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Teaching ‘global childhoods’ in childhood studies

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TEACHING 'GLOBAL CHILDHOODS' IN CHILDHOOD STUDIES

Moderators: Tatek Abebe and Sarada Balagopalan

Participants: Nicola Ansell, Brunel University, UK Anandini Dar, BML Munjal University, India Marek Tesar, University of Auckland, New Zealand Afua Twum-Danso Imoh, University of Bristol, UK

Keywords Childhood Studies, 'global' childhoods, knowledge production, teaching childhood studies

Childhood studies programs and generic social science programs in universities across the world increasingly offer courses that in some way focus on 'global childhoods'. For this webinar, we will bring into conversations four prominent scholars who, based on their teaching and research experiences on 'global childhoods', will explore and reflect on four sets of ideas: theoretical and empirical framing of 'global childhoods', questions around intersectionality and positionality in teaching 'global childhoods', decolonization of curriculum and epistemological justice, and the role of Childhood Studies journals in fostering critical debates around knowledge production, research and training on 'global childhoods'.

Participants:

- Afua Twum Danso-Imoh, Associate Professor in Global Childhoods and Welfare, University of Bristol, UK
- Anandini Dar, Faculty of Sociology and Assistant Professor, School of Education Studies, Ambedkar University Delhi, India.
- Marek Tesar, Professor and Director of Centre for Global Childhoods, The University of Auckland, New Zealand
- Nicola Ansell, Professor of Human Geography and Programme convenor of MA on Children, Youth and International Development, Brunel University, UK

Q1. As childhood studies span knowledge from the humanities and social sciences, what are the promises, challenges, and strategies of teaching a course in 'global childhoods' to students with diverse disciplinary backgrounds? How do you engage with the notion 'global childhoods' in the courses you teach in Childhood Studies? How has this engagement evolved and what are the major theoretical and methodological shifts that you've included while teaching on this topic?

AFUA TWUM DANSO-IMOH

I have been teaching UG and MA courses under the umbrella of childhood studies degree programmes for 15 years now at 3 different institutions in England – one as a visiting lecturer for one semester and two as a permanent faculty member of an academic department. Most of the modules I have taught on childhoods have been especially focused on exploring childhoods from a global perspective. In terms of the promise or excitement of teaching courses from this perspective it is because it enables me to combine my interest in childhoods in diverse contexts -mainly in the South- with my desire to develop the global consciousness of students at my institution- at least at the two institutions at which I have worked as a permanent member of faculty where the majority of students have been White British. Earlier

in my teaching practice I sought to encourage students to question their assumptions about childhood, understand the existence of different world views and conceptualisations relating to childhood and childrearing primarily in the South in order for them to gain an insight into societies other than their own. At the same time I sought to illuminate the importance of considering historical developments and social change in these societies as part of showing that worldviews and lived experiences cannot be seen as static or uniformly applied across a group of people leading to a plurality of childhoods conceptualised and experienced in a given context in countries in the South - a city, a town, a village in the same way their own societies illuminate great variability. This latter point has not been easy for many of my students to consider and in order to foreground this plurality more I started to change the way I approached the subject matter through problematising the Global North and South binary and proceeding to explore certain topics such as child work across contexts in both the North and South as part of an attempt to show the multiplicity of childhood experiences that exist in both world areas. However, much of the literature that my students have been able to access across the period I have been teaching has focused on childhoods that are at odds with the global ideals promoted by international law and social policies and programmes. Thus, even though I was trying to get them to move beyond a focus on seeing childhoods in the South as only characterised by deficits or what they lacked, there was little literature for them to draw on to examine other realities of childhoods in these contexts. While some students were able to engage effectivity with small body of literature and despite the interesting classroom discussions we had about the significance of this lack of literature, many have left my course still thinking that childhoods 'over there in the South' are just so different from contexts in the North. Although the new structure I use to teach childhoods, centred around problematising the binary between the Global North and South, has helped to address some of the challenges, students are still faced with a lack of literature to draw on to enable them to effectively discuss Southern childhoods holistically in classroom discussions and importantly, in assignments, some of which require students to primarily draw on academic literature.

NICOLA ANSELL

Thanks Afua – this is great. In the answer below I realise I write very little about what I actually teach – but it seems to be important to set the scene in terms of who the students are and what they bring to my teaching.

I've been running an MA programme in Children, Youth and International Development at Brunel University London since 2008. This programme has shifted in various ways over the past 15 years, not least being moved between different disciplinary homes. It was conceived when I was part of a Human Geography department, though incorporating existing modules from Youth Work and from Anthropology. It moved into the Education department, then to Social Work and for the past 7 years has been part of the Anthropology suite of programmes. The number of students recruited has fluctuated hugely, with anywhere between 4 and 29 recruited in a year.

The notion of 'global childhoods' is introduced in a compulsory term 1 module on Understanding Childhood and Youth. This module also serves several other Anthropology Masters programmes and is an option for final year undergraduate anthropologists. Students are accepted onto the Masters programmes with a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds. While some background in the social sciences is preferred, we recruit students with degrees in anything ranging from Economics to Dance. The Masters students benefit from studying alongside undergraduates who have a recent grounding in critical approaches to social

science, while the undergraduates get practice in applying their critical skills in relation to the professional experiences that many of the postgraduates bring.

Moreover, Brunel, as a London institution, has an ethnically and geographically diverse student body. At postgraduate level, in particular, we have very large numbers of international students. Students from 56 countries have registered on the MA Children, Youth and International Development, and in the past 3 years only one has been white British.

A consequence of this diversity is that students are expected to learn from each other's experience. When numbers are large enough, I use a 'speed dating' activity during induction week to give students the opportunity to learn about one another, focusing particularly on where they're from, the relevant experience they have and their academic backgrounds. In this way they learn to see one another as important resources. Before the Childhood and Youth module begins, I ask the students to post a blog on our virtual learning environment in which they describe the life of one of their grandparents at a particular point in their childhood or youth. They are then expected to read and comment on each other's posts. Ironically, this tends to lead to a perception of commonality, that then needs to be unpicked.

A challenge posed by bringing this diverse group of students together is that many are drawn to the postgraduate programmes by simplistic media portrayals of issues such as child labour and children's rights, and find it troubling to be asked to look critically at these. Such views tend to be particularly prevalent among students with backgrounds in the global South. Meanwhile the undergraduate anthropologists have learned an equally simplistic cultural relativist formula for addressing these issues: international agencies should not intervene in children's lives because their lack of cultural understanding does more harm than good. The challenge for teaching this first module is always to encourage a more complex and nuanced appreciation of the diversity of global childhoods.

ANANDINI DAR

It is delightful to read both Afua and Nicola's responses. Thank you again, Sarada and Tatek, for this opportunity to reflect on our courses. In my answer below I try and address how my teaching of such a course has evolved given two distinct teaching contexts and reflect on students' own personal or disciplinary locations.

The first time I taught a course precisely titled, "Global Childhoods" was as a summer undergraduate elective, in 2013, when I was still a doctoral candidate at the Department of Childhood Studies at Rutgers, USA. I was interested in this course as my own work engaged with the subject of globalization and childhoods, and I had an interest in the children's rights discourse in the global South. Since I was teaching this as a summer course (compressed into 4 weeks) in Camden, USA, I felt it important to begin the course by first addressing issues at "home". So, I began the course by introducing students to the diverse history of "western childhoods" (Aries, 1960), and the problematics of normative and universalizing 'myths of childhood innocence' (Gibson, 1995) that also circulate and get "exported" to other parts of the world through policies for 'saving' children (Boyden, 1997). This approach, at the outset, was promising as it resulted in students taking on a self-critical and a relational stance in studying about humanitarian aid interventions in children's lives in non-western countries in the second half of the course. However, when students submitted their final assignments on a report on "the state of children" in a context/ topic of their choosing (such as, immigrant children, working children, etc.) some of them reported on marginalized children's lives in countries of the South, ultimately homogenizing children's lives according to national or

“cultural” contexts. This was a bit reductive for me, however, my own understanding of these concepts, as well as the scholarship in this area in the field of Childhood Studies were also still emerging at the time (and little could be transacted in a short summer course).

So, when I started teaching in India, in a School of Education Studies, at Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD) in 2016, I contended with the absence of a field of Childhood Studies in higher education in India, and the diversity of the student population in terms of class, caste, religion, linguistic background and their disciplinary training. The course was floated as a second year MA elective for students in Education, and Early Childhood Care and Education programmes, with most students entering with a training in child development, psychology, and teacher education. They come into the programme with little to no exposure to social and political theory but often a strong grounding in conceptualising childhood as a normative stage of life. They are usually interested in knowing what is a “good practice” or a “bad practice” to improve children’s lives. Furthermore, AUD attracts a diverse body of students however, the majority in this programme are female, who are often expected by their families to complete the degree in order to become “good” mothers themselves, or at most become teachers who will fulfill their social expectations of caring for children. This is not surprising given that the field of education (school and higher education) remains a feminized profession in India (Kumar). Hence, this context both troubled me and motivated me to encourage students to think critically and socio-politically about children’s lives and the category of childhood. To do so, the course interrogates the meaning of “global childhoods” by asking how global processes such as those of colonization and globalization have informed and shaped children’s lives (Stephens, 1998). We begin the course by reading about various facets of globalization (cultural, economic, international standards, and consumer globalization) and colonization (Stearns, 2004; Morrison) and see how these have shaped and informed local children’s lives in different parts of the world, in and through sites of schools, media, and rights discourse. Students are introduced to critical theorists of globalization such as Appadurai, Hannerz, and P. Chatterjee who point to the inequalities produced through globalization not just across countries, but also within and across national contexts, resulting in an understanding by extension of how global flows produce greater inequalities and unequal childhoods. For me, this initial framing – that global childhoods also means unequal childhoods within national, regional, and global contexts – was productive as it offered students a move away from a reductive and interventionist mindset in their understandings of children’s lives. Further, by foregrounding that everyday life worlds of children across contexts are also a matter of the global political economy, encouraged students to reflect on how they engage with children as future educators. However, like Afua points out, there still remains a greater need for critical scholarship in this area and, in India, a greater challenge is perhaps for other disciplines like sociology, political studies, and education to begin engaging with the critical study young subjects and the category of childhood.

MAREK TESAR

Kia ora koutou

Dear colleagues, thanks so much for including me in this wonderful conversation and thank you for your responses. They have made me feel inspired and connected with you. Teaching a course on "global childhoods" to students in Aotearoa New Zealand is a challenging task, as it requires understanding the ongoing effects of colonisation on the experiences of Māori children and young people. Māori children and young people have unique cultural and historical experiences shaping their childhoods. Studying global childhoods in Aotearoa New Zealand requires understanding how these experiences intersect with global issues such as climate change, inequalities, sustainability, and multimodality of childhoods.

The postgraduate course 'Global Childhood' (and its twin 'Childhood Studies') is part of the offering of the Faculty of Education. This location of the course may be different to other colleagues' experiences—such courses are often offered in Sociology, Human Geography, Anthropology, Critical Psychology, etc. By locating global childhoods scholarship in the broad field of education, diverse disciplinary scholarly rhizomes are allowed to thrive.

Locating global childhoods in education offers an opportunity to explore the complex ways in which childhood is shaped and experienced across different cultures and societies, and to highlight the global dimensions of childhood experiences, with its promises and challenges. However, it can be challenging to navigate the vast array of disciplines and approaches that inform childhood studies, and to ensure that students with different disciplinary backgrounds are able to engage with the material in meaningful ways. Over the years, we have been successful at engaging diverse disciplines and supporting students. We need to continue to work hard on responding to these challenges.

Childhoods are not equal in Aotearoa New Zealand or overseas. Our role in this course is to uncover and challenge our students, both as scholars and activists. Part of how we do this is through the COLAB project that now works across 7 universities in the Global South and the Global North. The project enables students to perform and experience the scholarship with students from other cultures and countries; it is one of the favorite aspects of the Global Childhoods course for both students and teachers.

Q2. How does your specific geographic location affect your framing of 'global childhoods'? How do you incorporate issues of intersectionality, feminism, gender, sexuality, race, and capitalism in your framing of 'global childhoods'?

NICOLA ANSELL

Brunel University London is located on the western edge of London and just 4 miles from Europe's busiest airport. It's an extremely globally connected place, while also concretely (if you know Brunel, you'll know there's a lot of concrete) located in a city of immense wealth and power. We've recently been holding discussions around our identity, which are focusing attention on our ambivalent relationship to place ('rooted in (west) London'? 'Globally connected'?) We are at once a parochial university (a high proportion of our students are from west London) and an international university (46% are from overseas). But our west London students reflect the west London population, which is itself very international. And yet our relationships with the locality are in some ways tenuous and our claims to global relevance certainly troubling.

I don't explicitly use a framing of 'global childhoods' in my teaching – though I'm wondering whether I should! In many ways it is implicit. We look at how ideas about childhood have travelled the world and the problems that have arisen. We draw examples from the diverse places where our students have lived and worked or where their parents grew up and compare and connect them. Global childhoods are undoubtedly present in the classroom in some ways. Yet it is perhaps too easy to forget the distance between us in the west London classroom and the lives of most of the world's young people.

Intersectionality, feminism, gender, sexuality, race, and capitalism are not addressed as separate issues in my classes. But they are integral to many themes that are covered. For

instance, social reproduction clearly concerns the reproduction both capitalism and gender relations – and other forms of difference and inequality. There is an extent to which the content of classes is driven by the interests of students. I use group discussion a great deal and sometimes ask different groups to focus on different issues in a paper they've read. And several weeks of my main 'Understanding Childhood and Youth' module are given over to student-led seminars, in which groups of students direct the discussion of a set of two papers. Gender, race and intersectionality are frequently topics that they select for discussion.

AFUA TWUM DANSO-IMOH

My location is slightly different from Nicola's. For most of my career I have taught at universities where most of my students, especially on my undergraduate courses, have been White British, mainly young women. At one of the institutions I have taught at a good number of UG students came from other regions surrounding the county/province within which the university was located. What this meant, in effect, was that not only was it a primarily English student body, but it was particularly a Northern English student body. While my UG students tend to be familiar with understandings of childhood or broader topics relating to family life by the time they come and take my module (all my UG child-focused modules have been 3rd year/final year modules), they have not previously had much engagement with global discourses relating to childhoods and families, especially in contexts outside of Europe and North America. Thus for undergraduate courses using a global lens to frame the subject I am teaching – whether it is about childhood or more broadly family focused - has been critical, as ultimately, I want to ensure that these students, at the very least, leave my unit starting to challenge some of their assumptions they have about other societies and have a deeper understanding of what it means to be a child in other contexts not only by highlighting the differences in childhood conceptualisations and experiences, but also by trying to demonstrate the synergies that exist in the lives of some children as part of an attempt to reduce the extent to which non-Western societies are 'othered' and seen as so vastly different to their own. In the module I currently teach I also seek to enable them to problematise their assumptions of their own society and get them to consider childhood understandings and experiences from their own contexts that are at odds with what they are familiar with. The Masters courses I have taught on are different as most students tend to be international, especially from East Asia. For such courses there is less of a need to develop global consciousness in the same way, but they are still spaces where Eurocentric perspectives tend to dominate. In fact, as most of the international Masters students come from quite wealthy families who live in urban areas of cities in the country from which they originate, they sometimes share, with 'home' students, similar ways of thinking about the lives of poor children in urban or rural areas of their own countries (e.g. left behind children in China).

Like Nicola, issues of intersectionality are not discussed separately, they are embedded in lectures, workshops, readings and discussions. A key aspect of my teaching has, from the outset, been focused on illuminating the variability of childhood construction and experiences as a result of variables such social status, parental education, location, ethnicity and gender within a country or regional context in order to highlight the need to not only explore how childhoods may differ between the North and South, but also how they may differ specifically within locations in the South – be they regions, countries, cities/town, villages - and how these variables often intersect and shape the experiences of growing up for different

groups of children. I link this variability to internal social and cultural processes as well as global economic processes and the uneven effects they have on children and their families across contexts. These are normally weaved in through the various topics that are taught.

ANANDINI DAR

This is a great question. Of course, our context of where we are teaching this course impacts the design and pedagogy quite significantly, and I think I demonstrate this difference in my earlier response to some extent. But picking up where I left off, a large component of the first unit of my course is also to introduce the concept of 'economic globalisation' and locating how children are impacted by flows of capital across the globe (Stearns). I screen a Swedish documentary, "Santa's Workshop: Inside China's Slave Labour Toy Factories," (2004) in class, which as the title reveals, provides a detailed investigative account, rich with interviews with workers inside toy factories in China as well as with the executives of major toy companies such as Brio, highlighting the multi-layered complexities of 'global' capitalism and its effects on young people in the global South. The film reveals how the demands for manufactured toys in the West are met by production of these in China, by ensuring low wages to factory workers, who are also mostly young women and sometimes adolescent children, working in extremely harsh and dangerous conditions. The film opens up a rich opportunity for discussion on themes of gender, as most of the workers in factories were women, and about capitalism and its workings across scales.

For instance, some students, like some of the Swedish children in the film, shared that they would not want to buy these toys knowing that they were manufactured in this manner. Others more critically would intervene and problematise this by adding that capitalism would allow for these products then being cheaply made elsewhere, and in many senses impact the livelihoods of other children and their families in China. Later, some of the students also extended the discussion to how similar issues are faced by women and children working in factories in South Asia. Discussions around inequality in access to manufactured toys within India also ensued, resulting in some insights for an understanding around the interconnections between class, gender, global capital and childhood.

MAREK TESAR

The framing of global childhoods is heavily influenced by one's location. As a scholar, researcher and teacher educator in Aotearoa New Zealand, working within a bicultural curriculum, residing in the largest city with a diverse population, and witnessing classrooms with various ethnicities and languages spoken, I am acutely aware of the complexities of local and global childhoods. The country's cultural and historical backgrounds, migration and settlement histories, and experiences of poverty all play a role in shaping our views on childhood. The concept of global childhoods is not homogenous, and my students' diverse childhoods, backgrounds and experiences illustrate this. The tension between global and local childhoods is evident in their narratives, leading some to question what is the merit to thinking about 'local childhoods' and 'global children' as opposed to 'global childhoods' and 'local children'? The land on which they live, breathe, engage and participate in educational experiences plays a crucial role in shaping their intellectual projects and relationships with knowledge, themselves, and others. Often, they reflect on their relationships with people, places and things. This is one of the many reasons why we say, 'global childhoods' and not 'global childhood'.

Intersectionality is a foundational concept in global childhood scholarship, recognizing that children's experiences are shaped by multiple ideological settings such as race, gender, sexuality, and socio-economic status. In Aotearoa New Zealand, this intersectionality is especially relevant and foregrounds many of the experiences of young children. Capitalism exacerbates the differences and diversities within communities of the Global North and Global South. To understand the challenges and experiences of each child, we must recognize the various identities intersecting in their broader lives, including gender inequalities that are ever present, and how neoliberalism ruthlessly impacts the lives of children and their families. The global childhoods program that I lead provides a fascinating microcosm for the interrogation and theorization of these complex topics and provides important opportunities to understand and perform the intersections of scholarship and activism that allows students to uncover their own potential, passion and callings in this scholarly field.

Q3. In Epistemologies of the South Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014) discusses how global social justice is not possible without addressing the issue of global 'cognitive injustice'. Keeping this in mind, what do you think it will take to dismantle normative understandings of non-western childhoods in transnational policy making. Given the knowledge asymmetries in epistemologies of childhood and the theories from which childhood studies draw; what are the strategies of decolonization of curriculum/teaching/research and training in your course/program in (global) childhood studies?

MAREK TESAR

Let me be the first one to answer this excellent question!

Boaventura de Sousa Santos argues that achieving global social justice requires addressing global cognitive injustice, which refers to the unequal distribution of knowledge and the marginalization of non-Western epistemologies in the production of knowledge. This issue is especially pertinent to the study of global childhoods, where traditional understandings of childhood often reflect Western perspectives that overlook the diverse experiences of children in the Global South and indigenous perspectives. To address this, it is essential to prioritize the voices and experiences of children, particularly those from non-Western contexts, indigenous communities, and our younger children who are still developing their verbal voice.

In my research, I am interested in exploring how we can truly listen to children, even very young children who may not have a verbal voice, and how we can take their perspectives and experiences seriously (Article 12 of UNCRC!). This requires creating opportunities for these children to share their perspectives directly with policymakers and educators, incorporating non-Western epistemologies and perspectives into policy and curriculum development, and ensuring that a diversity of voices is represented and valued. Decolonization of curriculum, teaching, research, and training is essential to promoting global cognitive justice in childhood studies and global childhoods scholarship. This involves recognizing and challenging the ways in which Western knowledge systems have historically excluded non-Western perspectives and experiences.

I find the theories and methodologies of posthumanism and new materialism helpful as they reject the notion of a fixed, universal, and objective understanding of childhood. Instead, they view childhood as a socially and culturally constructed concept that is constantly being produced and re-produced in different contexts. To dismantle normative understandings of non-Western childhoods in transnational policy making, a posthumanist and new materialist approach can be taken, which acknowledges the agency and materiality of non-human actors,

including cultural artifacts, technologies, and environments, in shaping childhood experiences and practices. This could mean engaging with non-human actors as active agents in shaping childhood experiences and practices and recognizing the diversity and complexity of non-Western childhoods as shaped by multiple and dynamic forces.

It is important to recognize and respond to the specific needs and experiences of non-Western children and communities in policy making, emphasizing the importance of context-specific and culturally responsive approaches. This requires recognizing the ethical and political implications of policy making that overlooks or marginalizes non-Western childhoods, and advocating for more inclusive and equitable approaches that value and support the diversity of childhood experiences and practices. By prioritizing the voices and experiences of non-Western children and communities, we can work towards a more just and equitable global society for our tamariki (children) who are our future.

I will conclude with two Māori Whakataukī (proverbs): Ahakoa, he iti he pounamu (Although it is small it is precious) and Nau te rourou, naku te rourou, ka ora te manuhiri (With your food basket and my food basket, we will all be fed).

NICOLA ANSELL

I write this in Lesotho, where I realise (with some discomfort) that I am engaged in a process of transnational policymaking. I led a research project here a few years ago focused on rural education which uncovered numerous ways in which the country's school system fails to engage with the experiences and expectations of rural children, and ultimately persuades many of them of their own inferiority. I have followed that up with a project working with teacher education institutions to engage student teachers in action research projects in which they adapt their teaching to the experiences and interests of rural children. Connecting education to rural lives in this way proved very challenging for the student teachers and their supervisors within the schools, who view schooling as a universal and normative phenomenon. Last week we held a workshop with senior members of government, teacher education institutions and an international 'development partner' to disseminate our findings and seek support for changes in teacher training and development of CPD programmes to help teachers adapt their pedagogy to the social, economic and environmental contexts of the children they work with.

This project, and the workshop in particular, highlighted some of the complexities and ambivalences of efforts to 'dismantle normative understandings of non-western childhoods'. There was a resounding consensus in the group who, with the exception of myself (white British) and the development partner (Indian) were all Basotho, that teaching is failing rural children if it fails to connect with their understanding of the world. Teachers were perceived to be attuned to a normative view of the educable child, even where they themselves were raised in rural environments. The challenge is that schooling is so widely conceived of as an imported product and a process of preparation for life elsewhere. Achieving cognitive justice demands a great deal of dismantling and while I always question the legitimacy of my presence in spaces such as these, I think my research has a role to play. Working with school children, teachers, teacher educators and education policymakers to encourage dialogues across the different worldviews that shape their thinking is perhaps one way to begin to decolonise educational practice.

My teaching plays a similarly thorny role. When I set up the MA Children, Youth and International Development it had a compulsory module on 'International Development,

Childhood and Youth'. To a large extent this focused on the ways in which 'international development', considered loosely as global capitalist development, global institutions and agendas and international NGOs, shaped the lives of children, mainly in the global South. Children and young people were not understood as undifferentiated, but the focus was on the structural conditions that produced particular childhoods in particular places and also on how children themselves played a part in shaping their own lives and their societies.

I quickly found there was far too much that I wanted to cover in this module, so I soon separated out the content into two modules. One continued with the original title and addressed the major themes that might be found in a module on international development, but with a focus on how they related to the lives of children. The second module, 'Young Lives in the Global South' took its framing from childhood studies and (to a lesser extent) youth studies. It explored life course and intergenerational approaches (again placing childhoods within global social and economic processes) and sought to problematise the ways in which 'global standards' are used to regulate childhoods around the world.

While focused on the 'global South', I always began this module looking at childhood and youth in Western contexts and the ways in which popular perceptions and conceptual approaches have evolved. This always felt a little uncomfortable – indeed, I usually ensured that the class debated whether or not this was justified. From my perspective there were three justifications: childhood studies has origins in Western academia and those origins are important for being able to place what we read; Western popular conceptions and theoretical approaches have shaped not just academic studies of childhoods in the global South but also countless interventions, both international and more locally directed; and also because of the importance of connecting with students' own experiences. The challenge, as others pointed out in a previous exchange (and as highlighted in my current project), is to avoid the impression of a binary distinction.

AFUA TWUM DANSO-IMOH

De Sousa Santos's ideas around cognitive injustice are not too dissimilar from those of Anibal Quijano (2008) who uses the term 'coloniality,' not only to refer to the state of being and power, but also to the state of knowledge. For Quijano, this coloniality of knowledge leads to the destabilisation of Indigenous knowledge systems in favour of the knowledge of colonial powers even once colonialism, as an event, has come to an end. This coloniality of knowledge is evident in childhood studies and children's rights studies as it forms the basis upon which normative concepts and narratives about childhood conceptualisations, children's rights, child development and child protection are formed. These normative understandings are not only evident in transnational policy making; they are also evident in mainstream academic discourses about childhood from diverse disciplines, including psychology, law, economics, and social work. Those academics and others whose work counters these normative narratives remain at the margins of many of these disciplines and have long done so. What does this then mean, then,for dismantling normative understandings– not just in policymaking, but also in academic debates? My answer to this is quite pessimistic. I am not sure we can dismantle these normative understandings– not least because they now dominate both policy and academic discourses in numerous contexts in the South as Nicola highlights very well with her example of teachers' approach to formal education in rural areas in Lesotho.

What this means in relation to academic discourses is that there is now a proliferation of literature by scholars based in institutions in the South who draw on these normative

understandings as the basis for their own publications, and in the process, they overlook not just local knowledges, but also local ways of being and relating. Interestingly, the ways in which these normative understandings of childhood have become embedded in contexts in the South is further illuminated by the way the concept of decoloniality is currently being deployed. While this term has long been used in academic discourses in Latin America and is also being utilised in some contexts in the South, it has become particularly 'on trend' at institutions in Western Europe and North America. However, in the contexts where I conduct my research (West Africa) these debates around decoloniality are not especially being utilised to frame discussions about childhood or any other topic. This amuses me somewhat as it leads me to think that even the term 'decoloniality', which is meant to position us to be able to challenge the coloniality of knowledge and being that many of us have been caught up in from our earliest days (regardless of race and origins), is now being dominated by Western institutions and actors to such an extent that I would dare to state that decoloniality as a concept is in itself being colonised. Turning to teaching practices and the engagement of students in HE, my pessimism about the extent to which asymmetries in knowledge can be addressed remains. This is because decoloniality, understood properly, is not just a process that can be done; it is not just a series of actions such as changing curricula, tweaking reading lists, hiring one or two more Black and Brown academics at a grade that is deemed to be progressive; it is a way of being. As such, then, it involves a change in the mindset of individuals. Now, the issue is that this change in mindset cannot be achieved in a 3- or 4-year undergraduate programme which starts when an individual is already 18 years old. It has to start much earlier because the process of coloniality begins early too – if not from within the home then certainly from once an individual starts to engage with the education system at least in contexts of Western Europe. Having come to university embedded in coloniality how can a 3-or 4-year degree programme do anything other than patch a few things here and there. And added to that are universities as a whole (not just individual courses or committed lectureras) really well positioned to lead this decolonial turn given the extent to which they themselves are steeped in coloniality?

ANANDINI DAR

I could not agree more with Afua on her reading of the contemporary trends in the western academy and its deployment of the concept of "decoloniality." She is correct to also note that the radical move to dismantle normative understandings of childhood would be through a re-framing of curriculum from early years onwards. At the same time, I think this is a long term, and on-going project that may in fact never be possible (perhaps, I am even more pessimistic/ jaded!). Somewhat similar to Santos, Anibal Quijano (2000), draws our attention the "colonial matrix of power" that continues to exist in post-colonies, and elsewhere. Quijano finds that political and economic power is deeply linked to the control of knowledge. When certain child related transnational policies have already conditioned local and national contexts on how to raise children, as per standards of and funding from the west, then, a dismantling requires a rejection of these universals at the outset, alongside an introduction of techniques of critique and learning from practices on the ground. For me, I think higher education spaces and classroom interactions are the only sites where such projects of dismantling can begin. As many of my students enter into jobs in government education departments, and non-government organisations working on issues of children's welfare and rights, it becomes imperative that we prepare them on how to inform changes within these spaces (to some extent at least), so as to disrupt western and statist agendas of uncritical "child saving" in the South.

When I teach "global childhoods", and related courses, we critically examine transnational organisations, their agendas, programmes, and policies for "humanitarian interventions" in the south. For instance, we interrogate the World Bank's policies on child development as well as their influence on "better parenting" programmes in the global South (ref), and I seek to familiarize students to the problematics of capitalist power, and the erasure of local, indigenous, and traditional practices – not only by western knowledges but also statist agendas of development. By visiting field sites – such as a slum where I have been conducting my more recent research with migrant children – students witness first-hand how policies such as the UNCRC or the Right to Education Act have had little to no impact on the wellbeing of majority of India's children and opens up the scope to discuss class and caste politics, and the complex matrix of power embedded within national borders.

As many nations are turning towards more majoritarian and right-wing politics, the discourses on global childhoods needs to move beyond questions of local-global alone (Dar in Kannan et al, 2022, and Ref more), and turn to newer discourses, perhaps that of decolonizing, alongside an engagement with the politics of power and inequalities facing sub-altern children. One of my goals for such a course is to ensure that elite and middle-class students, at least to some extent, reflect on their privileges and do not get caught up in the syndrome of child saving "other" childhoods by reproducing newer framings of "us" and "them" already existing within urban centers like Delhi, where we are located.

[If space permits, I want to find a way to extend the point about funding inequalities – for research/ publication in the south – What can be newer ways where solidarities are possible between northern academia and that of the south – as that will have to be one way to "decolonize"]

Q4. What is the role of Childhood Studies journals, and what kind of role could Childhood: A global journal of child research play to support the curriculum needs of postgraduate courses/programs? What role and responsibility do Childhood Studies scholars have in this effort? From where you stand now, how do you imagine, and work towards, a future in which we unlearn and reconfigure our dominant framing of 'global childhoods'?

ANANDINI DAR

I really enjoyed engaging with all these questions. Below is my response to the final question.

I think journals like Childhood require a rigorous re-thinking of their own location, how it charges subscription costs, and what kinds of publications they bring out. A major lag in our field is the distance from practitioners and the subaltern and marginal voices. One can easily turn to other journals, such as Gender and Development, for instance, to take inspiration from. In just 25 years, they have re-imagined their location to be shifted from the UK to a consortium model, led by global South countries, and they charge reduced subscription rates for low- and middle-income countries. This is bound to facilitate more reading material for curriculum where I am located, where often times universities have limited funds for journal subscriptions. In addition, activists and practitioners who work with children and young people are unable to access and read the latest research due to extremely high costs per article. Are they not the target audience for such journals? Is the role of childhood studies scholars not to reach out to them? Where and how will change happen? Or else, are we

simply reproducing inequalities in who can access knowledge and who cannot. Issues around unequal global capital, which affects the young, must also be addressed in the publications about them, through a different subscription model. For me, this would indicate what Mohanty (2003) referred to as a form of transnational "political solidarity" against global capitalism, which detrimentally affects children and scholars engaged with children in some parts of the world more than others.

Furthermore, I think the challenge of what gets published in a journal such as Childhood is also linked to who conducts the peer review and what guidelines or understandings are made available for them. In this light, the editors may need to take on a greater role to guide and develop frameworks for peer reviewers before sending papers to them. It is no secret for academia that peer review is increasingly seen as a heavily contested system for assessing publications (Mastroianni, 2022), so perhaps finding ways to address how to improve this system would be a significant role for this journal.

Finally, I think to support the needs of curriculum for courses such as 'global childhoods', there ought to be some reflection on the forms of publications in Childhood. This journal can consider including resource lists, or annotated bibliographies, rather than editorials alone, which would help students and teachers to refer to scholarship not otherwise featured in the journal. These could easily be thematized and brought out in collaboration with young scholars as well. So, I guess while I was pessimistic in terms of my earlier response, this question is offering me some space for hope and imagining a future for the journal and beyond (thanks for this conversation, editors!) that ought to create new pathways where the dominant discourses need to be re-assessed through rigorous political solidarities that can counter global capital and its unequalizing forces, be it for childhoods in the South or elsewhere, or for scholars and practitioners in this field globally.

MAREK TESAR

Fascinating, important, and at the same time, such difficult questions to answer!

Childhood Studies journals (or any other publication outlets such as a dedicated transdisciplinary childhood studies book series) should play an essential role in advancing the field of global childhoods, and in return how I construct and teach the curriculum of Global Childhoods courses. In my teaching, we always feature relevant journals and book series for students to consider using during the coursework or research component of their study. For my teaching team, journals such as Childhood provide an irreplaceable platform and landscape of ideas, thoughts, issues, matters, and curricula concerns. It provides our teaching team - despite having set topics and themes for our course Global Childhoods - a glimpse of what is going on in the field 'right now'; what are the concerns of the field. In return, that allows us to provide updated literature to the projects that our students are doing as part of their study and to challenge their assumptions and broaden their understanding of how deep and rich the field is.

Childhood journal and other platforms that publish global childhoods and childhood studies research and publications on children and childhood provide a platform for scholars, researchers, and practitioners to publish their work, exchange ideas, and engage in critical discourse on topics related to childhood. Or at least that should be the ideal, alongside contributing to the understanding of the diverse experiences of children around the world and placing the well-being and rights of children at the centre of any agenda.

Albeit it is here that I wonder what the responsibility of the editor of the journal is. In some childhood journals, despite excellent editing, I feel that there is a very author-interest driven individual submission publication system in place. I do wonder what would happen if there would be more 'special issues' driven by Journal Editors (not guest editors) and, thus, allowing it to more strongly shape the field based upon current concerns and therefore also encourage my class in Global childhoods reflect and take that issue on board and make it a part of the course curricula.

The second point is about editors being open to innovation and not only following tradition with respect to both the content and the form of the submission. The one size fits all for all scholars from all ontological and epistemological backgrounds make me sometimes wonder if the childhood studies press wants Global South scholars to succeed as Western scholars or if they let them to succeed as Global South scholars, given more than just a nod to different ways of thinking and writing, and the formats of such submissions.

The third point would be potentially rather than merely traditional research papers, to offer a format such as short 'critical analyses' of contemporary issues related to children and childhoods. That, I think, will be critical to a deeper understanding of the complexities and diversity of global childhoods, bringing those new agendas to the table through shorter commentaries that we need more and more alongside traditional research articles.

Childhood Studies scholars have a crucial role and responsibility to play in advancing the field and promoting the well-being and rights of children globally. They need to engage in critical reflections on the dominant framing of global childhoods and work towards challenging and deconstructing the dominant narratives and assumptions that underlie them. This involves questioning the Eurocentric, heteronormative, and neoliberal discourses that often dominate research on childhood and recognizing the diversity of experiences and perspectives of children around the world. Unlearning and deschooling, and on the other hand, unearthing and daylighting deep forbidden knowledge in Western and non-Western and indigenous discourses. That all requires us to do some work as scholars, as teachers, and recognize whose voice is not part of this conversation.

To imagine and work towards a future where we unlearn and reconfigure our dominant framing of global childhoods, we need to challenge through journals' set ups the systematic injustices. We need to join the collective of global epistemological undoing; thinking how the articles purposefully seriously talk to the indigenizing of the childhood studies scholarship and not be afraid to challenge the tradition. We will need to consistently unlearn and reconfigure our dominant framing of 'global childhoods'.

NICOLA ANSELL

These are huge and challenging questions. I've just read through my responses to the previous questions, and there's a strong theme of wanting to encourage students to recognise complexity and nuance, but without losing sight of power relations shaping children's global lives and the construction of knowledges about them. The publication of research that provokes thought and discussion in this direction is of course welcome. And nuance and complexity are likely to be enhanced by diversifying both the authorship of papers and the reviewers. Simply having a wider and more diverse range of writing for students to engage with is valuable – the role of teaching is to encourage critical engagement with that writing. We do need to be mindful that no author or reviewer stands outside the power relations that frame academic knowledge production, and so there is clearly a role for editors in

questioning and encouraging authors from all backgrounds to think critically about their own research.

While nuance and complexity are important, it is vital that publications are accessible to postgraduate students who are only beginning to engage with the ideas being advanced and the theories that inform them. Authors could usefully be reminded of the breadth and diversity of the readership and the need for their work to be accessible and engaging. I also think there is scope to experiment with diverse formats for published work that might be more stimulating to students than always reading papers of similar length and structure – as well as perhaps enabling different knowledges and perspectives to be expressed. Beyond communicating with students, we perhaps need to rethink who the audience of an academic journal is – or whether there are other media through which we should communicate our research to practitioners and young people themselves.

Unlearning and reconfiguring are doubtless slow processes, but if they can be facilitated in any way it is through discussion among the sorts of diverse groups of postgraduate students that we find in our classrooms and focused on critical engagement with thought-provoking and challenging research. Journals have a responsibility to provide a rich source of research – to which all childhood studies scholars can aim to contribute – and through the design of our programmes we can provide environments for unscripted and unpredictable conversations.

AFUA TWUM DANSO-IMOH

Bearing in mind some of the points I made in relation to Q3 and my overall pessimism about the change that can feasibly occur, I need to start off by clarifying that until we fully understand decolonizing as a state of being and knowing which requires a change in mindset and power relations -something that needs to begin before individuals reach university – all we are doing is patching things here and there. Taking this as my departure point my response to this specific question is focused on what childhood studies journals, including this one, can do to patch things here and there, and possibly move us a bit closer to a better understanding of decolonizing and equip people to take the process further. So, bearing all these caveats in mind what can these journals do? Like Nicola and Anandini have both raised there is a need to consider the review process. The review system holds some biases that need to be ironed out as sometimes it feels that some articles submitted by scholars in the South are subjected to much harsher scrutiny than warranted. I, for one, am keen to push for an open review system where the reviewer's name is known to the author and vice versa. Maybe if people know, when they take on a review, that the author will know who they are then maybe a bit more compassion, empathy and bit more reflection on their biases may result. Related to this is a need to ensure more diversity in the reviewers approached – although simply having a reviewer from the Global South is not a panacea as they can also reflect these same biases and even subject to greater scrutiny an article, they suspect might be a colleague from their own context than that written by a foreigner. However surely having a wider range of reviewers to draw from must still surely be a good thing.

I also really like the point Marek makes about whether childhood studies journals and other presses want 'Global South scholars to succeed as Western scholars or if they let them to succeed as Global South scholars'. I think that is a very important question that needs to be addressed and probably requires a focused discussion about what constitutes scholarship. But the key is that different formats/different inputs should be encouraged. Some journals are already doing that, and it is certainly welcomed.

In terms of what childhood scholars can do, there is a need to acknowledge that there are already a lot of journals focusing on childhoods in other contexts and in other languages. Childhood scholars both in the North and South should also seek to publish more in such journals as by doing so their global reputation will also be enhanced.
In relation unlearning, for myself reading (both academic and non-academic) was critical for me and remains so. While some of the academic literature can be limiting (see earlier response to questions 1 and 2), the non-academic literature had a transformative impact on me – from about the age of 18 I was reading: fiction by the likes of Chinua Achebe, James Baldwin, Alice Walker, Buchi Emecheta, Ousmane Sembene, Amma Darko and Vikram Seth); and non-fiction by W.E.B du Bois, Malcom X, Marcus Garvey, Franz Fanon and Kwame Nkrumah – and a whole array of other authors. These provided me with the education I had not received at school or university and helped me to embark on the process of unlearning. Maybe this is an indication of the role non-academic sources, especially fiction, can play in the process of unlearning due to the ability to uncover untold stories and perspectives from these sources. In the case of fiction, while the characters are not real, these stories often give you a fantastic insight into historical or social dynamics at a moment in time. Examples: Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart (1958) or Vikram Seth's A Suitable Boy (1993). I plan to explore how I can draw on non-academic sources, including fiction in my own teaching practice from now on. It may certainly help my students engage with literature that can facilitate their understanding.

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