



FUTURE SPECIAL ISSUE  
CALL FOR PAPERS

# *Southern Theories and 'Global' Childhood Studies*

*Childhood: A Journal of Global Child Research*

## Guest Editors

**Tatek Abebe, Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, Norwegian University of  
Science and Technology, Norway**

**Ida Marie Lyså, Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, Norwegian University of  
Science and Technology, Norway**

**Anandini Dar, School of Education Studies, Dr BR Ambedkar University Delhi, India**

**Aims and scope:** This special issue of *Childhood* takes a closer look at the 'global' within childhood studies, with a focus on how southern theories and perspectives on childhood and children speak to and expand the theoretical, epistemological, and ontological horizons of childhood studies. Childhood studies as a research field can be claimed to be part of a historically northern-centric pattern of 'global' knowledge production, where the intellectual hegemony of the 'metropole' has been acknowledged as the producer of theory and methodology, and the 'periphery' has been positioned as the supplier of data (Connell, 2013). There is a need to alter this foundational divide between the empirical south and theoretical north (Balagopalan 2019a: 24), and the core-and-periphery geographies of definitional power and knowledge production (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012). In this special issue, we aim to facilitate debates in different epistemic traditions and with 'scholars from other societies and traditions of inquiry' (Appadurai, 1999: 237). The SI will serve as a space for theorizations of childhood and children's lives by identifying and engaging with knowledges that are otherwise excluded or marginal and generate productive dialogue with 'conventional' theories in childhood studies as well as practices of knowledge production.

Concepts and theories of childhood have historically resonated with and privileged the constructed, agentic, vocal, white middle-class childhoods, rather than the experiences of majority world children (Hanson et al., 2018). The contexts of southern children have been

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critically addressed from various angles including, for example, problematizing and contextualizing child agency (e.g. Durham, 2011), scrutinizing the 'global child' and North-South bifurcation in knowledge production of childhood studies from a decolonial perspective (de Castro, 2020) and historicizing rights and locating the contemporaneity of history in understanding present day childhoods (Balagopalan, 2019b). Abebe and Ofofu-kusi (2016) suggested to move beyond 'pluralizing childhoods' and explore how children, through their involvement in the social, economic, cultural and political life of their societies, contribute to the reconfiguration of social and generational dynamics unfolding in their contexts. More recently, there have been calls to decenter the sovereign, monadic, knowing child subject and theorize wider, mutually co-determining social processes and relationalities within which children's everyday lives and futures are implicated (Spyrou et al., 2019). However, southern scholarships and scholars of childhood remain relatively 'absent' within these debates. In the global south and global east, for example, there is a burgeoning body of critical discourses and literatures on children's rights, childhood and indigenous socialization practices. Knowledge about childhood also remains evident in activism, oral traditions, practices, and social movements. Yet, these are dismissed as either a-theoretical or 'less robust' compared to northern, published scholarship. Engaging with such epistemic communities, 'emerging sites of scientific knowledge production on children and childhood in the global South/majority world' (Hanson et al., 2018:282) and examining indigenous epistemologies of childhood can make a case for re-positioning the periphery and the core, as well as bridge the empirical with the theoretical in childhood studies. Ultimately, this approach also offers a more open and potentially 'global' field with new epistemic diversity.

This Special Issue asks the following questions as points of departure to invite papers drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives, theories and methodologies anchored in global south contexts. How is 'the child' positioned in diverse societal contexts of the global south, and what does that positioning imply for conceptualizing childhood? Has the emergence of childhood studies as an academic field and a discipline particularly in Euro-American contexts prevented it from being a 'globally' inclusive field? If so, how? Are there any tensions and frictions in the attempt to open and problematize particular areas of childhood studies' scholarship? How can/do childhood studies scholars relate to historicity and the contemporary in their use of theory? How can southern theories make childhood studies a more dynamic, 'global' research field? What is the role of southern institutions, researchers and scholarship in the development of the inter-/multi-disciplinary field of childhood studies?

We invite contributions on a range of theoretical and epistemic traditions including, for example, postcolonial theory, decolonial theory, subaltern studies, indigenous perspectives, epistemologies of the south, or other approaches that challenge and advance the existing theoretical and epistemological premises of knowledge production in childhood studies. We aim to publish articles with original critiques, generative discussions, and debates that produce new insights into the theorization of childhood and children's experiences, across disciplines, as well as social, cultural, and political contexts of the global south. Papers need not only use 'emic' concepts, knowledge, and ideas of what it means to be a child but also critically reflect on and analyze southern theories or concepts of childhood.

**We invite submission of paper proposals on topics including, but are not limited to, the following:**

- Ethno-theories of childhood, education and socialization of children
- Indigenous perspectives on children's role and place in society (including indigenizing children's rights discourses)
- Emic, relational ontological perspectives on childhood
- Revitalization of knowledge on childhoods (e.g. the role of oral literature and storytelling in non-literate or precolonial societies)
- Examinations of differently-casted, -classed, -racialized, -educated, -gendered, -abled and -cultured childhoods within specific historical, economic and political contexts of the global south
- Critical reflections on decolonizing childhood studies
- Problematizations of the 'global' within childhood studies (e.g. unpacking the 'global' child in theory, international policy making and practice)
- Critical and de-colonial approaches to activism, practices, and social movements related to children's lives
- Indigenous research methodologies and practices of knowledge production on childhood

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## Schedule

- **15th of February 2021: Deadline for submission of abstracts** in English (300 words) and short biography of authors (150 words). Please include author's name(s), affiliation(s) and contact information. These should be sent to the Managing Editor, Ragnhild Berge: [ragnhild.berge@ntnu.no](mailto:ragnhild.berge@ntnu.no).
- **25th of February 2021** Invitation sent to possible paper contributors.
- **30th of June 2021** Submission of full-length papers.

### For enquiries, contact:

Tatek Abebe: [tatek.abebe@ntnu.no](mailto:tatek.abebe@ntnu.no)

Ida Marie Lyså: [ida.marie.lysa@ntnu.no](mailto:ida.marie.lysa@ntnu.no)

Anandini Dar: [anandini@aud.ac.in](mailto:anandini@aud.ac.in)



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