

[The Value of Children in Asia: Economy, Family and Public Policies](#)

Announcement published by Valerie Yeo on Friday, March 9, 2018

Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

April 30, 2018

Location:

Singapore

Subject Fields:

Anthropology, Childhood and Education, Humanities, Sociology

CALL FOR PAPERS | SUBMISSION DEADLINE: 30 APRIL 2018

Conference on "The Value of Children in Asia: Economy, Family and Public Policies" 8-9 November 2018, Singapore

We invite papers for the conference The Value of Children in Asia to understand how children are valued amidst dramatic social transformations in Asian societies. Answers to this understudied question could provide important insights in addressing a set of acute demographic and social challenges in this region, such as extended periods of below-replacement fertility, population aging and rising social inequalities.

In western societies, research finds that industrialization and urbanization since the 19th century have drastically transformed the social context where children grow up and the social meanings of childhood. First, the rise of wage labour and bureaucratic employment has weakened the economic basis of the family as a productive unit, hence children's diminishing role as economic contributors. Second, the demographic transition characterized by decreased fertility and mortality rates, combined with the separation of the family as a private sphere absent the ruthless market logic, gives rise to the construction of a childhood which is valued by its paradoxical nature of being "economically useless" but "emotionally priceless" (Zelizer 1994). Further, with the modern state assuming a prominent role in distributing resources and regulating social life, there emerges a discourse of the development of children's capabilities and human capital as a public good, thus bringing children's welfare into public debate.

Fast forward to the 21st century, children in Asia live in a time where decades of fast economic development, demographic transition, shifting public policies and historical legacies of family norms and practices jointly shape heterogeneous and complicated contexts for their development. First, the low fertility trap. Many Asian societies, except for parts of South Asia, are concerned about long-term implications of persistent below-replacement fertility rates, induced by a web of factors such as economic restructuring, family-work conflict, women's "flight from marriage" and fertility policies. What the low fertility context means for children and the values attached to them remains elusive. Second, the "Asian family" in transition. At the risk of overgeneralization, in many Asian societies, the family (nuclear, extended or joint) is still regarded, and oftentimes is targeted by state policies, as the

front-line support and social security system for individual members. However, due to rapid urbanization, women's increasing educational attainment and employment in the formal economy, as well as mass-scale migration (internal or transnational), the family itself is undergoing considerable change. There is an urgent need to unpack how these family changes affect parents' values and practices in childbearing and childrearing. Third, children in the public eye. Facing pressing demographic and social challenges described above, national governments in Asia now find a state position on delivering welfare provision inevitable. Still in their evolutionary processes and with considerable inter-regional heterogeneity, how public policies are informed by and in turn shape particular discourses on children's value, as well as their impact on children's wellbeing deserve scholarly scrutiny.

In this conference, we invite high-quality empirical and theoretical discussions from multiple disciplines to address the following themes:

- Definition and conceptualization of the value of children
- Economic/social development and social transformation of children's value
- The value of children and parenthood
- The impact of public policies on the value of children and parenting practices
- Consequences of shifting values of children
- Conceptual and methodological issues: conceptual frameworks/paradigms as well as methodological approaches

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Submissions should include a title, an abstract of no more than 300 words and a brief biography including name, institutional affiliation, and email contact. Please note that only previously unpublished papers or those not already committed elsewhere can be accepted. The organizers plan to publish a special issue with selected papers presented in this conference. By participating in the conference you agree to participate in the future publication plans (special issue/journal) of the organizers. The organizers will provide hotel accommodation for three nights and a contribution towards airfare for accepted paper participants (one author per paper).

Please submit your [proposal](#) to valerie.yeo@nus.edu.sg by **30 April 2018**. Notifications of acceptance will be sent out by **15 May 2018**.

CONFERENCE CONVENORS

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