



Understanding young children's perspectives on and experiences of COVID-19 in China and England

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➤ **Background: COVID-19 Lockdown**

- Worldwide lockdowns during the COVID-19 outbreak
- **China:** National lockdown in Feb. 2020 (Chinese Spring Festival and winter holidays); students returned to schools in mid/late March 2020 (second lockdown in limited regions);
- **England:** National lockdown in March 2020, schools reopen in June beginning with nursery classes, reception (4-5), Year 1 (5-6), and Year 6 (10-11); second lockdown in January 2021 for most pupils, early years settings remained open; reopen in March 2021.
- **This study:** Data collected in between *April and June 2021*.

➤ Background: Children during the lockdowns

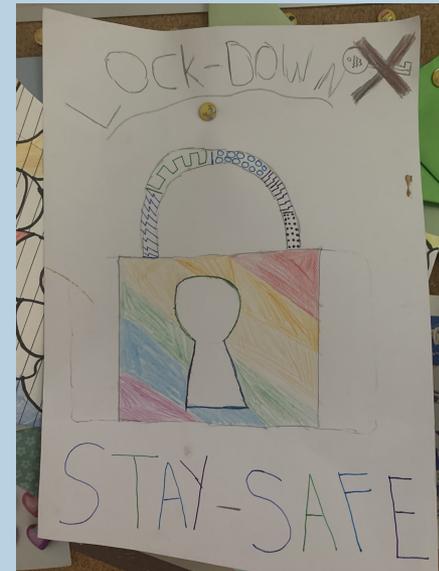
- Negative effects on children's physical and mental health are well documented and much discussed (Duan et al., 2020);
- Little is known about how children **actively** integrate their everyday thinking within the context of coronavirus outbreak;
- Few studies focus on how young children cope with the confinement experiences from their own perspectives (Bertram & Pascal, 2021).





➤ Theoretical framework

- **Child agency** (Xu, 2020): children are active and resilient participants in the context of the pandemic;
- **Discourses** (Foucault, 1972 & 1980) in which child agency is embedded and shaped by different political and sociocultural contexts in China and England



➤ **Research aims and questions**

- To investigate young children's perspectives on and experiences of COVID-19:
 - ❖ What dominant discourses about COVID-19 were identified from children's narratives and drawings?
 - ❖ How do children engage, interact, and represent those discourses?

➤ **Parents as co-researchers (Hackett, 2017)**

- Children's drawings and/or photo-taking facilitated by parents;
- Follow-up conversations between children and parents about the drawings/photos;
- Interviews with parents

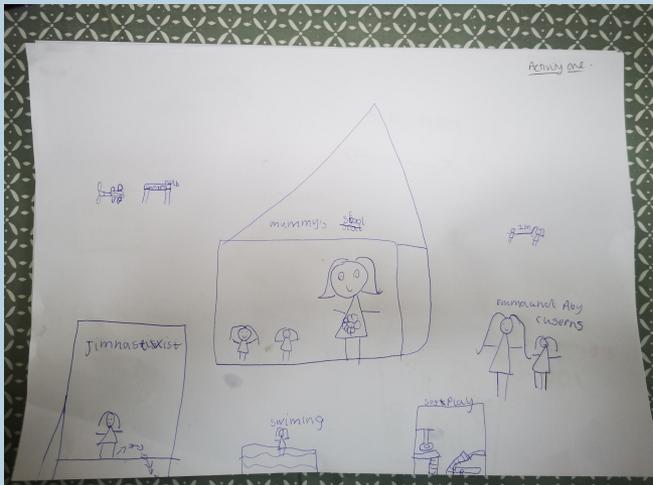
➤ Participants

- 11 Chinese children (aged 4-8; 6 boys & 5 girls; from across China);
- 13 children from England (aged 4-10; 6 boys & 7 girls, including 3 pairs of children from the same households; 2 Chinese children, 1 Turkish child);
- Activities mostly conducted by **mothers** in both countries, lack of fathers' participation;
- All children come from relatively affluent family backgrounds.



➤ Ethical considerations

- Gaining consent from children through parents (e.g. informed consent compromised; power relations)
- Parents' own interests



➤ **Initial findings: Children's drawings and narratives**

- Beating the 'monsters' in China
- Staying safe in England
- Social relationships

- **Beating the ‘monsters’ in China**

Parent: What did you draw?

Child: The virus and the virus.

Parent: A big one and a small one?

Child: Yes.

Parent: How about those in red?

Child: It's blood.

Parent: Why is there blood?

Child: Because it [the virus] **gets killed by the doctor.**

.....

Parent: Are you scale of the COVID virus?

Child: No.

Parent: Why not?

Child: Because we can prevent it.

Child: These are vegetables and fruits, and this is a big milk bottle, it can **beat them.**

Parent: Who are they?

Child: The little pandemic.

Parent: Oh, the virus.

Child: They do not like showering (*Xixiangxiang* in Chinese child language). ... so I've drawn a big tub, they get in and they eat vegetables. ... Then the milk bottle and dad will **beat them.**



A 5-year-old boy, China



A 4-year-old girl, China

- **Staying safe in England**

Parent: Tell me about your picture?

Child: So this is the sun and the cloud coughing, and this is the girl coughing – oh and these are the viruses. Here's a glass of water which you can put on your hands. And also – and also this is some soap ...

Parent: So why have you drawn the water and the soap?

Child: Because that's why you can **wash your hands**.

Parent: Does that give you the virus? Does that get rid of the virus?

Child: No, the virus on your hands can, splash away and wash away. And also so these are face, this is for your face. You put it over your face.

Parent: So that you don't ...

Child: So that you don't get the virus on – it's just like a **face covering**. And it also – and it's see-through.



A 5-year-old girl, England



- **Social relationships (The 'bubbles' in England)**

Parent: Right, Jack, what did you draw on the experience of lockdown?

Child: I did draw two people seeing each other. That one is a boy, that one is a girl.

Parent: OK. Why have you drawn them like that? What are they doing?

Child: They are trying to hold their hands.

Parent: Why are they inside circles?

Child: Because that means that's their **bubbles**.

Parent: OK, so they're inside their bubbles. Why have you drawn that as your experience of lockdown?

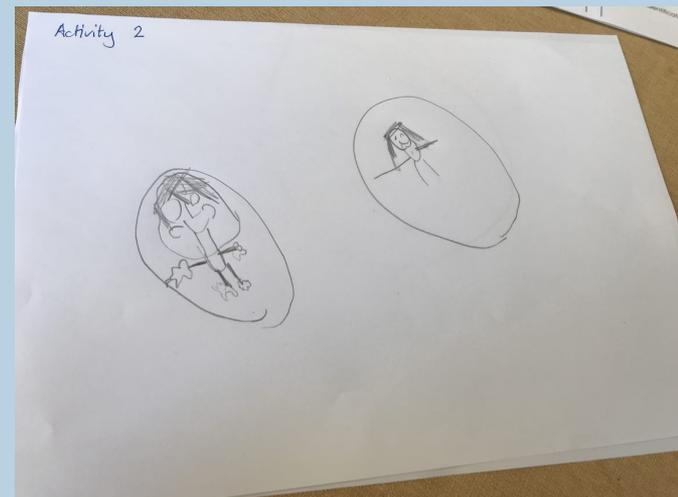
Child: Because **I don't really see my friends very much**.

Parent: OK. What did you do during lockdown?

Child: Quite a lot of staying at home. Sometimes we go to the park and see some of my friends.

Parent: OK. What did you like about being in lockdown? Was there anything you liked about it?

Child: Because that means **I can see a couple of my friends**.



A 5-year-old boy, England



- **Social relationships (Fathers's participation in China)**

Parent: What have you drawn?

Child: I've drawn dad cooking and doing reading with me during the pandemic.

Parent: Why did you draw this?

Child: Because I think these are the most impressive memories to me during the pandemic.

.....

Parent: What did you find most enjoyable and happiest during the lockdown?

Child: Dad cooking and reading with me.

.....

Parent: What did you want to do most during the pandemic?

Child: What I want to do most is to communicate more with dad, because he is rarely home usually. Every day I go to school, coming back at 6 or 7 pm and dad is still not home yet. But during the pandemic he had a lot of time staying with me, I felt happy because of this.

Parent: So why there is no mom in the picture?

Child: Because I think I had enough time with mom before, I want to also know about dad.



A 7-year-old girl, China

➤ **Initial findings: parents' perspectives**

- Real-life experiences & knowledge
- Surprise
- Sense of pride and relieve

➤ Discussion

- Children's active engagement with dominant social discourses in the contexts of COVID-19 in China and England
- Children are emotionally coping
- **The classed privileges**
- **The invisibility of children from less privileged families and backgrounds**



Thank you

Q & A

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