

Editorial: Childhoods in a Globalised World: Socialisation and Educational Dynamics in Transnational Contexts

In recent decades, the question of how migration and transnational processes shape children's lives has become central to childhood studies in Germany and beyond (Hunner-Kreisel & Bohne, 2016). This Special Issue foregrounds socialisation and educational dynamics as analytic axes for understanding contemporary childhoods that are shaped by cross-border ties, global media, international education markets, and migrations of people, aspirations, and practices. We take socialisation and identity formation as the primary concepts for examining how children's everyday lives are constituted through relationships, institutional practices, and broader power structures. Our approach highlights how global relations are both enacted and transformed locally, while producing complex, ambivalent, and often unequal dynamics. Motivated by the postcolonial turn in anthropology and the social sciences (Devisch & Nyamnjoh, 2011; Twum-Danso Imoh et al., 2022), qualitative scholars working from constructivist and critical perspectives have investigated processes of othering and how immigrant children experience racism in institutions of care and education. Childhood researchers have emphasised persistent discrimination and inequality within Western education systems, documenting how difference becomes enacted through social practices and interactions (Machold & Wienand, 2021). At the same time, focusing exclusively on imagined or constructed alterities can obscure the cross-border, relational nature of many contemporary socialisation processes (Weinreich, 2009). From the perspective of the sociology of education, social reproduction strategies practised by parents and the aspirations of children themselves increasingly travel beyond national borders (Kogler et al., 2024; Tu, 2022; Yeoh et al., 2005). Practices and life experiences that were once rooted in specific national settings are now transmitted transnationally. Being socialised in a particular context—sometimes discussed as enculturation (Mead, 1963)—can therefore shape children's lives far beyond the territory in which those practices originated.

We use the term 'global' to capture transnational connections and influences that shape local practices of socialisation and educational dynamics, often reflecting and reinforcing global power asymmetries. Crucially, we emphasise two-way dynamics: global relations materialise in local practices (globalisation), while local actors and movements also reproduce, transform, or

resist global structures. Following Giddens, globalisation can be understood as an intensification of worldwide social relations that links distant localities so that events ‘here’ are shaped by processes ‘there’ (Giddens, 1996). Appadurai’s ‘scapes’ framework (ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, ideoscapes) helps capture the multiple flows through which childhoods are reconfigured transnationally (Appadurai, 2005). Research attentive to mobility further underlines that migration both results from and reproduces uneven global structures, so that power asymmetries materialise in family and educational practices (Beck, 2000).

Childhoods are not only entangled with generational ordering but also with wider social orders and (global) relations of power and inequality. In migration contexts, children’s and families’ lifeworlds are structured by reciprocal dynamics of boundary-drawing and orders of belonging (Kämpfe, 2019; Mecheril, 2016). Postcolonial perspectives document the persistence of colonial power relations and reveal material, discursive, and epistemic exclusions (Fanon, 1952; Said, 1978). Critique has also been directed at knowledge production within childhood studies itself: Eurocentric and middle-class ideals of ‘the good childhood’ can mark non-Western lifeworlds as ‘foreign’ or deficient (Liebel, 2017). De Castro (2019) problematises the notion of the ‘global child’ for risking the reproduction of Western hegemonic universalisms and for relegating childhoods in the Global South to illustrative or deviant cases. To challenge epistemic imbalances (Fricker, 2007; Spivak, 1988), Abebe, Dar, and Lyså (2022) argue for a consistent decentring of childhood research and for taking Southern theories and indigenous knowledges seriously. They advocate relational-ontological perspectives that conceive of childhoods as embedded in diverse social, generational, and more-than-human relations. Inequality-informed childhood research that is committed to postcolonial and decolonial approaches is therefore called for—one that subjects childhoods in a globalised world to contextualised, critical analyses. Intersectional perspectives (Alanen, 2016; Purkayastha, 2012) further enable analyses of childhoods as sites where multiple axes of difference—generation, gender, class, ethnicity, religion—intersect, making visible their complex embedding in local and global relations of power.

With this Special Issue we seek to recentre socialisation as a core concept of childhood studies and to illuminate the manifold entanglements of socialisation and enculturation processes from a global perspective. Our aim is to stimulate renewed debate about diversity in socialisation trajectories and to ask how these trajectories matter for plural societies and education systems as well as in transnational contexts. The focus is on examining the complex dynamics of socialisation—in particular processes of enculturation and adaptation that children undergo in different national, ethnic, and diasporic settings—and on how these processes shape identity formation, belonging, and educational pathways. This inquiry does not only aim to trace how hegemonic ideas about ‘good childhoods’ in (Western) migration societies condition familial socialisation. It also asks how divergent concepts of childhood and

the local as well as transnational relationalities that underpin them contribute to processes of stabilisation, transformation, and the diversification and hybridity of identities (Bhabha, 1994).

The contributions to the Special Issue explore these themes through empirical investigations into socialisation and educational dynamics in the Global South as well as in migration and diaspora contexts of the Global North, demonstrating their theoretical and empirical potential for understanding childhoods in a globalised world. They draw on interdisciplinary perspectives from sociology, anthropology, and educational research to elucidate the multifaceted nature of socialisation across different contemporary societies—both in the Global South (Ghana, India) and in migration and diaspora contexts in the Global North (Somali and Vietnamese diasporas). The authors use a wide range of theoretical frameworks, i.a. from the school choice literature, relational sociology, constructivist theories of childhood, and socialisation and parenting research. Together, the papers deepen our understanding of how children and parents navigate and make sense of identity formation amid changing social landscapes, and how other agents of socialisation—including educational institutions and migrant selforganisations—actively shape socialisation and educational processes. Methodologically, the studies employ a wide range of qualitative methods, from ethnographic interviews and drawingtelling with children to document analyses, offering multifaceted insights into the practices and narratives of socialisation. Scholars and educational practitioners will benefit from enhanced understandings of the interplay between diversity, (transnational) socialisation processes, and global power relations—insights that can inform public discourse and practical interventions aimed at fostering more inclusive educational and social environments.

Contributions to this issue

Samia Aden critically examines the narrowing of family studies debates to Western, nuclear family models and asks how clan-based family networks among refugees organise “doing family” in transnational spaces. Clans—a family formation widespread across many parts of the world (e.g., Asia, Africa, and Arab regions)—consist of extended, kin-based networks whose members often relate through patrilineal descent (frequently with mythical ancestor ties) and that organise collective care, identity, and obligations through affective bonds. Theoretically situated in transnational family research and employing a praxeological perspective supplemented by “doing/undoing family” concepts under migration regimes, Aden analyses 81 semistructured and biographical interviews with refugees of Somali origin in Germany to show that clan relations operate not as static units but as situationally produced, flexible networks. Family is therefore lived through collective care arrangements, mobility practices (e.g., hosting relatives, mutual aid during

crises), and transnational obligations and solidarities. These practices affect children's care, protection, and educational access. Institutional categories (e.g., family reunification, asylum law) also shape family dynamics. Experiences of clan-based discrimination and prolonged separations during forced migration generate ambivalences and intergenerational transformations within relational networks. Aden calls for family policy and social work practices that are open to transnational, clan-based arrangements and for critical scrutiny of Eurocentric norms—while also urging more empirical research on the effects of such networks for child socialisation and institutional cooperation.

Mary Setrana, Justice Richard Owusu Kyei, and Elizabeth Koomson-Yalley position their study within the expanding field of transnational education, migration studies, and the sociology of childhood. The study engages with the commodification of education and globalisation of schooling, focusing on how international (particularly British-curriculum) primary schools in Ghana respond to and shape the educational aspirations of local affluent families and Ghanaian emigrant parents. The authors ask what motivates parents who emigrated but left their children in Ghana to enrol their children in international schools, and looking at a different group highly engaged in international schooling, how affluent parents in Ghana seek an international and cosmopolitan educational experience for their children. Furthermore, the authors examine the perspective of international schools in catering to the aspirations of emigrant and affluent parents, embedding the analysis in wider global trends in education. The study by *Setrana et al.* makes a contribution to global childhood studies by empirically illuminating how transnational educational practices facilitate new forms of socialisation for children in the Global South. It demonstrates that parental aspirations for schooling in international contexts extend beyond future economic success to encompass the construction of cosmopolitan identities, access to diverse peer groups, and the cultivation of cultural capital. The commodification of education in this context produces opportunities for children to engage in transnational social fields, thereby shaping their self-perceptions, aspirations, and social networks. The study foregrounds the active role of international schools in enabling and structuring these transnational socialisation processes, highlighting their complex relationship with both local social stratification and global education markets.

Based on the problem of unequal educational opportunities in India, *Doris Bühler-Niederberger, Ravinder Barn, Ravneet Kaur, and Leon Dittmann* ask in their article how schools, as institutions of socialisation, deal with the challenges of high heterogeneity among students and what relational mechanisms come into play in this process. Theoretically, the authors use a macro-sociological, relational (transactional) approach based on Emirbayer, which analyses social practice not as a property of given entities, but as relational action. The analysis is based on field research data from four Indian schools (interviews with teachers and students, participant observation and “drawing-telling” with children). The case selection covers different social profiles

(caste, class, urban/rural). The results show that school administrators consciously rely on “relational strategies” to create an emotionally formed sense of community (“we”)—for example, through shared rituals, shared break activities, or participatory school practices. Children are not only recipients but also active co-producers of the relational fabric. At the same time, despite such efforts, schools remain deeply unequal: access to participation, visibility in the curriculum, and the effectiveness of relational practices vary greatly along social class and power lines. This article expands school research in the Global South by highlighting how affect and relationship programmes shape socialisation and at the same time perpetuate social reproduction (e.g., through caste or class differences). For educational practice, this means that inclusion must be thought of in relational and context-sensitive terms—not solely as a curricular problem.

In her article, *Jessica Schwitek* focuses on migrant self-organisations (MSOs) as hitherto little-noticed socialisation institutions and asks how these organisations shape intergenerational orders and the social positioning of young Vietnamese-Germans in the migration society. Theoretically, the study combines childhood sociology with migration research. The study systematically analyses the online and public relations work of ten Vietnamese MSOs (V-MSOs) in Germany in a document analysis, coding service profiles, forms of address, and narrative positioning. The three narratives identified—(1) cultural preservation, (2) social mobility, and (3) negotiation—emphasise that MSOs function both as spaces of cultural reproduction and as platforms for political and representational claims for young people; they thus have a direct impact on identity formation, educational aspirations, and feelings of belonging. In doing so, they not only address the dual positioning of young Vietnamese-Germans as subjects in the midst of the generational and migration-related social order and the complex intersectional challenges faced by young Vietnamese-Germans. All three narratives also reveal the importance that V-MSOs attach to childhood and youth as well as intergenerational issues—albeit with different emphases—underscoring their role as relevant social spaces for growing up within a migration society. Schwitek highlights MSOs as important socialisation actors that have been overlooked until now and calls for their role to be systematically taken into account in integration and education policy as well as in research—in particular by supplementing qualitative studies with the perspectives of young people themselves.

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