

Special Issue Proposal for Global Studies of Childhood

(Re)Constructing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in Chinese Childhoods: Intersectional Perspectives and Transdisciplinary Approaches

GUEST EDITORIAL TEAM

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BACKGROUND

Although the universalisation of the UNCRC since 1989 tends to be perceived as a landmark for international consensus on realising children's rights to dignity, development and participation, evidence suggests that inequality, exclusion and social injustice in childhoods continue to prevail across the globe (Clark et al., 2020; Lareau, 2011). Groups of children's lives, opportunities, and access to provision and services are deprived by a range of barriers relating to diversity issues such as gender, disability, migration, ethnicity, and socio-economic status (Konstantoni and Emejulu, 2017). In recent years, the UN Sustainable Development Goals have been influential in highlighting the crucial interdependence of equity and sustainability (Minujin and Ferrer, 2016), reiterating the necessity to seek effective, collective, and transformative solutions to unfairness, crisis and divide in human societies. Nevertheless, despite that children's welfare has been considered in both contexts of the UNCRC and the SDGs, researchers raised concerns over issues in international policies such as the invisibility of children's roles and contributions (Croke et al., 2021) and the risk of reproducing discrimination and exclusion against certain groups (Davis and Watson, 2000). In particular, while much research has been conducted in the Global North contexts where a discourse of children's rights and equality tends to be more present in social policies, considerably less is heard about children's lives from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Global South (Singal and Muthukrishna, 2014). These issues not only add to the misrepresentation of global childhoods to differ mainstream images of children being white, middle-class, able-bodied, and heterosexual (Curran and Runswick-Cole, 2014; Dyer, 2016; Kehily, 2010), but also the underrepresentation of local knowledge connected with cultural wisdom (Moore et al., 2005).

To explore global perspectives alternative to a Western discourse of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in childhood studies and challenge normative and homogeneous constructions of childhoods, we propose that Chinese societies, given their unique socio-cultural, political, and historical contexts, are rather interesting and important sites of research. In current Chinese societies, different sets of socio-cultural norms often coexist when shaping children's experiences. These norms include those that embed with Chinese Confucianism values (e.g., harmony, filial piety, and hierarchy), socialistic-collectivistic orientated (e.g., solidarity,

equality, and collective), and individual-oriented (e.g., individuality, individual interest, and democracy) (Yan, 2010; Hansen, 2015). Meanwhile, Chinese childhoods are also subjected to the influence of global discourses such as children's rights (Naftali, 2014) and neoliberalism (Gupta, 2018; Yang et al., 2020). In recent years, there is a growing body of literature that sheds light on the complexity of conceptualising EDI issues in Chinese childhoods. Children's perspectives, although being less heard than significant adults', are also increasingly foregrounded. For example, in disciplines of sociology and education, while the dominance of Confucian virtues and sexual morality continues to mark topics on sex and sexuality as taboos and commonly excluded in child education (Liu, 2015), Xu (2020) invited young children from Hong Kong and Mainland China to contribute to the disclosure of the assumed 'feminisation' of early childhood education, contesting a stereotypical understanding of gender and sexuality. In her research into friendships in a rural school in Central China, Zhu (2020, 2021) indicates that children's choices of friends can be underpinned by various values, such as the Confucian and collective-oriented values of being obligated to collective interest (e.g., family's collective 'face') and 'harmony within hierarchy'; however, these norms do not always align which could cause tensions in children's everyday lives. Wang (2021) explored disabled children's experiences in mainstream schools in Shanghai and identified children's valuing of equal treatment and how their marginalised position was reinforced by a charity model of disability in a Confucian society and a performative schooling culture. This special issue aims to provide a dedicated space to bring together a collection of the latest research to substantially extend our knowledge of EDI issues in Chinese childhoods, especially from the perspectives of the children themselves.

We consider that two theoretical frameworks - intersectionality and transdisciplinarity - can be especially useful to embrace complexity, openness, and uncertainties in the process of producing new knowledge and insights of diverse Chinese childhoods. Intersectionality provides a 'gathering place for open-ended investigations of the overlapping and conflicting dynamics of race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, and other inequalities (Lykke, 2011)' (Cho et al., 2013, p.788). When bringing intersectionality into Childhood Studies, intersectionality could work as a grounded methodological framework (Marfelt, 2016), a theoretical lens, and a politics for liberation (Konstantoni and Emejulu, 2017), which addresses the limitations of understanding childhood experiences through a singular identity. We also view the endeavour of comprising this collection as a transdisciplinary undertaking to encourage dialogues, exchange, and collaboration across disciplinary, cultural, geographical, and academic/non-academic boundaries - a methodology that is considered to be particularly relevant for taking account of diverse perspectives and solving complex societal problems (Cassinari et al., 2011). Mitchell and Moore (2018) further argued that the transdisciplinary approach would enable a more accurate understanding of contemporary childhoods and children must be recognised as the knowers, who should be indispensable in the process of co-constructing integrated knowledge and collective actions.

This themed edition of Global Studies of Childhood positions all children as agents of change for a socially-just, inclusive, and sustainable future. The notion of Chinese childhoods is defined as childhood experiences of children (of any ethnicity below the age of 18) in Asian

societies dominated by Chinese culture - Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and Singapore. Comparative studies across different cultural contexts are welcome. However, due to the limited scope of this special issue, research that solely focuses on children with Chinese cultural heritage in other parts of the world is not included, while we recognise its important role in understanding Chinese childhoods. The terms of equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), increasingly adopted in international social policies, are used as a starting point to consider social injustice in childhoods. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that these terms are predominantly articulated and popularised in global North contexts and the meanings of these notions are contested. Therefore, we especially welcome theoretical and empirical work inherently underpinned by a critical, intersectional and transdisciplinary stance that problematises the Western European and Anglophone conceptualisations of EDI and childhoods, and work with alternative concepts that are culturally-situated and connected with local understanding and perspectives. Studies that focus on children's perspectives are particularly valued. In addition, we also welcome non-conventional submissions such as reflections from practitioners and reports from civil societies on lived realities of local communities and innovative child-led models of practice in services.

KEYWORDS AND TOPICS

We welcome submissions adjacent to (but not limited to) the following thematic areas:

- Gender and sexuality
- Disablement, impairment, and health inequalities
- Left-behind children and migrant children
- Care-experienced children
- Ethnic minority children
- Urban and rural childhoods
- Trauma, violence, emergency, and crisis
- Social class, poverty, and child labour
- Digital childhoods
- Rights, participation, citizenship, and resistance
- Global and local policy processes
- Innovative responses to diversity in children's services
- Family and community-based support
- Neoliberalism, postcolonialism, and global North-South divide
- Decolonisation and indigenous knowledge
- Sustainable development and transformation
- Methodologies and ethics in researching EDI issues in Chinese childhoods

POTENTIAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- How are the notions of diversity, equality, and inclusion constructed in contemporary Chinese political, social, and cultural contexts?

- In what ways do these constructions manifest in the lived experiences of Chinese children?
- What theoretical contributions can EDI-focused research of Chinese childhoods contribute to international knowledge of childhood studies?
- What are the barriers to and facilitators of diverse groups of children's participation in decision-making in service development and planning?
- How are Chinese childhoods shaped by global discourses such as neoliberalism and postcolonialism?
- How are children's voices represented in EDI issues in Chinese societies?
- How do Chinese cultures (both traditional and contemporary) shape children and families' experiences of EDI issues?
- What are the implications of EDI-related policies in Chinese childhoods?
- What are the methodological and ethical challenges in researching EDI-related issues of Chinese childhoods?

We welcome contributions from both academic and non-academic authors. Academic papers need to be up to 6,000 words (excluding references) and other work up to 3,000 words.

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Please email an abstract of 500 words (250 words for non-academic work) and a short bio of each author to guest editors by **31st August 2021** at sigsc2021@gmail.com. Please feel free to direct any informal queries about the proposed edited collection to the editorial team sigsc2021@gmail.com.

TIMELINE

Abstracts Due: **31st August 2021**

Invitations to submit full papers will be sent by **31st October 2021**

First Draft Due: **28th February 2022**

Special Issue editors review and provide feedback to authors: **31st May 2022**

Authors submit articles to Global Studies of Childhood: **31st August 2022**

Peer review and revisions: **September 2022 – February 2023**

Anticipated submission date for the Special Issue: **March 2023**

Please Note: all accepted articles can be published online first with SAGE Journals and provide authors with an accepted reviewed paper at that time with all scholarly attributes awarded.

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