Childhood, Youth, and Identity: A Roundtable Conversation from the Global South

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This roundtable session initially took place as part of the international conference "Childhood, Youth, and Identity in South Asia," organized by the Department of History, Shiv Nadar University, Greater Noida, and the Centre for Publishing, Ambedkar University Delhi, India, on January 6–7, 2020.

Key words: *childhood; youth; global South; pedagogy; history*

Young people's ability to operate in-between (and traverse diverse spaces and times) makes *childhood* and *youth* best positioned analytical categories for examining our complex, shifting, mobile world and invites us to transform how we conduct research. This roundtable conversation highlights the diversity of current research on childhood and youth in, on, and from the global South. Yet, despite significant scholarly interventions in the conceptualization of individual agency, identity construction, and the postcolonial condition, debates in the fields of childhood and youth studies have continued to be largely anchored by epistemological frameworks and theoretical concepts foregrounded by scholars and institutions situated in the global North . Unfortunately, even as new research trajectories are being forged, several studies continue to frame young people in the global South as either victims or heroes, limiting their contributions to the empirical / field informant domain, rather than producers or sources of knowledge in and of themselves.[1] Against this backdrop, the growth of dedicated university departments and research funding for scholars, especially in Europe and the USA, reiterates and demonstrates the pressing need for a more inclusive dialogue among scholars spread across various political and cultural contexts, especially those working in, on, and among young people in the regions of the global South, which constitute major sites of research enquiry. In fact, the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated these disparities.

This gulf between theory, activism, and praxis on topics of common interest prompted a stronger self-reflexive conversation among several of us as early career scholars engaged in designing and teaching graduate courses on these topics across various institutional locations.[2] On the one hand, we wished to pry open certain dominant analytical lenses and call for greater interaction across the regions of the global South, and on the other hand, we also recognized the interplay of individual and institutional locations in promoting such a field against the backdrop of widening inequalities, assaults on various freedoms, the rise of populist governments, and the commodification and privatization of education. As scholars of the global South, we are already adept at reading beyond siloes. Not only do we have to be conversant with the scholarly literature pertaining to our own regional focus, but we are expected by the publishing enterprise to keep abreast of the developments and scholarship produced in the global North while often, vice versa is not the case. For instance, recent debates have led to a partial reevaluation of the field of history of childhood, and yet most young researchers working in, on, and from the global South find themselves having to engage with that same dominant scholarship of the global North in a bid to be academically recognizable and legitimate. The present piece, which unfolds as a conversation among scholars across disciplines and geographical locations, challenges these problematic processes of scholarly pursuit and is not merely an exercise in retrospection: It is simultaneously an attempt to make sense of how we engage with the transcultural academic community. We resist depicting an essentialized picture of the global South and think we could certainly do more to speak to one another across the regions. Our conversation here is an initial and important step in that direction. We hope this piece will provoke new collaborations and strengthen ways of understanding the centrality of childhood and youth perspectives in making sense of our past and present, for the lives and bodies of young people are shaped and transformed constantly by the way all of us think and live.

By tracing some of the career histories and influences on the conversing scholars, we offer a glimpse of the epistemological foundations of such multidisciplinary scholarship. In effect, it complicates a South-North separation because many of the participants have been influenced by a cluster of disciplines/institutions/research that transcends this distinction. It also brings to the fore some of the challenges that scholars from the global South must contend with, such as the imperative to write about the "ordinary," particularly given how disciplines like history from the South are sometimes committed to an "anticolonial project." Scholars writing about childhood and youth of the global South must consider national and regional histories but must also engage with and reflect on the legacies of their disciplines influenced by colonial pasts and national politics. We ask: Is it possible to write about "normative" childhoods from the South? Our exchanges spell out a question, otherwise a spectre in many other conversations, discussions, and reflections even about one's own research. They compel one to question the worth of such scholarship apart from its empirical contribution. This conversation is both an assertion and a question about why scholarship of childhood and youth from the global South might at all be needed.

Divya: **As early-career academics trained either in parts of the global South or abroad, what motivated you to pursue childhood/youth studies? What are your thoughts on your positionality as you traverse this field?**

Anandini: My introduction to postcolonial literature and critical feminist thought during my BA in literature in India and later as a graduate student of sociology and anthropology in Australia inspired me to engage with questions about culture, power, and inequality concerning childhood. Afterwards, I engaged with conceptual challenges of the cultural relativist approach implicit in the references about "diverse childhoods" (Prout & James, 1997, while making sense of Sharon Stephens' (1995 critique of this perspective and her suggestion, instead, of a need to explore the global processes that are transforming childhood itself. When I returned to India to work in the children's rights sector, I realized that a deeper engagement with multidisciplinary frameworks was required to understand the lives of marginalized children in the context of globalization. I felt the absence of interrogation of "childhood" in how this sector addressed issues impacting the young. Hence, I deliberately chose to pursue a PhD

in childhood studies from Rutgers University, USA, to make sense of the most marginalized populations and local, global, and transnational flows from a multidisciplinary perspective. However, my training was challenging as we grappled with varied disciplines such as literature, history, sociology, and psychology around childhood and youth issues. Yet, these intersectional engagements continue to inform my current location in a school of education studies.

Hia: I became familiar with childhood studies (CS) as an MPhil student in sociology in 2007. I was interested in research that would foreground children's experiences, but there was little in our disciplinary training to enable this perspective. My approach was informed by a catenation of transdisciplinary and transcultural switches. At Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, MPhil students were encouraged to work on secondary data. This allowed the overview of the different kinds of research and conversations on children and childhood. Some of these rarely interacted, which was exasperating, like the "new" CS and the Indian response to the UNCRC.

Listening to Anandini I can relate to the bewilderment that came from engaging with very diverse literature. And all the time one had to think about how to factor in the Indian context. Researching and teaching in departments that were not very childhoodcentric shaped my interests. During my PhD at the University of Freiburg, I found that concerns within German academia were unlike those generated by the "new" CS. The childcentric approach in Germany was inflected by political shifts like the *Kinderladen* movement of the 1960s as much as by developmental psychology and education (Baader, 2016). Researchers were less wary of talking about socialization. Moving in and out of these diverse fields helped me see these conversations historically and to also historicize discussions about childhood in the context of India. This and the contemplations that emerge from teaching "mainstream" sociology in an Indian university over the last few years inform my present approach.

Shivani: While childhood studies may not aptly describe the focus of my work, I engage with the imagination of an inclusive and transformative education that is responsive to the subjectivities, contexts, and needs of children. My undergraduate and graduate degrees are in psychology from the University of Delhi, where I was exposed to psychological and psychoanalytic literature (works of Erik Erikson, Erich Fromm, Donald Winnicott, Carol Gilligan, Nancy Chodrow, Sudhir Kakar, among others) that helped me to engage with issues concerning children and youth.

While pursuing my master's, I got an opportunity to interact with children and young adults in clinical settings. Engaging with them, I often felt that the symptoms witnessed or reported in these settings were not always manifestations of difficulties of the self but often of unequal and unjust societal structures (caste, class, gender, and others). I felt uncomfortable waiting for a breakdown to happen before I could begin listening. I became interested in exploring how their sense of self, agency, and interaction with the social, cultural, and political were mediated and negotiated. This negotiation occurs across multiple sites, of which formal educational spaces are crucial since they carry a transformative possibility. Hence, I chose to do my MPhil and PhD research in educational studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University, where my training was in cultural psychology and critical pedagogy. My approach to researching with children in education has been a critical, reflexive, sensitive, and dialogic exploration of contexts and experiences, guided by a critical theory perspective. I feel it is an approach that enables a sensitive hearing of others' voices through an active acknowledgment of positionality and power.

Sarah: I still think of myself mainly as a historian of childhood rather than someone at work in the field of childhood studies, largely as a result of my training. When I started my PhD in the UK, the history of childhood was a relatively small field there, and so my research was framed regionally—as a PhD in modern South African history. I came to the history of childhood out of a linked set of interests in histories of education, gender, and Christianity, which all pointed me to the same question: How was the notion of the child useful to churches and the state in

the making of racialized identities in the second half of the nineteenth century? More recently, while my current project is still focused on childhood and youth, I am beginning to think more broadly about age as a category of historical analysis. I am interested in the debates within childhood studies as they pertain to the historiographies in those areas. Questions of agency, for instance, resonate within childhood studies but also in African history.

Clovis: Even though I consider childhood studies a home discipline of sorts, I also have a foot in other disciplines: media studies, communication, and African studies. This *multi/cross-disciplinarity* (Cook, 2010) is very common for childhood and youth studies scholars, in part imposed by the realities of academic institutions and the job market. I very much agree with Anandini, who also came out of the same PhD program at Rutgers, that crossing disciplinary boundaries is essential to studying children's lives. While many academic fields and departments claim to be interdisciplinary, the realities are often different. The ability to be conversant with several disciplines and their specific methodological, epistemological, or theoretical approaches makes our practices exciting and very well suited to contemporary problems' multidimensionalities and multilayered nature. However, it does come with significant challenges when it comes to being recognized by longer established fields with strong affiliations with certain methods, such as anthropology or history. I have found fields that also emerge out of multi- or cross-disciplinary practices such as media, gender, urban, or area studies, for instance, to be great allies of childhood and youth studies as they also seem to embrace the kind of critical openness required by scholarship that draws on disciplinary traditions but is not bound by them (Kraidy, 2018)

Divya: Conceptual categories such as transnational/transregional/translocal, to name a few, have gained currency. Yet, we are also witnessing the emergence of right-wing populism on the ground based on narrow, parochial ideas of nations and nationalisms. How can scholars working on and in the global South, given political and institutional constraints, undertake comparative studies that some of these frameworks may require? Do you think such a spatial reimagining affects the debate on who can speak for whom and how much?

Clovis: This is a key issue of our times. In my own work, I have looked at how the global circulation of internet protocols such as IMSI numbers and IP addresses—these seemingly neutral protocols that govern the internet and which we know are highly political (DeNardis, 2009)—become key mechanisms through which state power become remade, often along increasingly authoritarian lines with key consequences of the dispensation of power and the regulation of citizenship (Bergère, 2020). Regarding knowledge production, I recently read Joseph Tonda's *L'Impérialisme Postcolonial: Critique de la Société des* Éblouissements (2015), which provides a good example for thinking about these issues. Tonda, an African scholar based at the Omar Bongo University in Libreville, offers a rare example of research based in the majority world doing "global" research, an issue raised in a prior roundtable discussion (Hanson et al., 2018). The chapter called "Éclairage" traces the author's intellectual trajectory in arriving at the concept of éblouissement—bedazzlement in English—to describe a specifically postcolonial mediation of power in the digital age. In doing so, he notes several key moments, conversations, film screenings, and exchanges that shaped his thinking, including the time he spent at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Nantes (as well as research in Congo). This is not in any way a question of being enlightened in the West but simply that the kind of work he does requires him to spend time in other African countries and in the West, since he studies media phenomena that often originate there. So, who can speak for whom? That question has regained urgency today and for good reasons. Issues of representation and the coloniality of knowledge production continue to shape how and where knowledge is produced, by whom, and how it circulates. At a minimum, those of us working for institutions based in the global North should leverage our access to resources to support the work of scholars based in the global South in ways that go beyond paying lip service to that idea. This is in part what we are currently doing at Northwestern University in Qatar, where we

are setting up an institute for advanced study specifically focused on the global South. Our goal is to provide a space that can support the work and voices of those living and working outside of the global North. The difficulty however is to do this without reproducing the kinds of essentialisms or claims to authenticity that we are trying to oppose. In other words, the goal cannot be a kind of purity but a plurality of voices and perspectives. In this regard, the work of Souleymane Bachir Diagne on a universalism of encounter (2017), which echoes similar arguments made by Mignolo and Walsh (2018) or Escobar (2020) in Latin America, is particularly informative: Who controls the networks through which knowledge on the global South is shared and studied.

Shivani: A work that has hugely inspired me is Renato Rosaldo's (1993) *Culture and Truth*, where he provides a powerful critique of detached, "objective" examination of cultures as being static and monolithic and offers chaos as an image for depicting the postcolonial situation, as in "nothing is sacred, permanent or sealed off." The text questions "comparative studies" where the Orient is made a benchmark "against which to measure Western European Progress" (p. 42). This concern assumes particular significance for me as a cultural psychology and critical pedagogy researcher, since cross-cultural comparisons have often strengthened the understanding of some cultures/communities as deficient, where the deficit is defined in comparison to a positivist truth (the norms established in the global North). However, any response to this conceptual framing is through an uncritical and methodologically uninformed search for the "indigenous" (a category more popular in psychology), which increases the danger of narrow-minded and parochial ideas gaining strength.

Anandini: I think it is important first to locate the context in which these theories of transnationalism/transregionalism gained relevance. In his classic work on ethnic minority cultures, Vernon Van Dyke (1974) argued that the basis of the formation of modern nation-states, inspired by Western political tradition, rests precisely on the erasure and neglect of minority cultures. Therefore, insular ideas about the nation are not new but far more complex.

In my work, I engage with questions about South Asian immigrant teenagers' identities and political geographies, at a time when a new racialized identity—of the South Asian, Arab, and Muslim—had emerged as a result of the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the US (Dar, 2018). What it meant to be South Asian, American, young, and working class was bound to be distinct for that generation because widespread Islamophobia and hate crimes were part of their daily geographies. In this context, I found theories of transnationalism offered what some globalization theories elided: that state interests continue to marginalize young people's voices and sideline their concerns. Metaphors of "transnational connectivity" (Grewal, 2005), and of "circulation" and "flows' (Tsing, 2000) help explain how young people draw upon cultures that are global, local, and multinational, all at once, in their responses to the constraints imposed on their lives by the state and find transnational spaces to articulate their concerns. However, despite new spatial reconfigurations, the young and minority cultures remain on the margins, or in alternate spaces, making Spivak's poignant question "Can the subaltern speak?" still relevant for childhood studies.

Hia: Most scholars unwittingly develop a comparative framework to straddle the worlds of their training and their research. The discussions of the 1990s within the "new" CS had recognizable locales yet appeared to imply a certain universalism, which was challenging for researchers like me at the time, who found their contexts at odds with the methodological requirements of CS. My doctoral research, which was on ideas of protected childhood among the Bengali middle class, was forged in this crucible. It then felt important to talk about children's lives inscribed within a regional rather than a national context. At that time I imagined Zinnecker's (2000) work on childhood as *Bildungsmoratorium*, emphasizing families and leisure careers, as mitigating the tensions between the theoretical and empirical. The conceptualization and reception of that work was fraught with these scalar considerations (H.

Sen, 2013). I wasn't sure how or how much to speak about regional histories. I engage with spatial frameworks differently today, especially since I started engaging with more scholarship on transcultural connections and am more at ease seeing regions as *also* projects today. In a recent work I examine performances of childhood in the national children's theatre scene. While categories of the national, regional, and transcultural are important, it was liberating not to expound on spatial questions or those of decolonization that I once saw as compulsion.

Spatial frameworks also inflect writing practices. The work of sociologists trained in the global South often tends to be read as ethnographies, regardless of the researchers' intentions. The spatial apportioning of who can say what is produced by larger academic practices. Fewer scholars writing from the Indian context would be likely to engage in theory making unencumbered by regional specificity. Historians of the global South are perhaps better positioned to address spatial tensions in their work than anthropologists and sociologists. Fields like Dalit studies however are exceptions which, while engaging with continental debates on experience and knowledge (see Guru & Sarukkai, 2012), self-consciously seek epistemological alternatives.

Sarah: The scholarship on children's mobility in Africa demonstrates how research focused narrowly on the nation-state produces only a partial account of children's lived realities. This is true for the present but as much for the past. Scholars of the continent have been particularly effective in working through the relationship between the emergence of modern childhood globally and the changing definitions and experiences of childhood and youth in Africa, especially during the colonial and postcolonial eras. In her work on girlhood in colonial Lagos, Abosede George traces how the idea of the African child was mobilized in justifying philanthropic and colonial interventions in poor Lagos families in the early twentieth century. Along with George, other scholars such as Corrie Decker (2018), Saheed Aderinto (2015), and Sacha Hepburn (2019) show how definitions of childhood were negotiated and interventions aimed at African children formed in the interactions between colonial officials, colonial elites, and, to a lesser degree, children and young people themselves.

However, there is a tension in the production of knowledge about childhood and youth in Africa: Frankly, most historians of Africa interested in childhood and youth are based in Northern universities. Without denying the obvious inequalities between the global North and South, I would also point to the messy circulations of people and knowledge between, for instance, African and European institutions—as Clovis describes. The question of who gets to speak for or on behalf of children is particularly interesting in this context—and rendered even more so when state and aid agencies so frequently use images of African children to raise funds for various projects. For historians, children's voices—African or otherwise—are often muted in the archive, or heavily mediated by adults. Instead of uncritically seeking out and centering those voices, sociologist Allison James (2007) reminds us that no voice emerges pure or authentic from the archive (or elsewhere). Drawing on Kristine Alexander's (2012) work, my point is, then, that no historian is especially well positioned to act as a medium for children's voices from the past. Instead, we must remain attentive to the uses of children's voices—in the past and in the present—and to the specifics of the subject voices themselves.

Divya: In a similar roundtable discussion, the childhood studies scholar Sarada Balagopalan remarked that postcolonial theorists provide a way to break away from the "epistemological-empirical binary" of children's lives in the Western and non-Western worlds (Hanson et al., 2018). How relevant has the work of postcolonial theorists been to your case studies? Does it pose new methodological challenges?

Anandini: I would like to pick up where Hia left off in the previous question. Indeed, larger academic practices regulate how knowledge is produced and consumed. For instance: Does my work, where I theorize the notion of political agency of young South Asians in the US, get read as a new theory on agency or as an empirical piece? Several disciplines, such as cultural anthropology, gender studies, development studies, and cultural studies, have

provided alternative epistemologies for knowledge production and offered new methodological insights.

Given my area of research, of course, I have engaged with postcolonial theorists. For instance, Homi Bhabha's conceptualization of third space and hybridity were important to make sense of immigrant children's subjectivities in the diaspora. However, while it is useful to think of hybridity as enabling other positions to emerge (Bhabha, 1994), I found it problematic that hybridity, for Bhabha, can also displace the histories that constitute the very being of subaltern subjects. What may be useful then in rethinking postcolonial theory for CS is an applied epistemology (Horsthemke, 2020), as postcolonial theories do not offer tangible ways or methods to historicize. In addition, scholars such as Gopal Guru (2021) argue that postcolonial theory does not fully capture the concerns of the subaltern Dalit subject. Hence, to me no single theoretical tradition, including postcolonial theory, is sufficient for examining the lives of children in Western and non-Western worlds. The field needs to turn to decolonial, Dalit, critical race, and Indigenous theories as well.

Sarah: My current work draws on a 1986 essay by the South African writer and literary scholar Njabulo Ndebele, "The Rediscovery of the Ordinary." Ndebele expresses irritation with South African writers for responding to apartheid with what he terms "spectacular" literature, which reduces the country's complexities to caricature. Individuals become ciphers for groups; every interaction between people becomes an allegory for the apartheid system. Instead, he argues, writers should attempt the far more difficult task of depicting the ordinary and banal life experience under apartheid. One of the overlaps in conceptual debates within both African and childhood history recently has been a readdressing of the question of agency. As Fred Cooper (1994) and Lynn Thomas (2016) have suggested, defining agency only as resistance risks casting those who did not resist, for whatever reason, as collaborators, but also risks ignoring anyone who did not act in ways easily recognized as resistance.

I have found Ndebele's (1986) interest in the ordinary instructive in thinking my way out of what historian Mona Gleason (2016) has described as the agency trap. For historians of Africa, so much of the work of excavating the continent's history has been devoted to a broader anticolonial project, and that has—necessarily—tended to emphasize protest, social movements, and other forms of action. Perhaps unsurprisingly, much of the literature on youth is on politically engaged young African men in their teens and twenties. What happens when we broaden the category of youth to include girls and younger children, as well as those who do not fit neatly into the racial category of African? And what happens when we do not seek out agency in the archive—and focus on the "normal" and, indeed, on the *normative*?

Shivani: My research (Nag, 2018) on educational experience and participation of children and young adults has been informed by sociocultural theories of learning that focus on concepts of mediation, activity systems, situated and distributed cognition, and communities of practice (Cole & Engeström, 1993; Engeström, 1987; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; and others) and critical pedagogy that appreciates the significance of counternarratives. Works of scholars like Sudhir Kakar (1978, 1990) and Ashish Nandy (1983) have also been extremely significant in providing insights about the cultural context of the development of self and psyche. Kakar's engagement with life histories, narratives, analysis of popular culture (cinema, folk tales, mythologies, rituals, etc.), and recollections from his own childhood suggest possibilities for an interesting and innovative methodology. More recently, the scholarship of psychologists like Sunil Bhatia (2017), which challenges Eurocentric understandings of identities and subjectivities of youth, could also offer useful conceptual and methodological insights.

Clovis: I thoroughly enjoyed Sarada Balagopalan's argument that postcolonial theories move us away from notions such as multiple childhoods that reinforce binary understandings of childhoods as either Western and epistemological or non-Western and empirical (Hanson et al., 2018, p. 281). In my work, I draw on the work of Mbembe (2001, 2016), Chatterjee (2004, 2011), Appadurai (1993), Diouf (2003), Bidima (2002), Tonda (2015),

or Diagne (2011, 2017) to situate young Guineans' current engagements with digital technologies within a longer political history shaped by colonial occupation. This provides the context for the current states' engagement with what I term the *digital addressing infrastructure* and the attraction of internet protocols for tax collection (Bergère, 2020). More generally, what I find provocative about a postcolonial lens is the centrality it accords to the moment of encounter, understood as a profound reconfiguration, a "transmutation" (Tonda, 2015, p. 107) traversed by specific relations of power. Suppose "youth" is built into the mythology of social media in unique ways in Guinea. In that case, youth as a social category is also necessarily at the heart of these transformations and the relations of power and violence that traverse them.

I am currently working on a piece that highlights specifically the Western genealogy of dance (characterized by a separation of the public and the stage and of the choreographer and the dancer) that is often embedded—and therefore naturalized—in the interpretation of protest organizing as "choreography" (see Gerbaudo, 2012). What would a different historiography (Mbembe, 2016; Santos, 2007) of dance based on West African dance traditions such as *doundoumba* offer us conceptually when thinking about youth activism? Postcolonial theories are diverse and follow several traditions that loosely map onto continental realities, including African, South Asian, and Latin American lenses, each emphasizing specific dimensions of colonial power. Working across these terrains allows for interesting South-to-South conversations to emerge, which I find conceptually stimulating.

Hia: For my earlier work on the imaginaries and experiences of childhood in Bengal, works of scholars like Partha Chatterjee (2004, 2011) helped me calibrate my view of the field. The importance of colonialism in shaping reforms, producing and inflecting new anxieties and debates about education, family, pedagogy, and producing various disjunctures is integral to understanding the contemporary lives of children. Like Sarah, the insights of the subaltern studies scholars were relevant to me. But the nature of approach and methodological challenges of engaging with postcolonial theories varies across disciplines. Satadru Sen's (2007) work on mixed-race children, for example, is not in direct conversation with a self-conscious CS approach, but it deeply engages with the works of other South Asianist scholars. A certain reflexivity is built into the fabric of the historical enterprise where researchers cannot but take stock of the context which constitutes their subject and produces the archives. The importance of colonial history is far more tacit in sociological research on childhood. The degree of engagement also varies when addressing an audience/ readership unfamiliar with South Asia (see H. Sen, 2016). I worry about the other possibility: young researchers feeling compelled to engage with something because they are from a certain context. Also, at the end of the day postcolonial theorists belong to a "conversational community" (Alanen, 2018), much like CS scholars. And researchers of childhood from the global South must know how to manoeuvre their way through different communities and their language without detracting from their main analytical concerns.

Concluding remarks

We began this conversation by emphasizing the invitation to think across and through the boundaries of disciplines, institutions, geographies, or knowledge productions that are contained in young people's abilities to traverse, to operate in-between, liminally. Our responses illustrate, in small ways, the multiplicity of disciplinary sites, archival and research practices, and institutional locations from which new kinds of traversing can be envisioned, as well as why this is a matter of necessity today. Collectively, our responses insist on the devastating effects for knowledge production of the sustained inequalities in relation to research funding and institutional resources between the global North and global South, as well as the racial, gendered, and colonial histories these continue to reflect. As a conversation about research in the global South, it may seem surprising that it includes the voices of scholars working at institutions with home bases in the global North. This clearly reflects the kinds of continued research inequalities we seek to call attention to. Yet, if we are to take seriously children and young people's invitation to

operate across boundaries, we need to find a way to both denounce the histories, canons, and institutions of which our practices are necessarily a part and resist a kind of response that would essentialize or authenticate the global South, and global South research. If there is one lesson to learn from a sustained engagement with young lives in the global South, it is that—and here we echo Newell and Pype (2021) and embrace Nyamjoh's (1996) concept of convivial scholarship—we are all *amakwekwere* (outsiders, recent arrivals). Bidima's (2002) notion of philosophical *traversée* or traversing is also a productive way to guide how we both tell stories and share meaning.

This roundtable dialogue is not exhaustive in any way. Although the concerns raised by the scholars are diverse, this discussion shows why self-reflection from the scholarship on childhood and youth from and of the global South is imperative. As scholars speaking from varying positions, with disciplinary training and scholarship that cut across geographical locations, this piece encourages an interrogation of a range of theoretical and epistemic perspectives—such as the decolonial, postcolonial, and subaltern—that remain largely absent even in emerging scholarship on childhood studies in the global South. It has also brought forth the need for scholars within the global South to extend solidarities in conducting research and shaping useful theoretical frameworks together.

Between wanting to make one's field comprehensible for those unfamiliar with Southern realities and also halting at the reiteration of familiar epistemologies, researchers working on Southern childhoods end up treading a fraught space, constantly looking at other conversations, often in other fields, to chisel out their way amid the crises of thought, representation, and knowledge itself.

Acknowledgments

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1   An exception is the edited collection by Zazie Bowen and Jessica Hinchy (2015) on children and knowledge in India.

2   To address some of these concerns, a collaborative international conference on childhood, youth, and identity in South Asia was co-organized by the Department of History, Shiv Nadar University, Greater Noida, and Ambedkar University Delhi in January 2020.

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