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Children's Needs and Teachers' Gender: Rethinking Male Participation in ECEC Through the Voices of Scottish, Hong Kongese, and Mainland Chinese Young Children. Presentation on the 26th EECERA annual conference, 1.9.2016, Dublin/Ireland.

Abstract

This presentation will explore how children perceive and react to male and female teachers in terms of their daily activities and needs in ECEC classrooms. It wishes to inform about to what extent and in what ways teachers' gender might be relevant to children's gender development and/or wider wellbeing.

Research on gender imbalance in ECEC workforce is criticised of lacking cross-cultural analysis, observational data resources (Rohrmann and Brody, 2015), and children's perspectives. This research will be able to address those gaps. It adopts Butler (2004)'s conceptualisations of 'doing' and 'undoing' gender, to unfold how children's gender subjectivity is socially constructed through their active interactions with the social world.

Observations of daily life in 17 ECEC settings in Scotland, Hong Kong and Mainland China were conducted, with a focus on the interactions between children and their teachers. A further conversational talk based on three pictures that present culturally gendered and non-gendered teacher behaviours was done with each individual child after the observation.

Informed consent was gained from the principal teachers, class teachers, and children's parents. Children were encouraged to give their oral consent before the conversation, and were free to quit at any time.

The findings suggest that gender is among a wide range of social aspects that children 'do' and 'undo' to gain pleasure/fun in their interactions with male and female teachers. Those findings therefore suggest that teachers, being both male and female, should be trained about gender-reflective practices in order to cater for children's variable needs.

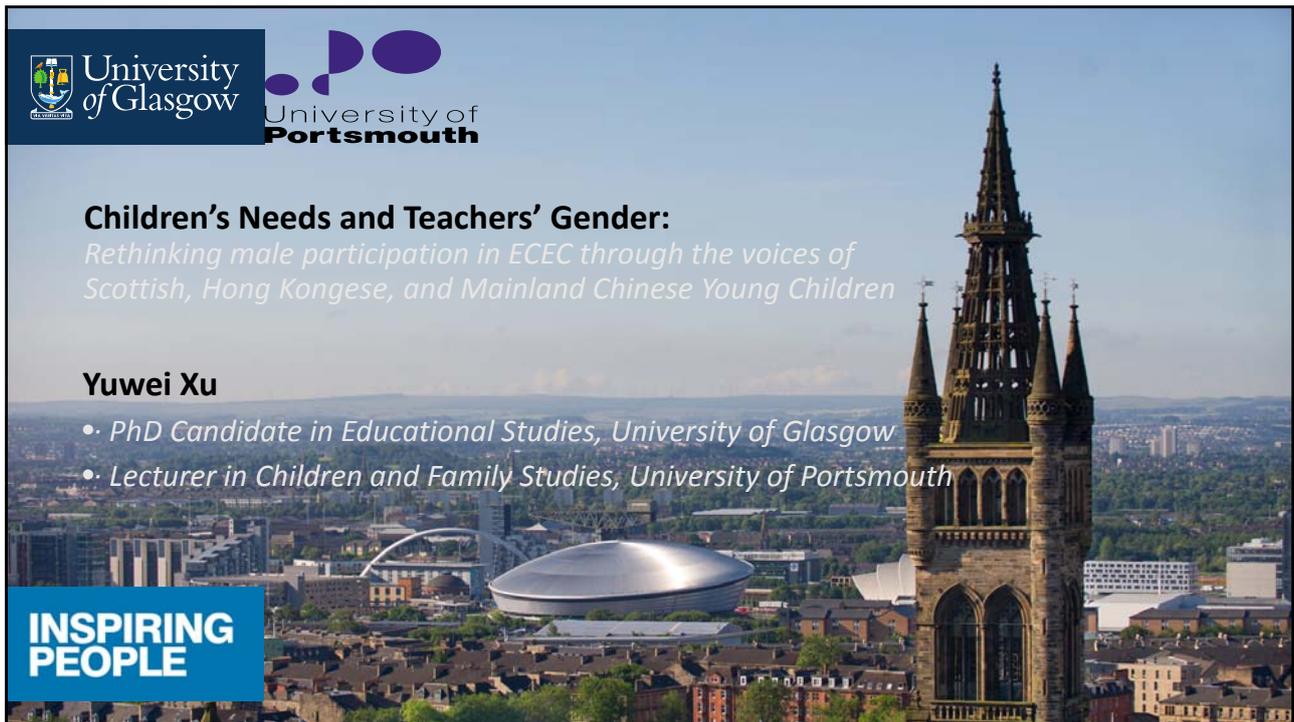
Keywords

gender, children voices, male participation, cross-cultural research, comparative education

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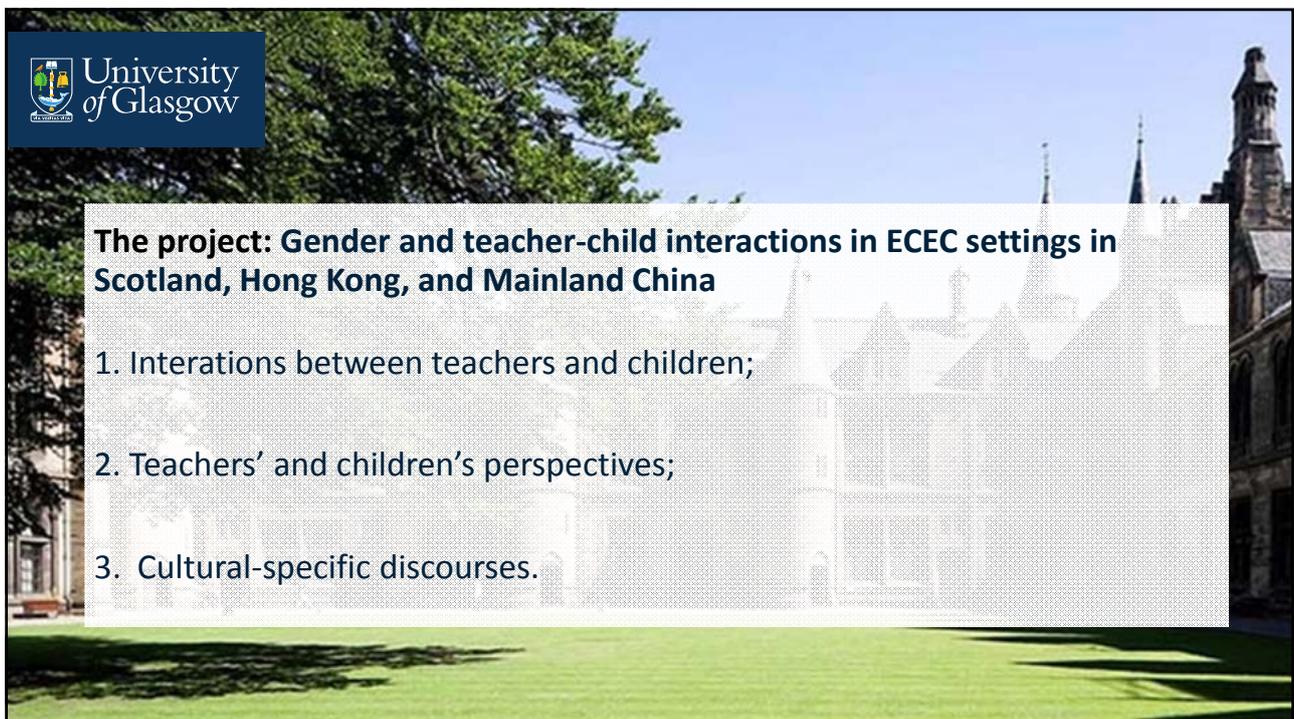


Children's Needs and Teachers' Gender:
Rethinking male participation in ECEC through the voices of Scottish, Hong Kongese, and Mainland Chinese Young Children

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The project: Gender and teacher-child interactions in ECEC settings in Scotland, Hong Kong, and Mainland China

1. Interactions between teachers and children;
2. Teachers' and children's perspectives;
3. Cultural-specific discourses.

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Theoretical framework: Poststructural and 'postdevelopmental'

1. Gender fluidity and complexities;
2. Gender performativity and doing gender;
3. The power of gender discourses;
4. Gender as embodied social experiences.



ECEC systems in Scotland, Hong Kong, and Mainland China

Country/Region	Scotland	Hong Kong	Mainland China
Main types of ECEC providers (No. & Percentage)	Early Years Centres; Private Nurseries; Primary School Nursery Classes;	Non-profitable Local Kindergartens (874; 89.4%); Profitable Non-local Kindergarten (104; 10.6%)	Public Kindergartens; Private Kindergartens
Class categories	Infant room: 18 months; Toddler room: 2-3 yrs; Preschool room: 3-5 yrs;	K1 (Nursery): 3-4 yrs; K2 (Lower Class): 4-5 yrs; K3 (Upper Class): 5-6 yrs;	Nursery Class: 2-3 yrs; Lower-level Class: 3-4 yrs; Middle-level Class: 4-5 yrs; Upper-level Class: 5-6 yrs;
Class size and teacher-child ratio	Infant: 1:3; Toddler: 1:5; Preschool: 1:8; Usually the numbers of children vary from day to day. The teachers' numbers may also change accordingly, from 2 to 5 or more.	Official requirement - 1:15; Usually in the five schools that I visited, there are about 20 - 30 pupils with 2 teachers.	Official requirement: 30 - 40 children depending on class level (public kindergartens); There are usually three members of staff in one class - 2 teaching teachers and 1 caring teachers.
Tuitions	Up to 600 free hours for above 3s; 2-year-olds may enjoy free hours subject to family circumstances; Parents can purchase extra hours from private nurseries or some centres.	The Government 'Voucher Scheme'; High fees for international schools; 15 years free education from 2017/18;	Vary a lot from public to private kindergartens; Free kindergarten education in some highly developed cities/provinces;
Teacher qualifications	HNC	Childcare Diploma or above	Secondary Education or above
Language(s) of instruction	English	Cantonese as instruction language; All children are required to learn English and Chinese Mandarin as second languages.	Mandarin as instruction language; English is learned as a second language, but it may vary from school to school.
Curriculum	Curriculum for Excellence; Getting it Right for Every Child.	Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum	Guideline to the Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6; Teaching Guideline for Preschool Education.

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Sampe 1: Edinburgh

Setting		ED1	ED2	ED3	ED4	ED5	ED6	ED7
Type		Early Years Centres	Early Years Centres	Private Nursery	Early Years Centres	Early Years Centres	Private Nursery	Primary School Nursery Class
Location		South	East	South	East	North	South	North
Class level		Preschool	Preschool	Preschool	Toddler	Toddler	Preschool	Preschool
Children	No.	18	Around 20	Around 25	14 /17	5-10	Around 20	20-30
	Age	3-5 yrs, more 3s	2.5-5 yrs, more 3s	3-5 yrs, more 5s	1.5-3 yrs, more 2s	1.5-3 yrs, more 2s	3-5 yrs	3-5 yrs
	Boy/Girl	9/9	10/10	Roughly half/half	9/5; 11/6	Roughly half/half	Roughly haf/half	Roughly haf/half
	Ethnicity	Scottish	Scottish	Mixed cultures	Mostly Scottish	Mixed cultures	Mixed cultures	Mixed cultures
Position	MT	Early Years Officer		Nursery Practitioner	Early Years Practitioner	Early Years Officer	Deputy Manager	Early Years Practitioner
	WT					Nursery Practitioner	Practitioner	Early Years Officer
Age	MT	46	58	33	29	48	38	45
	WT	Nearly 50	45	28	28	28	25	46
Working Experience	MT	9 yrs	12 yrs	1.5 yrs	3 yrs	13 yrs	10 yrs	4 yrs
	WT	25 yrs	27 yrs	1.5 yrs	7 yrs	5 yrs	1 yr	23 yrs
Qualifications	MT	Higher National Certificate (HNC) Early Education and Childcare		BSc Physics	BA; HNC	HNC	SVQ Level 3	HNC
	WT			SVQ Level 3	BSc; HNC	BA; HNC	HNC	HNC
Ethnicity	MT	British	White British	British	White Scottish	White British	White Scottish	White Scottish
	WT	Scottish	Scottish	White Scottish	Scottish	Scottish	White Scottish	White Scottish

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Sample 2: Hong Kong

Setting		HK1	HK2	HK3	HK4	HK5
Type		Local	Local	Local	Local	Local
Location		Central	Northwest	East	West	North
Class level		K2	K3	K2	K2	K3
Children	No.	20	25/10	23	22	28
	Age	4-5 yrs	5-6 yrs	4-5 yrs	4-5 yrs	5-6 yrs
	Boy/Girl	10/10	15/10; 4/6	15/8	9/13	13/15
	Ethnicity	Almost all children are Chinese with occasionally one or two non-Chinese in the class.				
Position	All male and female participants are class teachers.					
Age	MT	Early 20s	21	Early 30s	26	24
	WT	Early 30s	44	30+	30+	33
Working Experience	MT	2 yrs	< 1 yr	8 yrs	4 yrs	2 yrs
	WT	20 yrs	18 yrs	18 yrs	13 yrs	10-11 yrs
Qualifications	MT	HD	HD; Bachelor (ongoing)	HD; BEd (Special Education)	HD; BEd; MEd (ongoing)	HD; BEd; MEd (ongoing)
	WT	N/A	BEd	BEd	BEd	HD; BEd (ongoing)
Ethnicity	All teachers are local who grew up, attended schools, and work in Hong Kong.					



Sample 3: Tianjin, Mainland China

Setting		TJ1	TJ2	TJ3	TJ4	TJ5
Type		Public	Public	Private	Public	Public
Location		North Sub-urban	North City	Southwest City	North Sub-urban	Southwest City
Class level		Upper-level		Middle-level	Upper-level	Lower-level
Children	No.	28	33	15	27	35
	Age	5-6 yrs		4-5 yrs	5-6 yrs	3-4 yrs
	Boy/Girl	11/17	18/15	8/7	17/10	17/18
	Ethnicity	All Chinese (including minority Chinese).				
Position	MT	Assistant Teacher		Caring Teacher	Leading Teacher	Assistant Teacher
	WT	Leading Teacher		Leading Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Leading Teacher
Age	MT	25	23	20	27	20
	WT	Early 30s	47	27	26	Late 40s
Working Experience	MT	3 yrs	3 yrs	2-3 yrs	2 yrs	3 yrs
	WT	4 yrs	26 yrs	4 yrs	1.5 yrs	28 yrs
Qualifications	MT	BEd		HD	Bachelor in Management	HD
	WT	Master in Sports	BEd			
Ethnicity	All are Chinese.					

Children's experiences with gender

- Transition to the nurseries/kindergartens
- Building up relationships
 - *Power relations*
- Parenting

Children actively 'playing' with gender

- Physicality/bodies
 - Sexualities and negotiations/challenges;
 - Rough and tumble play;
- Gender 'rules'

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Thank you!

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