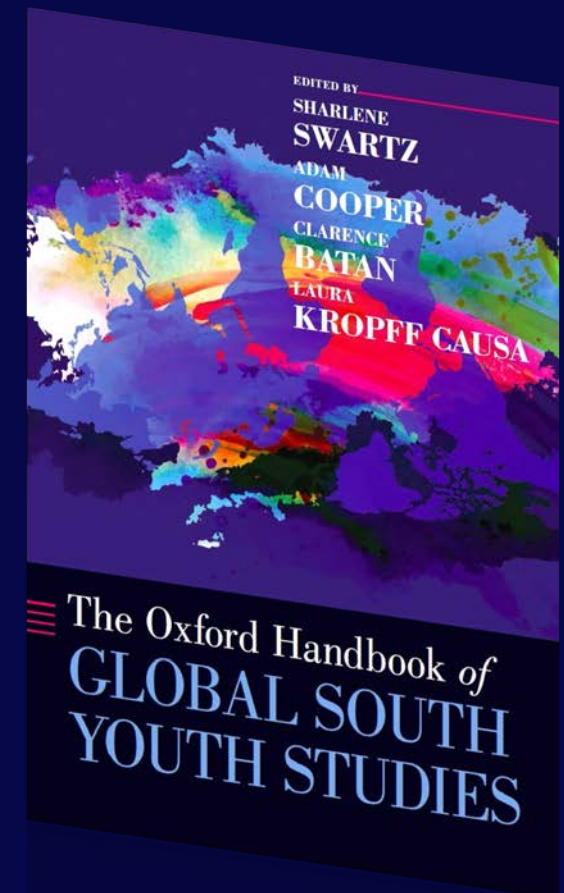
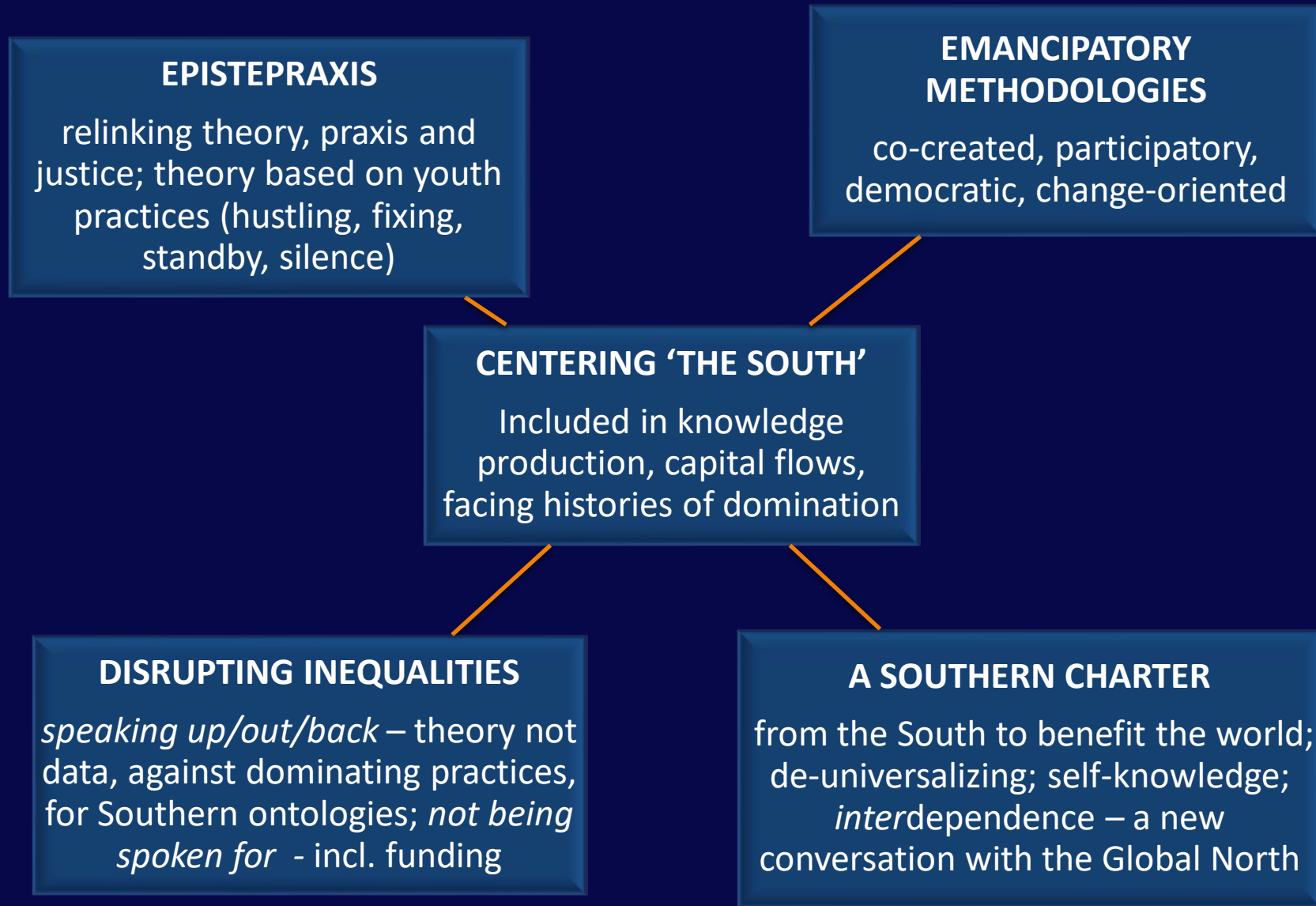




YOUTH DEVELOPMENT THEORY NAVIGATIONAL CAPACITIES FOR YOUTH IN CONTEXTS OF ADVERSITY

Sharlene Swartz

15 March 2023



DECOLONISING YOUTH STUDIES AND RESEARCH

NAVIGATIONAL CAPACITIES

A new theory of youth development

Beyond theories of resistance,
protective assets and resilience

Developing flexible capacities—in
resource-poor contexts, can be
acquired and enlarged



THE DIFFERENCE RESISTANCE, ASSETS AND RESILIENCE?



💣 NavCaps vs. Resilience Theory

Resilience - the ability to withstand and recover from adversity, stress, or trauma. Emphasises adaptation, coping mechanisms 'bounce back'

💣 NavCaps vs. Theory of Youth Assets

Youth assets identifies internal (values, self-esteem) and external skills (relationships, opportunities)

💣 NavCaps vs. Resistance Theory

Resistance emphasise challenge and resistance to dominant social structures & norms that contribute to marginalization; explores the need for critical consciousness and collective action

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CAPACITY AND A CAPABILITY?

While capacities focus on the **potential or inherent attributes** that allow an individual or a system to perform, capabilities emphasize **the practical application and the realization of that potential in real-world situations**. In summary, capacities refer to the "**potential to perform**," while capabilities refer to the "**actual ability to perform**."



INDIVIDUAL AGENCY

The importance of individual agency

Skills and self-awareness development; motivation



**ACT
INDIVIDUALLY**



ASPIRATION

How aspiration shapes youth
future

Fostering ambition and setting
realistic goals; overcoming
cultural constraints



**ASPIRE TO
POSSIBILITIES**



ANALYSING POLICIES

The importance of understanding and critically analysing policies

The need for policy evaluation and youth participation in advocacy

**ANALYSE
POLICIES**



ACQUIRING CAPITALS

Social, cultural, symbolic and economic capitals

The role of relationships, skills, networks, dignity and resources in social mobility



ACQUIRE
CAPITALS



ACQUIRING INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY

Intersectional identity and its
relevance in navigating social
contexts

The importance of
understanding the
interconnected aspects of
one's identity

Conferring dignity on others



**ACHIEVE
OPEN
IDENTITIES**



COLLECTIVE AGENCY

The importance of collective agency in social change

The importance of collaboration and community engagement



ACT
COLLECTIVELY





**ASPIRE TO
POSSIBILITIES**



**ANALYSE
POLICIES**



**ACQUIRE
CAPITALS**

NAVIGATIONAL CAPACITIES

**ACHIEVE
OPEN
IDENTITIES**



**ACT
INDIVIDUALLY**

**ACT
COLLECTIVELY**



WHO ARE ITS THEORETICAL INFLUENCES?

- 💣 **Social capital theory (e.g., Bourdieu)** – the importance of relationships, networks, and trust in accessing resources and achieving social mobility.
- 💣 **Theories of agency (e.g., Giddens, Archer, Wright)** – how power, choice and action for change happens
- 💣 **Intersectionality (e.g., Hill Collins, Crenshaw)** – the interconnected nature of identity and how they shape experiences and opportunities
- 💣 **Critical consciousness (e.g., Paulo Freire)** – the ability to understand and critically analyze social structures, policies, and systems that shape lives
- 💣 **Aspiration – (Appadurai)**, cultural limits



WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF NAVIGATIONAL CAPACITIES?



- 💣* **Wellbeing, Human flourishing, Development** - does not address challenges faced by marginalised youth.
- 💣* **Survival** - empowering young people with the **skills, resources, and networks** to navigate complex social environments
- 💣* Goal of the theory is to **overcome barriers** and improve their socio-economic status, achieving a better life in terms of **opportunities, resources, and status.**
- 💣* **Collective social mobility** - Captures marginality, adversity and disadvantage; speaks to **barriers and challenges** due to their socio-economic context

USEFULNESS IN YOUTH PROGRAMMES?



Developing capacities, potentials, resources

- 💣 **Individual agency** - self-awareness, decision-making, problem-solving, motivation, coping & emotional intelligence
- 💣 **Collective agency** - collaboration, group involvement, tipping points
- 💣 **Aspirations** - mentorship, vocational guidance, role-models, vision for the future, escaping cultural boundaries
- 💣 **Capitals** - experiences, internships, networks, mentors
- 💣 **Analysis** - local, regional, and national policies, advocacy, participation
- 💣 **Intersectional identity** - dignity – self and others, embracing diversity



**ASPIRE TO
POSSIBILITIES**



**ANALYSE
POLICIES**



**ACQUIRE
CAPITALS**

NAVIGATIONAL CAPACITIES

**ACHIEVE
OPEN
IDENTITIES**



**ACT
INDIVIDUALLY**

**ACT
COLLECTIVELY**

