences impacting Generation Z more homogenous.

Lack of Global Research

While Generation Z has received a great deal of attention in both scholarly publications and mainstream media, there is still limited research in understanding this demographic, particularly on a global level. Most research on Generation Z has come from the United States. For example, Twenge (2017) wrote her book, *iGen*, using a large-scale dataset from the United States. In addition, much research about Generation Z comes from the Pew Research Center, specifically focused on the United States (Parker & Igielnik, 2020), and even a cursory online search shows that many of the more widely known books on Generation Z are written by American authors.

While research on this generation has become more widespread in the United States, scholars in other countries have recently been conducting their own research (e.g., McCrindle, n.d., in Australia; Redmond, n.d., in the United Kingdom; Sakdiyakorn et al., 2021, in Thailand; Global News, 2018, in Canada; and Ordun et al., 2021, in Turkey). However, research is scant among a variety of other countries, leaving scholars and practitioners the need to reference data from other countries.

Different Methods Across Studies

Further, when studies are undertaken in various nations, they are often conducted independently by researchers studying young people in their respective countries using methodologies and survey questions vastly different from those used in other studies. While the findings from a country's independent study can be useful from a national perspective, comparing populations across studies can be more challenging. In addition, various studies with nuanced methodologies might be helpful for triangulating data and deriving thematic findings, but the differences in approaches do not allow for true comparison.

Greater Global Interdependence

The world is also becoming increasingly interdependent, resulting in the development of a much stronger global peer personality of Generation Z. Perhaps the similarities are due to the ever-expanding “era of technology and communication,” which is resulting in greater worldwide accessibility to the internet (Wargadinata et al., 2020, p. 142) or globalization in which multinational companies, nearly geographically limitless tech platforms, and constant travel and contact make it easier than ever to share some element of modern culture that cuts across a multitude of nations.

Further, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated globalization as health, trade, economies, and the labor force were all interconnected and necessitated a coordinated response (Sforza & Steininger, 2020). And, the general response to communication and learning globally has included more online synchronous and asynchronous learning with an increased reliance on digital resources in place of face-to-face interaction (Ferri et al., 2020). Thus, learning about Generation Z from a global perspective can expand our understanding to better work with, engage, supervise, and educate young people across our interconnected world.

Global Gen Z Study

In February 2021, Seemiller and Grace compiled survey questions for a study on Generation Z. The original intent was to deploy this study as a follow-on to their 2014 study published in *Generation Z Goes to College* (Seemiller & Grace, 2016) using many of the same measurements and methods but expanding the instrument to include more contemporary topics not included in 2014.

Instrument

The survey included 35 quantitative questions and six qualitative questions. Aside from demographics, survey measurements reflected characteristics, learning preferences, pandemic behaviors, social issues of concern, relationships, civic engagement activities, social media and communication preferences, and political actions.

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Similar to the 2014 study, five measurements from the Life Orientation Test (Scheier et al., 1994) were included to measure optimism, although two measurements were slightly adapted. However, in 2021, a newly added aggregate composite score was used to better understand Generation Z's overall level of optimism.

In addition, measurements from the Motivation Indicator (Seemiller, 2009) were incorporated to assess the extent to which participants find various motivators useful, as was used in 2014. The 22 motivators fall into three categories: Eight extrinsic, seven relational, and seven intrinsic.

Collaborators

After finalizing the survey instrument, Seemiller and Grace started reaching out to potential research collaborators from around the world based on a search on Google Scholar and Research Gate in regard to who was publishing about Generation Z. Many had published books and articles on the topic, specific to their disciplines, and were the foremost experts on Generation Z research in their respective countries.

After inviting more than 50 scholars from around the world, 30 confirmed their participation as research partners and assembled their own research teams in their respective countries, resulting in a larger global team of 91 researchers. Their disciplines included marketing, nutrition, psychology, higher education, leadership, engineering, food engineering/sustainability, youth culture, design, world languages, literature, public health, tourism, transculturality/gender studies, rehabilitation, childhood education, sports/culture/events, pedagogy, management, foreign trade/commerce, theology, human resource management, family studies, political science, management information systems, economics/international cooperation, physical education, journalism, entrepreneurship, digital marketing, and humanities. The expansive list of fields of study these researchers represent is critical for understanding a cohort from a multifaceted perspective. These disciplines in their own ways draw on a knowledge base that connects to understanding, from various lenses, the societal events that have shaped Generation Z.

Cultural Adaptation

Each research partner was provided with the survey questions and asked to adapt them to culturally align with the values and norms of their geographic region. For example, the choices offered for the political ideologies measurement were changed to represent political parties and affiliations relevant to each country. In addition to cultural adaptations, some countries opted to deploy the survey in English while others translated the survey into their native language(s). The survey was ultimately offered in 19 different languages. From a research design perspective, offering the survey in a prominent language used in each country demonstrates a level of cultural responsiveness that encourages participation.

Each research partner sent the survey link to their networks in their countries to solicit participation. Most outreach took place through higher education institutions with the target audience being undergraduate college students. The link was shared on social media, through listservs, in newsletters, and through direct outreach.

Participants

Between the end of September 2021 and the beginning of January 2022, 21,377 Gen Z participants completed the survey from the 32 participating countries. Participants from an additional 49 write-in countries also completed the survey, yielding representation from 81 countries in total. The demographics of the study are included in [Table 1.1](#).

While the main focus of this book is to describe the global aggregate peer personality of Generation Z, it can still be informative to disaggregate the data into regional groupings. For one, understanding if and to what extent cultural nuances shape survey responses can help shed light on where any differences might exist, both geographically and with specific topics. Second, disaggregating the data can provide the opportunity for a comparative analysis, which could in turn showcase the strength of the aggregate global findings. For example, if, when disaggregated, most or even all regional groupings have the same finding on a measurement, there may be more assurance of the universality of the aggregate global finding.

World Values Regions

Although geographic groupings were considered for disaggregation, the cultural, social, economic, and religious nuances can differ drastically from countries that share a border. Thus, division by geography was not viewed by the researchers as the most compelling way to analyze disaggregated groupings. Instead, the World Values Regions were used as an analytical framework as this model using a distinct clustering of countries based on beliefs that impact socioeconomic development, with the rationale that some countries, even geographically distant from one another, have more in common from a values perspective than perhaps nearby countries in the region ([World Values Survey Association, 2022](#)).

Ronald Inglehart and Christian Weizel developed a cultural map that plots a variety of countries into separate regions based on the extent of each country's traditional versus secular values as well as survival versus self-expression values. Traditional values are tied to high levels of religious identification and nationalism. Secular values are less grounded in religion and more in traditional social institutions. Survival values are those related to having security and are connected to ethnocentrism and lower trust, whereas self-expression values are reflective of inclusion and the democratic process ([World Values Survey Association, 2022](#)).

[Table 1.2](#) includes the participating countries in the Global Generation Z Study and their placement in the Inglehart–Weizel World Cultural Map [2022](#).

Table 1.1. Demographics of the Global Gen Z Study.

	Percent
<i>Gender</i>	
Woman	65%
Man	31%
Nonbinary	2%
Other	2%
<i>Race</i>	
White	70%
Asian/Asian-American	8%
Hispanic/Latino	7%
Black/African-American	5%
Native/Indigenous	2%
Middle Eastern	2%
Other	6%
<i>Religion</i>	
Participate in organized religion	39%
Spiritual, but not religious	30%
Not spiritual or religious	30%
<i>College student</i>	
Business major	24%
Social science major	13%
Health and medicine major	11%
Education/family and human development major	10%
Engineering, technology, and computer science major	10%
Other major	32%

It's important to note that while all regions are included in this book for comparative analysis, some regions had low numbers of participants. These include Africa with 30 participants and West and South Asia with 51. Further, not all countries in the World Values Regions ([World Values Survey Association, 2022](#)) were included in this study, making some regions like Confucian, Latin America, Protestant Europe, and West and South Asia perhaps not generalizable to other nonrepresented countries in those regions. While these limitations may influence some of the more nuanced findings, it is clear that the similarities across many regions around a variety of topics discussed in this book provide strong validity for a global peer personality of Generation Z.

Table 1.2. World Values Regions and Participating Countries.

World Values Region	N	Traditional Versus Secular	Survival Versus Self-Expression
*Africa	30	Unknown	Unknown
+ Botswana	30		
African-Islamic	3,358	Lean traditional	Lean survival
Turkey	808		
India	285		
Indonesia	628		
Jordan	271		
+ United Arab Emirates	309		
+ Israel	625		
+ Lebanon	432		
Catholic Europe	3,658	Lean secular	Lean self-expression
Italy	269		
Portugal	540		
Spain	1,455		
Austria	1,241		
Belgium	153		
Confucian	482	Secular	In-between
Hong Kong	4		
China	478		
English-Speaking	6,589	Lean secular	Self-expression
The United States	5,170		
Australia	272		
The United Kingdom	1,050		
+ Canada	97		
Latin America	1,494	Lean traditional	In-between
Brazil	909		
Ecuador	53		
Philippines	532		
Orthodox Europe	3,668	Lean secular	Lean survival
Bulgaria	861		
Russia	268		

(Continued)

Table 1.2. (*Continued*)

World Values Region	<i>N</i>	Traditional Versus Secular	Survival Versus Self-Expression
Serbia	200		
Romania	1,654		
Cyprus	130		
Montenegro	555		
Protestant Europe	1868	Secular	Self-expression
Germany	1,630		
The Netherlands	238		
West and South Asia	51	In-between	In-between
Singapore	51		

Note: Participating countries from the Global Gen Z Study (Seemiller & Grace, 2019) marked with an + were not included in the World Values Survey but were listed in this table based on the authors' determination of their best placement, given their espoused societal values. The region entitled Africa, which is marked with a *, is a category constructed by the authors for Botswana and is not a World Values Survey region, because presumed placement of Botswana into the existing regions was more difficult.

Data Analysis

In January 2022, after the completion of data collection, research partners were sent the data from their respective countries. Further, collaboration groups were formed to analyze the entire global dataset, ultimately resulting in the development of this book. Simple frequency counts and percentages were used to look at larger scale trends of the quantitative data, and thematic coding was used to analyze the open-ended questions.

Conclusion

Members of Generation Z are our children, students, coworkers, neighbors, congregants, patients, constituents, clients, customers, supervisees, team members, advisees, and loved ones. And, only when we can better understand how to connect and engage with this global cohort can we tap into the potential they have to make the world a better place for all of us.

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