

Families' social capital and school participation of children with developmental disabilities in China

Xinqian Jiang & Ian Thompson

To cite this article: Xinqian Jiang & Ian Thompson (2025) Families' social capital and school participation of children with developmental disabilities in China, *Disability & Society*, 40:12, 3487-3511, DOI: [10.1080/09687599.2025.2494145](https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2025.2494145)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2025.2494145>



© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 30 Apr 2025.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1015



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)

Families' social capital and school participation of children with developmental disabilities in China

Xinqian Jiang  and Ian Thompson

Department of Education, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

ABSTRACT

Children with disabilities are often restricted from participating in wider society, making schools the primary arenas for meaningful interaction. This study examines how families' social capital influences school participation of disabled children. Twenty Chinese caregivers of disabled children in mainstream, special, or home education, were purposefully recruited and interviewed. The data were analysed using thematic analysis in NVivo. It revealed a complex interaction with school participation among the three dimensions of Nahapiet and Ghoshal's social capital framework: structural, relational, and cognitive. The findings emphasise: the advantage gained through structural connections, the increased participation resulting from strong social bonds, and the cognitive impact of social norms on educational choices. This study emphasises the crucial role of social capital in influencing school participation of disabled children. It offers promising strategies for enhancing inclusion by shifting from a student-focused approach to a family-network-focused approach, addressing it as a broader social issue.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 28 June 2024
Accepted 19 March 2025

KEYWORDS

Social capital; developmental disabilities; school participation; inclusion; education in China

Points of interest

- The study used semi-structured interviews with Chinese caregivers to understand how families use social capital to support their disabled children to access and participate in school.
- By applying Nahapiet and Ghoshal's framework, the research illustrates a shift from viewing disabilities through a medical lens to understanding the broader societal influences, advocating for the social model of disability.
- The findings demonstrate that social capital can provide some families with distinct advantages, thereby contributing to ongoing educational inequalities among children with disabilities.
- Schools play a crucial role in creating inclusive environments by fostering connections between parents and educators, improving information exchange, and supporting diverse student needs.
- The research calls for inclusive policies that reduce access barriers and ensure equitable participation in educational services for all students, including those with disabilities.

CONTACT Xinqian Jiang  Xinqian.jiang@education.ox.ac.uk

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

Introduction

The participation of disabled children in social services, as an indicator of social inclusion, requires properly guided social capital (Bates and Davis 2004). The theoretical connection between social capital and inclusion has been suggested based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) (Koutsogeorgou et al. 2014; Bates and Davis 2004; Maxwell and Koutsogeorgou 2012). This article elaborates on the connection using empirical data from Chinese caregivers. The insights from this study may help improve inclusion towards children with developmental disabilities in educational services.

Social capital and educational equity

The interconnection between children's education and their families' capitals has been argued as 'complex and warrant further exploration' (Holt, Bowlby, and Lea 2019, p.3). According to Bourdieu's (1986) social and cultural reproduction theory, parents use any available resources to improve their children's chances of school success which leverage social gaps (Epstein 1987; Xie 2016; Molla and Pham 2019). Findings of previous studies demonstrated the advantages of being raised by parents with extensive knowledge and substantial financial resources for a child's education (Holt, Bowlby, and Lea 2019; Parcel and Dufur 2001). It was argued that parents' social capital has a greater influence on child development than parents' educational attainment or financial wealth (Coleman 1988). Dika and Singh (2002) meta-analysis found a significant positive relationship between family-based social capital and students' schooling. However, the reliance on family's capitals may exacerbate the inequity in accessing educational opportunities for children from underprivileged families (Fan 2014; McConkey and Mariga 2011).

Social capital is one of the most powerful explanatory notions to understand educational inequality across social classes (Lareau and Horvat 1999; Bourdieu 1986; Dika and Singh 2002; Huang and Lin 2019). It is defined as 'the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships' (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998, p. 243). Nahapiet and Ghoshal's (1998) theoretical framework considers the social capital as a multifaceted concept, namely structural, relational and cognitive dimensions. More specifically, structural embeddedness focuses on how social networks are organised and how relationships within these networks are interconnected, including who is connected to whom, how these connections are formed, and how they create a unified and functioning network (Murray et al. 2020). Whereas, relational social capital concerns the ability to exchange resources the quality and depth of personal relationships cultivated through ongoing interaction (Claridge 2018). It could

explain the transformation of social capital into an opportunity (Trainor 2010). While, the structural and relational aspects of social capital are considered private property of individuals, the cognitive social capital is viewed as a moral resource based on social activities (Putnam 1994). The cognitive dimension of social capital relates to subjective interpretations of shared understandings, language, and goals, reflecting individuals' thoughts and feelings (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998).

Previous studies have operationalised the concept of family social capital in child education in various ways, such as supporting children's enrolment in specific schools (Trainor 2010), setting educational expectations (Coleman 1988; Turley et al. 2017), building cooperations and exchanging information with teachers (Anguiano, Thomas, and Proehl 2020; Fisher, FitzGerald, and Olson 2022; Murray et al. 2020). Publicly, social capital is also argued to be the most important contributor for policy issues in education (OECD 2002; Burt 2009). It enables participants to act together to pursue shared objectives in a more effective way through the shared norms, values, and understandings within or among groups (Putnam 1994; Posey-Maddox 2013; OECD 2002). World Health Organization acknowledged the advantage of social capital and highlighted its potential linkage with inclusive policies (Rocco and Suhrcke 2012). It was argued that an inclusive approach can significantly benefit individuals with disabilities when it is constructed within a framework of social capital (Maxwell and Koutsogeorgou 2012). Although these studies justify the theoretical link between social capital and social inclusion, they do not clearly explain its real-world implications for participation in social services. Few empirical studies have examined the use of families' social capitals in the context of special education (Zhang and Arya 2024).

School participation of children with developmental disabilities

Participation in the local community, enhancing the positive feelings of togetherness within the network, is characterised both as a means and an outcome of social capital (Onyx and Bullen 2000; Dekker and Uslaner 2001). Individuals with disabilities in many countries have faced exclusion and discrimination in community life, experiencing social injustice and deprivation of their human rights (Radermacher et al. 2010). Disabled children benefited from their families' input to better access and involve in school activities (Fan 2014). Stronger social capital fosters higher participation for disabled children due to their intrinsic link (Maxwell and Koutsogeorgou 2012). Enhancing participation in social and community activities contributes to their physical health, social skills, mental well-being, and overall quality of life (Yeung and Towers 2014).

Social inclusion refers to the processes and actions that ensure all individuals, regardless of their abilities, have equal opportunities to participate fully in

society (Maxwell et al. 2018). The school environment often serves as the primary arena for child participation and socialisation with the broader society. The measure of school participation includes two key dimensions: attendance and involvement, as outlined within the Family of Participation-Related Constructs (fPRC) framework (Imms et al. 2017). While attendance reflects the frequency with which children engage in schooling activities, involvement refers to the subjective intensity of participation, concerning factors such as motivation, engagement, and social connection (Arvidsson et al. 2020; Eriksson, Welander, and Granlund 2007). The theory of social capital provides a new perspective to further examine the connectedness among parents, educators, and children, and can facilitate the evaluation of the consequences of child's school participation (Purola and Kuusisto 2021).

Children with developmental disabilities often face barriers to participating in school services (Coster et al. 2013; Wang 2021). According to Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), developmental disabilities refer to neurodevelopmental disorders as a group of conditions that can cause impairments in learning, social and physical functioning, including intellectual disability, autism, specific learning disorder, and many more (American Psychiatric Association 2013). These conditions typically manifest during early childhood and persist throughout the person's lifespan, may impact day-to-day functioning, affecting approximately 1 in 6 children (Zablotsky et al. 2019). Globally, WHO and UNICEF (2018) estimated 317 million children and young people were affected by health conditions contributing to a developmental disability.

Given the high prevalence and early onset, this child population tends to become marginalised due to a myriad of obstacles, including physical, social, and cultural barriers (Bynner 2001). The traditional view of disability attributes these obstacles to individual impairments, suggesting that their impairments prevent access to societal offerings (Shakespeare 2006). This perspective isolates individuals with disabilities from society and overlooks how cultural and environmental factors affect their experiences (Ingólfssdóttir, Jóhannsdóttir, and Traustadóttir 2018). Whereas, the social model of disability draws attention to the socially constructed barriers that limit the participation of disabled individuals (Shakespeare 2013; Ingólfssdóttir, Jóhannsdóttir, and Traustadóttir 2018). This study aligns with the social model, which posits that disabilities are influenced by the quality of the arrangement between the individual and society rather than the severity of disability (Finnerty, Jackson, and Ostergren 2019). Therefore, it focuses on this social issue that overcoming barriers to meaningful participation in schools requires a restructuring of social systems and norms. Greater social attention is needed to alleviate social barriers for full societal participation, as recommended by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2010).

Situating the study

To address social exclusion, it is important to understand the context in which social capital is situated (Lareau and Horvat 1999). China's distinct social, political, and cultural fabric often leads to unique interpretations and applications of Western-based theories (Zhang et al. 2021; Mak and Kwok 2010; Zhang and Rosen 2018). In China, social capital, linked to 'guanxi' (social networks), plays a crucial role in everyday interactions and functions (Zhang and Arya 2024; Ross and Lin 2006). There has been an increasing prevalence and significance of social capital in Chinese society since the reform toward market economy in 1978 (Bian 2018). The institutionally uncertain environment has elevated the importance of interpersonal relations in creating better life chances due to the gradually relaxed certain bureaucratic controls (Bian 2019). Bureaucrats at various levels of the party-state hierarchy had discretionary powers to allocate social resources and opportunities one way or another (Bian 2019). Therefore, personal connections become necessary to gain access to new forms of scarce resources, in this case school placements and teachers' supports for disabled children (Gu, Zhang, and Liu 2014; Shang, Fisher, and Xie 2011).

People with disabilities in China have historically faced discrimination, largely influenced by Buddhist beliefs (Wu 2020). According to the principles of reincarnation and karma, disability was often perceived as a punishment for misdeeds in a previous life, making the birth of a disabled child a source of shame for the entire family (Fu et al. 2022; An, Hu, and Horn 2018). In contrast, Confucianism—the foundation of Chinese culture—emphasises compassion toward vulnerable individuals, including the disabled and elderly, encouraging people to care for them as they would their own family members (Zhang and Rosen 2018). In recent years, advocacy for inclusion and human rights has contributed to improving conditions for people with disabilities. The education in China is a state-managed enterprise educating disabled children with a three-tiered system, comprising the Learning in Regular Classroom program, special education, and homeschooling (McCabe 2007; Correia, 2021).

Chinese families prioritise their children's education, often exerting additional effort to mitigate their disadvantaged schooling situations due to disability (Fan 2014; Wu 2020). Parents actively engage with teachers, hoping for greater support in their children's education (Wang 2008). This includes visiting schools, sending gifts, and assisting teachers whenever possible (Wang 2008). Among the approximately 93 million Chinese children aged 0–14, an estimated 5.1% have disabilities (4.74 million) (WHO 2011). As of 2022, China had 2,314 special schools serving 578,800 students with disabilities, which accounts for 62.9% of disabled students in formal education (Fu et al. 2022). This indicates that the number of disabled children receiving formal

education is significantly below the estimated number of school-aged students with disabilities in China. Despite the stated commitment to a Zero Rejection policy, school placements for every school-aged child with developmental disabilities are not guaranteed (An, Hu, and Horn 2018). Educational resources for disabled children remain scarce and lack clear guideline in China (Cui 2016; McCabe 2007).

Each child with a disability follows a unique developmental trajectory that cannot be adequately captured through standardised questionnaires. Most studies exploring this area have methodologically used questionnaires to measure the correlation between families' social capital and students' academic or developmental outcomes (Li, Gan, and Jia 2017; Hrabéczy et al. 2023). For example, Zhang et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review in this area and discovered that most articles published between 1996 and 2018 (176 articles, 73%) involved only quantitative analysis, with only 37 articles (15%) reporting qualitative studies including interviews. Similarly, Dika and Singh (2002) stated that majority of empirical works on parents' social capital rely on quantitative analyses and mainly follow Coleman's theoretical framework. These authors established a correlation between the amount of social capital possessed by the parent and the children's school performance (Wang 2008). The current understanding in this area is limited by the lack of diversity in methodology and theoretical frameworks. To address this, our qualitative study incorporates interviews to explore caregivers' experiences and perspectives on using social capital to support their children's school participation.

This study aims to address these existing gaps by investigating the role of families' social capital on the disabled's school participation by employing Nahapiet and Ghoshal(1998)'s multidimensional framework of social capital. While the theoretical underpinnings of this association between social capital and educational inclusion are well-established, empirical evidence validating this link remains limited. This study guided by the social capital framework can significantly contribute to the inclusion of the disabled in educational services, supporting a research perspective that shifts from a student-focused to a family-network-focused approach (Trainor 2010; Hrabéczy et al. 2023).

Methods

Study design

This study employed a qualitative exploratory design using semi-structured interviews with caregivers of children with developmental disabilities to address the research question of how families' social capital influences their children's school participation. The in-built flexibility of the semi-structured interviewing method allows for spontaneity to emerge by adjusting interview questions in real-time (Silverman and Patterson 2021). Given the multifaceted

nature of the subject, this research design enables participants to articulate their experiences, perspectives, and perceptions in their own authentic voices which is particularly valuable in exploring complex, under-researched issues in everyday contexts. The study is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, which asserts that individuals construct knowledge by interpreting their experiences within multiple realities shaped by cultural, social, and historical contexts. This approach acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual's context, allowing their situated interpretations to emerge and resonate meaningfully (Hay, 2000); Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

Ethical considerations

This study involves interactions with human subjects. To ensure that all processes and measures followed ethical guidelines, the study design has been reviewed and approved by the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) at the University of Oxford to lead the investigation as planned. The administrator of the partnered child centre also reviewed the research design for ethical purposes prior to data collection. All participants were informed of the research aims and their rights to skip questions or withdraw, and they provided written consents before the interviews took place. The participants' identities were anonymised throughout the study. They were assigned pseudonyms (e.g. P1, P2... P19) based on the order of interviews. These pseudonyms were used alongside any quotations attributed to them.

Fieldwork context

This study is set in Henan province, characterised as a developing region of central China in terms of educational services and resources (Huang and Zhang 2019). Henan was ranked 15th among all 31 provinces and municipalities in China based on quality indicators of special education, including the proportion of students, the student-teacher ratio, the average area occupied per student, and educational resources (Huang and Zhang 2019). It suggests that the educational system of Henan may represent the average situations encountered by Chinese disabled children in formal education.

Sampling

Caregivers, as key stakeholders in children's education, are valuable sources of information for understanding the authentic experiences of disabled children (Ryan and Quinlan 2018). Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants for this study to broaden the data scope and uncover multiple perspectives and experiences. This study recruited various groups of caregivers in terms of relations, types of child schooling and child diagnoses.

In Chinese culture, grandparents are also considered close and valuable members of the household, often heavily involve or even replace parents as primary caregivers for children with developmental disabilities (Huang et al. 2020). Therefore, grandparents who identified themselves as the primary caregivers of children with developmental disabilities were included in this study. In terms of child's schooling types, this study included caregivers with children enrolled in mainstream education, special education, or home education. The sample size depends on its heterogeneity and the research objective. Therefore, this study recruited a sample of 20 caregivers including both parents and grandparents who (1) self-identified him/herself as the primary caregiver of a child diagnosed as developmental disabilities (except mobility and sensory impairments); (2) the child had to be in schooling age from six to fourteen; (3) the child had to be registered at either mainstream, special or home education in the governmental record. The study participants were recruited through a local child rehabilitation centre in Henan, China. The recruitment information with the selection criteria was posted on the centre's social media and shared with affiliated caregiver chat groups. Once qualified caregivers expressed interest in participating in the study, they were individually contacted to schedule interviews based on their availability. As a result, 20 caregivers were recruited in the first place. The first participant's interview was excluded from the study for the purpose of piloting.

Participants

In total, nineteen participants, aged between 32 and 73 years (fifteen mothers, three grandmothers and one grandfather) made up the final sample group, and they all self-identified as the primary caregiver of the focused child at home. All participants spoke Mandarin as their native language. They all had one child with a developmental disability; seven of them had another typically-developing child. Nineteen children, aged between 6 and 14, were the focus of this study. They were diagnosed with a range of developmental disabilities, including six autism spectrum disorders, two Down syndrome, one cerebral palsy, two developmental delay, one cognitive and language disorders, and seven unspecified learning disabilities. All children in the study possessed government-issued disability licenses, to validate the nature and severity of their impairments. There was a higher representation of boys than girls (thirteen males; six females). These children were enrolled in diverse educational settings (six in mainstream schools; eight in special schools, and five in home education). Other demographic information of participants (e.g. marital status, educational levels, and income) was not collected in this study as it was less relevant to addressing the focused matter.

Procedures

A pilot study with a mother of a boy with intellectual disabilities studying in mainstream education was conducted before the official data collection. The purpose of this pilot was to check for understanding of special terms, any use of offending terms, and wording and sequencing of questions. The following interviews benefitted from the changes in the structure and sequencing of the questions. The interview guide was iteratively adjusted based on insights gained from the pilot interview to enhance clarity and relevance. The pilot study participant was excluded from the data analysis because the child was enrolled in secondary education, whereas the other participants' children were at the primary level.

Each interview lasted approximately 40 to 60 min and was conducted face-to-face in one of the meeting rooms at the rehabilitation centre. Interviews were conducted in Mandarin to ensure participants' understanding and fluency. At the start of each interview, participants were provided with a Mandarin-translated version of the 'Participant Information Sheet'. Those who agreed to participate were then asked to sign a 'Participant Consent Form'. The researcher employed the voice recorder on a password-protected iPhone and iPad to safely store the data. After collecting basic demographic information, the interview proceeded with proposed questions designed to guide the conversation, allowing for adaptation according to individual responses. Interviews were mainly guided with open-ended questions, including 'What was your experience of enrolling your child to the primary school?', 'What concerns or difficulties of schooling did you encounter in the process?', 'What were additional supports provided to facilitate your child's school participation?' and 'In what ways does your families' social capital affect your child's enrolment/involvement in schools?'. At the end of each interview, participants were asked if they had any feedbacks or questions for the researcher. They were reminded of their rights to withdrawal their data at any time before the end of data collection period.

Data analysis

Qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed verbatim and imported into NVivo for systematic coding in Chinese with thematic analysis. This study used an inductive approach of thematic analysis whereby codes were actively sought out through reviewing the dataset rather than fit into a pre-existing coding frame (Xu and Zammit 2020). The analysis process commenced with open coding, where transcripts were systematically reviewed to identify meaningful units of text related to the research question. It involved separating data to establish what it means before meaningfully grouping the data back together. The researcher re-evaluated the independence of each code and attempted to combine or group codes based on the established connections between said codes (Braun and Clarke 2006). Codes were then collated and organised into

themes through constant comparison within and across interviews. A theme represents certain levels of patterns within the dataset addressing the research question which is the conceptual abstraction of data (Braun and Clarke 2006; Elliot et al., 2018). Unlike codes, themes did not emerge independently but were shaped by theoretical frameworks, ontological and epistemological positions, and the researchers' understandings of the field (Srivastava and Hopwood 2009).

Findings

This study addresses the research question of how families' social capital influences the school participation of children with developmental disabilities. This findings section is presented in themes organised according to Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) three dimensions of social capital: structural, relational, and cognitive aspects. The findings indicate that having a larger structural network and actively investing efforts to cultivate relationships with key stakeholders in the schooling process significantly enhanced the likelihood of meaningful school participation for disabled children. In the cognitive dimension, caregivers' values, expectations, and understanding need proper guidance to prevent societal misconceptions and to guide their behaviours and decisions in the best interests of the child.

The structural dimension: utilising social links for accessing educational resources

The structural patterns of social networks enabled disabled children to access educational resources effectively, despite the limited availability of school placements. Interviews with caregivers revealed that schools often avoided the educational duties of disabled students. The absence of clear guidelines and laws for student distribution allowed educational institutions to shirk their responsibilities towards disabled students. Many caregivers described that school registration for their disabled children was a complicated and frustrating process (P2, P3, P4, P10, P14). They faced several selection examinations to prove their children's learning capability and adaptability. Once any child was deemed as 'unadaptable' to be educated on campus in selection exams, they were forced into homeschooling (P2). More specifically, P4 accused that schools were intentionally 'alleviating the difficulties of entrance exams and kicking [disabled children] back and forth between institutions like a ball'. The sarcasm in P4's expression indicated the complaints towards the educational policy for the disabled. Moreover, P2 and P14 highlighted that 'full coverage' and 'zero rejection' exist only in student registrations without adequate support to ensure their active participation in school activities. Their names were included in school registration and formal education enrolment statistics, even though they did not physically participate on campus.

Caregivers were motivated to secure actual school placements that guarantee both the attendances and involvements for their disabled children.

Caregivers' recognition of limited school placements for disabled students prompted them to utilise their social networks to secure these scarce opportunities. During interviews, some caregivers disclosed that their social connections enabled privileged access to educational services for their children, even when they initially did not meet the enrolment criteria (P12, P15, P17). For example, P17 utilised her professional network, explaining, 'My husband and I have worked at this company for many years. The company-affiliated school is located on the same premises. As part of our employee benefits, the company should provide educational opportunities for our children regardless his capabilities'. She viewed herself as an insider through her employment, believing it entitled her child to prioritised access to affiliated schools. Similarly, P15's child was admitted to the current school during the term after being expelled from the previous one. P15 explained that the headmaster, who was an extended family relative, remarked, 'Although I hadn't seen him in over a decade, asking him to enrol one more student as family wasn't a big favour'. Both P15 and P17's children gained exceptional admission to schools through their families' connections, showcasing how social networks can influence educational opportunities beyond standard enrolment criteria. Social connections within groups like companies or families provide members with a shared identity, facilitating convenient access to each other's resources. These examples underscore the significance of social capital in navigating educational systems for children with disabilities, emphasising the role of personal networks in overcoming bureaucratic barriers.

When certain children gained privileged access to education through social connections, it inevitably disadvantaged other students without such connections. For example, P14's child was unable to enrol in any schools by the age of eight. P14 attributed this failure to their low socio-cultural status. She remarked, 'Some students with lower abilities than my child were able to enrol in schools. However, my child was held back due to our family's rural background as farmers and our lack of connections with school or government authorities'. These findings suggest that social connections can effectively secure additional opportunities for school participation within China's competitive enrolment system. However, this privileged access exacerbates schooling difficulties for families in socio-economically disadvantaged positions, further entrenching inequalities within the competitive system.

The relational dimension: enhancing child school involvement through stronger social bonds

The closeness of relationships between caregivers and teachers significantly influenced children's involvement in school activities. Teachers, who are

directly responsible for delivering education, play a crucial role in shaping the quality of a child's schooling experience. P13, a kindergarten teacher, secured a placement for her child at the kindergarten where she had worked for over a decade. During the interviews, she expressed satisfaction with her child's level of involvement under special supports, attributing it to the special support provided through her close personal connections with her colleagues. Meanwhile, P13 voiced concerns about her child's upcoming transition to primary school next year. She said, 'I am worried about whether my child will be successfully enrolled and how primary school teachers will treat him without any personal connections'. The aforementioned case demonstrates that students are more likely to engage in meaningful participation within a supportive environment. Additionally, the strength of social ties with school teachers significantly influences the treatment children receive during their schooling.

Those without established networks described in interviews their intentional efforts to build personal connections with teachers from the beginning. P7 discussed her efforts to foster a positive relationship with their child's teacher, stating: 'To build a good rapport with the teacher and ensure my child receives more attention in class, I have sent greeting cards and gifts to the teacher in my child's name during holidays and special occasions'. Furthermore, many caregivers actively participated in school events and class activities to show their dedication to collaborating with teachers in their child's education (e.g. P7 and P19). Some caregivers took on the role of full-time parental helpers in classrooms without financial compensation (e.g. P8, P17). Additionally, certain caregivers went as far as 'cleaning teachers' offices and classrooms, hoping this effort would earn teachers' patience and support for [their] children (P19)' to participate more effectively in school activities. Based on caregivers' interviews, caregivers perceive their efforts to cultivate relationships with teachers as crucial for improving their children's school participation to some degree. However, the ethical considerations and the cost-effectiveness of their social contributions remains a topic of debate.

In interviews, some caregivers expressed disagreement with the attitude of 'bowing their heads to teachers (P19)', a phrase vividly illustrating how other caregivers sought to ingratiate themselves with teachers. For example, P10 believed that schooling is primarily the responsibility of teachers, stating, 'Schools fail to provide quality education, which exhausts parents and leaves them with no time to live or work'. P11 added, 'Child-caring is very stressful without sufficient respect. I quit my job and had no personal time to hang out with friends but received no appreciation'. Additionally, P7 opposed with full-time caregiving and explained: 'My child may not have any progression, even I give up my work and full-time support him at school. It will worsen the financial burden of the family and lead to no time for myself'. Although these caregivers disagreed on ingratiation towards teachers for various

reasons, the findings demonstrate that they actively considered the cost-effectiveness of such actions to improve their children's involvement in schools.

As caregivers focused on childcare, they forged new social connections with teachers, professionals, and other caregivers they met through schools, rehabilitation centres, and parental support groups, despite losing previous connections (P2, P3, P4, P9, P11). These caregivers often acquired schooling information and parenting strategies through these new connections (P3, P9, P11). P11 shared an example during her interview: 'After my child was rejected by the mainstream school, the registration deadline for special schools had already passed. If I hadn't learned from another caregiver that her child's school in the county was still accepting enrolments, my child would have had to stay home for a year'. The information and experiences shared within the network have reference values for other caregivers in similar situations. This indicates the importance of maintaining social relationships for navigating schooling processes.

The cognitive dimension: the influence of social norms on caregivers' decision-making processes

Child-rearing decisions were significantly influenced by the shared understanding, norms and values within their community, indirectly affecting their children's school participation. In Chinese society, social norms that prioritise reserved expression often led family members and friends to avoid discussing signs of developmental abnormalities in children. Their comforting words also reduced caregivers' vigilance in seeking professional diagnosis and treatment. P2 shared, 'I was concerned that my child spoke late, as other children his age were already speaking. However, my mother-in-law reassured me, saying that the child's father also spoke late and turned out fine. She even believed it was a good sign, citing a Chinese proverb: "A noble person speaks late"'. However, the true meaning of the proverb, which emphasises actions over words, was misunderstood as a justification for the child's speech delay. Similar situations occurred with other caregivers, who missed early treatment due to the norm of not disclosing negative information unless necessary (P1, P5). Many did not seek a diagnosis until their children were rejected by schools (P8, P9, P10). Reflecting on this, P10 expressed regret: 'I truly regret not seeking rehabilitation therapy earlier for my child. He would be in a much better position if I had'. These findings suggest that over relying on the good intentions and competence of family and friends can negatively impact child development and education. The delay of information within a closed network hindered caregivers from acting in the best interests of the child.

Caregivers were motivated to enrol their children not only for the child's benefit but also to uphold the family's reputation and meet societal expectations.

The established consensus that children must be schooled by a certain age was deeply rooted in its long history of meritocracy and Confucian doctrines. As P3 explained, 'If I keep my child at home instead of sending him to school, my entire family will be criticised for being irresponsible.' Similarly, P2 highlighted the repercussions of homeschooling: 'My neighbours already gossip about my child's disability. If I cannot enrol my child in school, they will assume her abnormality is even more severe.' The societal emphasis on children attending school contributed to the stigma and shame associated with being expelled from formal education including homeschooling. P3 elaborated on the pressure, saying, 'If my grandson has to be homeschooling, I feel he's been abandoned. I can't muster the strength to keep advocating for his potential!' This deeply ingrained cultural expectation highlights how cognitive social capital significantly influences caregivers' perceptions and actions regarding their children's education.

Caregivers were motivated to conform to social norms, especially since their children were already perceived as deviating from 'normality' (P2, P3). They felt that straying from the mainstream led to feelings of shame and inferiority within their social circles (P1, P10). Some believed their families would regain social acceptance only if their disabled children attended mainstream schools (P7, P9, P13). Enrolling a child in special schools was seen as a sign of no future prospects due to the stigma associated with special education in Chinese culture. P10 opted for her child to take a gap year instead of attending a special school, stating, 'I see my child progressing now. I am confident he can transition to mainstream schools after another year of rehabilitation.' Similarly, P19 admitted choosing mainstream education for her grandchild to protect her own self-esteem, regardless of the child's capability. The persistent focus on conforming to social norms led caregivers to make decisions that were not in their child's best interests, even though they recognised that their children could not meaningfully participate in school activities. Caregivers' decision-makings were influenced by prevalent social discriminations and stigmas in the community, which hindered disabled children from accessing appropriate education.

The disabled-unfriendly social environment led many caregivers to have minimal expectations for the child's school participation. Many caregivers even accepted the possibility of their children being discriminated against in schools (P7, P10, P12). P10 said: 'It was understandable if teachers and students treat my child differently at schools because of his impairments.' They blamed themselves for not giving their child a healthy body or enough support to live like other typically developing peers (P7, P10). Many even expressed guilts for adding burdens to teachers' works due to their children's disabilities (P7, P10, P15). P12 expressed in the interview, 'I hesitate to expect additional attention or support from teachers as long as any school enrolls my child'. While some caregivers expected their children to excel as they aged or progressed in school (P2, P15), others held particularly low

expectations, believing their disabled children were 'uneducable' (P3, P4, P6, P8, P17). P17 regarded school primarily as 'a venue to occupy their children while caregivers attend to work or take personal time'. Similarly, P3 stated, 'I don't expect any progress for my child, as long as he is happy at school'. These findings suggest that social pressure compels caregivers to conform to societal norms and values. They focused solely on their children's impairments and differences from the majority, rather than examining systemic failures in implementing appropriate education and inclusive practices for all. Enhanced social awareness could help diminish stigmas associated with disabilities and facilitate decisions that prioritise the child's best interests.

Discussion

This study explored the complex interaction between families' social capital and the school inclusion of their disabled children in China. The findings highlighted the critical role of social capital in shaping school participation amid limited educational resources. Using Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) framework, the study revealed how caregivers leveraged their connections, cultivated relationships with professionals, and fought against social stigmas and discrimination to enhance their children's school participation. These insights help us understand the implications of family resources in navigating the educational landscape for children with developmental disabilities.

The structural dimension

This study uncovered distinct patterns in caregivers' perceptions and experiences in addressing their child's schooling issues, even among those living in the same city. Some caregivers had connections with relevant authorities who could distribute limited educational resources in their favour. Therefore, they found the process of school registration and enrolment simple, while other caregivers faced significant challenges accessing formal education. Consistently, Correia et al. (2021) conducted a large-scale survey that revealed a majority of Chinese parents face significant challenges in accessing educational services for their children with developmental disabilities. However, the survey did not have the advantages exploring the underlying reasons for the difference in caregiver experiences. The current interview study demonstrated that caregivers' ability in utilising social capital to connect with school authorities is critical for securing school placement and support. Similarly, previous studies have emphasised the role of social networks in gaining privileged access to formal education in Chinese society (e.g. Zhang and Arya 2024; Wang 2008; McCabe 2007).

One possible explanation for this might be that the educational system institutionally offers limited placements that enable meaningful participation

for every disabled child (Wang 2021). Several studies have confirmed the scarcity of school placements and unwelcoming school climate for the disabled in China (Cui 2016). This study reemphasized the challenges in accessing formal education and highlighted the crucial role of social capital in enabling disabled children to participate in the competitive schooling environment. However, this approach only benefits certain children from socially well-connected families, thereby entrenching educational inequity within society (McConkey and Mariga 2011; Fan 2014; Bourdieu 1986). Socioeconomically disadvantaged families face escalating challenges due to limited resources being occupied by those with social connections (Huang and Lin 2019; Gu, Zhang, and Liu 2014).

To further verify this hypothesis, studies on social capital from developed countries have provided valuable counter-evidence. They rarely reported the use of social connections to access formal education and support services for the disabled at primary education level (Holt, Bowlby, and Lea 2019; Trainor 2010; Murray et al. 2020). It might be that these countries often have long-established and universal education systems (Singh and Moody 2022). The schooling placements for disabled students were almost guaranteed without additional input from the families (McConkey and Mariga 2011). Although obtaining school placements were not challenging for caregivers in these countries, Holt, Bowlby, and Lea (2019) found that families with high socio-economic status often educated their disabled children in the locally considered the 'best' education. Consistent with the literature across the globe, this study further supports the hypothesis that social capital was seen as a currency used to purchase resources or opportunities, aligning with Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural reproduction (Lareau and Horvat 1999; Bourdieu 1986; Dika and Singh 2002).

The relational dimension

The results of this study showed that caregivers formed close relationships with teachers and other caregivers to secure schooling opportunities and information. Caregivers who invested more time and energy in establishing social relationships (e.g. with teachers) were able to create better academic environments for their children. The findings suggested that the structural network alone was insufficient to establish the trust, reciprocity and norms needed to sustain efforts at inclusion across diverse groups. Hence, it could conceivably be hypothesised that the stronger the social ties that bind people together, the more social capital individual members will have to draw upon. This finding broadly supports the work of other studies in this area highlighting the importance of strategic participation of families in schools (Coleman 1988; Wang 2008; Zhang and Arya 2024). Social capital generated from closed social structures (Coleman 1988) was also observed by Purola

and Kuusisto (2021) through parental involvement and collaboration with professionals. The findings emphasised the need for inclusive practices that foster trust and collaboration among caregivers, teachers, and professionals.

The closed bond between parents and teachers forms a social structure that encourages the development of effective norms (Dika and Singh 2002). Extensive studies on parent-teacher collaboration in Catholic schools have demonstrated how dense, reciprocal, and intergenerational networks among parents, educators, and students, both within the schools and their associated church communities, enhance children's education (Murray et al. 2020; Anguiano, Thomas, and Proehl 2020). Parents and teachers in Catholic schools often have pre-existing relationships which supports the establishment and reinforcement of behavioural norms for children, along with the exchange of information about their development (Dika and Singh 2002). Moreover, closed connections and collaborations in Catholic schools promoted greater social capital (Anguiano, Thomas, and Proehl 2020). Other methods for developing close relationships between parents and teachers include after-school interventions, school parental committees, and similar initiatives which foster shared expectations, reciprocity, and trust (Turley et al. 2017. Zhang and Arya 2024). This study is consistent with previous research showing that social capital facilitates connections among diverse school stakeholders, promoting collaborative efforts and interactions to advance inclusion efforts.

Another finding that stands out from the results is that some caregivers ingratiated themselves with teachers to enhance the closeness of their rapport. In this process of collaboration, caregivers of children with developmental disabilities were inferior on the power hierarchy with teachers. In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that parents are viewed as less-than-equal members in such collaborative efforts (McCabe 2007; Wu 2020; Chen, 2016). Chen (2016) pointed out that some parents were even concerned that their behaviours of visiting schools, questioning progression, and reporting any issues would indicate of distrust and disrespect for the teachers. It suggested that the phenomenon was prevalent among caregivers of the disabled students in China.

Although Chinese norms of respecting teachers and valuing education may contribute to this phenomenon, other social factors could also explain the unequal relationships. Firstly, caregivers being inferior often lacked robust structural networks with the school authority to benefit from privileges. To mitigate the socio-economic disadvantages they faced, they may have sought to establish compensatory relational closeness (Fisher, FitzGerald, and Olson 2022; Purola and Kuusisto 2021). In order to access the formal education, caregivers actively seek and create opportunities to connect with teachers in China (Wang 2008; McCabe 2007). Immigrant Chinese parents in the United States adopt a more passive role in initiating contact with schools and teachers comparing to caregivers in China (Wang 2008). Wang (2008) suggest

immigrant parents attribute less instrumental value to parent-teacher relationships for their children's success than their counterparts in China. Another possible explanation for this is caregivers' ignorance of their child's inherent right to access education (Wang 2021; Zhang et al. 2021; Correia et al. 2021; An, Hu, and Horn 2018). Caregivers often believed that their children's schooling opportunities depended on appealing to teachers' sympathy and feared that making additional demands would jeopardise these placements (Wang 2008; Bian 2018). Therefore, this study confirms that caregivers lacking social connections and awareness of educational rights often dedicated additional time and effort to support and please teachers to secure their child's entitled quality education.

The cognitive dimension

The study's findings demonstrate that misdirected social capital not only constrained information exchange but also shaped individuals' perceptions and behaviours within a densely interconnected network characterised by shared values and norms. Having a child with disability may be viewed as an inauspicious sign, diverging from the mainstream majority in Chinese society (Fu et al. 2022; An, Hu, and Horn 2018). Stigmas towards disability, as a form of cognitive social capital, significantly reduce caregivers' expectations of their child's potential. Lowering academic expectations may alleviate parental stress but diminishes caregivers' motivation to advocate for their disabled children's optimal development, thereby limiting their meaningful participation in schools (Su et al. 2017). It demonstrated that social capital is multifaceted and requires proper guidance, rather than being universally beneficial. Stigmas toward disability may arise from insufficient understanding of these marginalised groups, who differ from the majority (Li et al. 2023; Thornicroft et al. 2007). Moreover, individuals in closed social networks often exclude and stigmatise outsiders driven by strong feelings of shared identity (Burt 2009). On certain extent, cognitive social capital transforms the group into more than just a collection of individuals (Posey-Maddox 2013). However, it created invisible pressure to conform to socially defined norms, particularly in China, a society that emphasises uniformity and collective well-being (Mak and Kwok 2010; Huang et al. 2020). Correcting the stigmatised social awareness towards the disabled glue the society together with inclusive values for equal participation within the community (Mitter, Ali, and Scior 2019).

The current study detected evidence that social stigmas towards special education hinder caregivers making rational schooling decisions to maximise their child's potential. Some caregivers refused to accept the permanent labelling of their children as atypical. Consequently, they tended to emphasise their child's normality when discussing school options. These reactions were repetitively shown in other Chinese studies (Zhang and Rosen 2018;

Shang, Fisher, and Xie 2011). The caregivers' reactions were guided by socially defined notions of what is right showing a consensus shared within the social system (Wong et al. 2015). In this case, the consensus was that mainstream schools represent normality and uniformity with the majority, leading to children in special or home education being discriminated against (Cole 2008). Yang, Byrne, and Chiu (2016) confirmed that educating in mainstream schools brought caregivers of disabled children a temporary relief of public discrimination. They assumed it is the only way their disabled children and their families could be included by the society. However, caregivers often misunderstood that the basic rationale for inclusive schooling is not about giving children a particular education (or indeed any education) (McConkey and Mariga 2011; Haug 2017). Inclusion should be the inherent right of every individual, regardless of their capabilities or conformity to social norms. Whereas, education should be recognised as a force for social change and a means of creating a more equitable society in which people with disabilities can become full and active members (Haug 2017). This study broadly supports previous research showing that caregivers' decision-making processes are shaped by the social norms and values of their community (Lui et al. 2015; McCabe 2007; Wu 2020). Therefore, properly directed social awareness leads to a more inclusive society.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of families' social capital on school participation in China through semi-structured interviews with caregivers of disabled children. The qualitative descriptive design provided nuanced insights that complemented previous survey-based studies in this field, enhancing our understanding of how families use social capital to support developmentally disabled children in overcoming their disadvantaged positions. Applying Nahapiet and Ghoshal's framework of social capital, this study marks one of the few empirical applications of this framework in special education. It highlights the shift from focusing on individual impairments to considering broader societal influences, reflecting a theoretical shift from the medical model of disability to the social model. Our findings contribute to the debate on educational equality by demonstrating how social capital can provide privileges to certain families. To address these disparities, we recommend implementing inclusive policies that enhance the educational experiences of disabled children by reducing access barriers and ensuring equitable participation in educational services. Schools play a crucial role in fostering inclusive environments by facilitating networks between parents and educational professionals. These networks improve information exchange, build shared expectations, and foster reciprocity to collaboratively support the diverse needs of disabled students. However, the exploratory nature of this

qualitative study and its small sample size limit the generalizability of its findings to broader populations and diverse contexts. Future studies could replicate this design in different contexts to explore cultural differences in using social capital to facilitate child education.

Acknowledgements

The authors extend their sincere appreciation to the adolescents and caregivers who generously and openly participated in this study. In addition, we are most grateful to the organizations that disseminated our research invitation.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Xinqian Jiang  <http://orcid.org/0009-0008-0461-7768>

References

- American Psychiatric Association. 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- An, Z. G., X. Hu, and E. Horn. 2018. "Chinese Inclusive Education: The Past, Present, and Future." *Intervention in School and Clinic* 54 (2): 118–122. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451218765244>.
- Anguiano, R., S. Thomas, and R. Proehl. 2020. "Family Engagement in a Catholic School: What Can Urban Schools Learn?" *School Community Journal* 30 (1): 209–241.
- Arvidsson, P., S. Dada, M. Granlund, C. Imms, J. Bornman, C. Elliott, and K. Huus. 2020. "Content Validity and Usefulness of Picture My Participation for Measuring Participation in Children with and without Intellectual Disability in South Africa and Sweden." *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy* 27 (5): 336–348. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11038128.2019.1645878>.
- Bates, P., and F. A. Davis. 2004. "Social Capital, Social Inclusion and Services for People with Learning Disabilities." *Disability & Society* 19 (3): 195–207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0968759042000204202>.
- Bian, Y. 2018. "The Prevalence and the Increasing Significance of Guanxi." *Cambridge Core*. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/china-quarterly/article/abs/prevalence-and-the-increasing-significance-of-guanxi/9068B293CE75D7F7EE7A9160F8BD1D13>
- Bian, Y. 2019. *Guanxi, How China Works*. Cambridge, England: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bourdieu, P. 1986. "The Force of Law: Toward a Sociology of the Juridical Field." *Hastings LJ* 38: 805.
- Braun, V., and V. Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.
- Burt, R. S. 2009. "The Contingent Value of Social Capital." In *Knowledge and Social Capital*, 255–286. London: Routledge.
- Bynner, J. 2001. "Childhood Risks and Protective Factors in Social Exclusion." *Children & Society* 15 (5): 285–301. <https://doi.org/10.1002/chi.681>.

- Chen, Y. 2016. *Chinese Parents' Perspectives on Parenting: Children's Education and Future Prospects*. Master's thesis, Itä-Suomen yliopisto (University of Eastern Finland).
- Claridge, T. 2018. "Introduction to Social Capital Theory." *Social Capital Research*. <https://Bit.Ly/3nbgqB>,
- Cole, K. R. 2008. "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Parents Attitudes to the Inclusion of Children with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream and Special School." *British Journal of Special Education* 35 (3): 173–179.
- Coleman, J. S. 1988. "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital." *American Journal of Sociology* 94: S95–S120. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228943>.
- Correia, Ana, Vitor Teixeira, and Chris Forlin. 2021. "Home–School Collaboration in Assessment, Placement, and Individual Education Plan Development for Children With Special Education Needs in Macao: The Views of Parents." *The School Community Journal* 31 (1): 205–231.
- Coster, W. J., M. Law, G. Bedell, K. Liljenquist, Ying-Chia Kao, M. A. Khetani, and R. Teplicky. 2013. "School Participation, Supports and Barriers of Students with and without Disabilities: School Participation." *Child: Care, Health and Development* 39 (4): 535–543. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cch.12046>.
- Cui, F. 2016. "A Good Example of Parent Advocacy for Rights in Inclusive Education in China." *Frontiers of Law in China* 11 (2): 323–328.
- Dekker, P., and E. M. Uslaner. 2001. *Social Capital and Participation in Everyday Life*. London: Routledge.
- Denzin, N. K., and Y. S. Lincoln. 2011. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dika, S. L., and K. Singh. 2002. "Applications of Social Capital in Educational Literature: A Critical Synthesis." *Review of Educational Research* 72 (1): 31–60. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543072001031>.
- Elliot, Valerie, Allison Cammer, William Pickett, Barbara Marlenga, Joshua Lawson, James Dosman, Louise Hagel, Niels Koehncke, and Catherine Trask. 2018. "Towards a Deeper Understanding of Parenting on Farms: A Qualitative Study." *PloS One* 13 (6): e0198796 <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0198796>. PMC: 29897960
- Epstein, J. L. 1987. "Parent Involvement: What Research Says to Administrators." *Education and Urban Society* 19 (2): 119–136. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124587019002002>.
- Eriksson, L., J. Welander, and M. Granlund. 2007. "Participation in Everyday School Activities for Children with and without Disabilities." *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities* 19 (5): 485–502. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10882-007-9065-5>.
- Fan, J. 2014. "The Impact of Economic Capital, Social Capital and Cultural Capital: Chinese Families' Access to Educational Resources." *Sociology Mind* 04 (04): 272–281. <https://doi.org/10.4236/sm.2014.44028>.
- Finnerty, M. S., L. B. Jackson, and R. Ostergren. 2019. "Adaptations in General Education Classrooms for Students with Severe Disabilities: Access, Progress Assessment, and Sustained Use." *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities* 44 (2): 87–102. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1540796919846424>.
- Fisher, Y., A. M. FitzGerald, and A. Olson. 2022. "What Do Teacher-Education College Students Know about Parental Involvement: A Comparative Study between the US and Israel." *Education and Urban Society* 54 (6): 714–730. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00131245211026685>.
- Fu, W., J. Liang, L. Wang, R. Xu, and F. Xiao. 2022. "Teacher-Student Interaction in a Special School for Students with Developmental Disabilities in Chinese Context." *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities* 68 (2): 168–181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20473869.2020.1729018>.

- Gu, J., Y. Zhang, and H. Liu. 2014. "Importance of Social Capital to Student Creativity with- in Higher Education in China." *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 12: 14–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2013.12.001>.
- Haug, P. 2017. "Understanding Inclusive Education: Ideals and Reality." *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 19 (3): 206–217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15017419.2016.1224778>.
- Hay, Iain. 2000. *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Holt, L., S. Bowlby, and J. Lea. 2019. "Disability, Special Educational Needs, Class, Capitals, and Segregation in Schools: A Population Geography Perspective." *Population, Space and Place* 25 (4): E 2229. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2229>.
- Hrabéczy, A., T. Ceglédi, K. Bacskai, and G. Pusztai. 2023. "How Can Social Capital Become a Facilitator of Inclusion?" *Education Sciences* 13 (2): 109. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educs-ci13020109>.
- Huang, H., and X. Lin. 2019. "Chinese Parental Involvement and Class-Based Inequality in Education: The Role of Social Networking Sites." *Learning, Media and Technology* 44 (4): 489–501. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2019.1620767>.
- Huang, Y., S. Wang, U. Kellett, and C. Chen. 2020. "Shame, Suffering, and Believing in the Family: The Experiences of Grandmothers of a Grandchild with a Developmental Delay or Disability in the Context of Chinese Culture." *Journal of Family Nursing* 26 (1): 52–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1074840719895264>.
- Huang, Y., and M. Zhang. 2019. "A Study on the Allocation of Special Education Resources in China." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 6 (2): 14–22. <https://doi.org/10.14445/23942703/IJHSS-V6I2P103>.
- Imms, C., M. Granlund, P. H. Wilson, B. Steenbergen, P. L. Rosenbaum, and A. M. Gordon. 2017. "Participation, Both a Means and an End: A Conceptual Analysis of Processes and Outcomes in Childhood Disability." *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology* 59 (1): 16–25. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dmcn.13237>.
- Ingólfssdóttir, J. G., T. Jóhannsdóttir, and R. Traustadóttir. 2018. "Working Relationally to Promote User Participation in Welfare Services for Young Disabled Children and Their Families in Iceland." *Nordisk Vælfärdsvísun | Nordic Welfare Research* 3 (1): 33–46. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2464-4161-2018-01-04>.
- Koutsogeorgou, E., M. Leonardi, J. E. Bickenbach, M. Cerniauskaite, R. Quintas, and A. Raggi. 2014. "Social Capital, Disability, and Usefulness of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for the Development and Monitoring of Policy Interventions." *Disability & Society* 29 (7): 1104–1116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2014.910106>.
- Lareau, Annette, and Erin McNamara Horvat. 1999. "Moments of Social Inclusion and Exclusion, Race, Class, and Cultural Capital in Family-School Relationships." *Sociology of Education* 72 (1): 37–53. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2673185>.
- Li, X., B. L. Lindsay, A. C. Szeto, and K. S. Dobson. 2023. "An Examination of the Effect of Feedback on Meta-Ignorance of Mental Illness Public Stigma." *Metacognition and Learning* 18 (1): 165–181. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11409-022-09325-8>.
- Li, Z., S. Gan, and R. Jia. 2017. "The Impact of Social Capitals on Service Quality of Chinese Educational Institutions: A Multilevel Analysis." *Concurrency and Computation: Practice and Experience* 29 (24): e4217. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cpe.4217>.
- Lui, M., K. Sin, L. Yang, C. Forlin, and F. Ho. 2015. "Knowledge and Perceived Social Norm Predict Parents' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 19 (10): 1052–1067. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1037866>.

- Mak, W. W., and Y. T. Kwok. 2010. "Internalization of Stigma for Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Hong Kong." *Social Science & Medicine* (1982) 70 (12): 2045–2051. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2010.02.023>.
- Maxwell, Gregor R., Mats Granlund, and Lena Augustine. 2018. "Inclusion through Participation: Understanding Participation in the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health as a Methodological Research Tool for Investigating Inclusion." *Frontiers in Education* 3: 41. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2018.00041>.
- Maxwell, G., and E. Koutsogeorgou. 2012. "Using Social Capital to Construct a Conceptual International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health Children and Youth Version-Based Framework for Stronger Inclusive Education Policies in Europe." *American Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation* 91 (13 Suppl 1): S118–S123. <https://doi.org/10.1097/PHM.0b013e31823d4b92>.
- McCabe, H. 2007. "Parent Advocacy in the Face of Adversity: Autism and Families in the People's Republic of China." *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities* 22 (1): 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10883576070220010501>.
- McConkey, R., and L. Mariga. 2011. "Building Social Capital for Inclusive Education: Insights from Zanzibar." *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 11 (1): 12–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-3802.2010.01174.x>.
- Mitter, N., A. Ali, and K. Scior. 2019. "Stigma Experienced by Families of Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism: A Systematic Review." *Research in Developmental Disabilities* 89: 10–21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2019.03.001>.
- Molla, T., and L. Pham. 2019. "Capital, Capability and Educational Justice." *Policy Futures in Education* 17 (5): 575–581. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210319837835>.
- Murray, B., T. Domina, A. Petts, L. Renzulli, and R. Boylan. 2020. "We're in This Together": Bridging and Bonding Social Capital in Elementary School PTOs." *American Educational Research Journal* 57 (5): 2210–2244. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831220908848>.
- Nahapiet, J., and S. Ghoshal. 1998. "Social Capital, Intellectual Capital, and the Organizational Advantage." *The Academy of Management Review* 23 (2): 242–266. <https://doi.org/10.2307/259373>.
- Onyx, J., and P. Bullen. 2000. "Measuring Social Capital in Five Communities." *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 36 (1): 23–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886300361002>.
- Parcel, T. L., and M. J. Dufur. 2001. "Capital at Home and at School: Effects on Student Achievement." *Social Forces* 79 (3): 881–911. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2001.0021>.
- Posey-Maddox, L. 2013. "Professionalizing the PTO: Race, Class, and Shifting Norms of Parental Engagement in a City Public School." *American Journal of Education* 119 (2): 235–260. <https://doi.org/10.1086/668754>.
- Purola, K., and A. Kuusisto. 2021. "Parental Participation and Connectedness through Family Social Capital Theory in the Early Childhood Education Community." *Cogent Education* 8 (1): 1923361. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2021.1923361>.
- Putnam, R. D. 1994. "Social Capital and Public Affairs." *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 47 (8): 5–19. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3824796>.
- Radermacher, H., C. Sonn, C. Keys, and P. Duckett. 2010. "Disability and Participation: It's about us but Still without us!" *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 20 (5): 333–346. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.1039>.
- Rocco, L., and M. Suhrcke. 2012. *Is Social Capital Good for Health? A European Perspective*. Copenhagen, World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe.
- Ross, H., and J. Lin. 2006. "Social Capital Formation through Chinese School Communities." In *Children's Lives and Schooling across Societies*, 43–69. Bradford, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

- Ryan, C., and E. Quinlan. 2018. "Whoever Shouts the Loudest: Listening to Parents of Children with Disabilities." *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities: JARID* 31 Suppl 2 (S2): 203–214. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12354>.
- Shakespeare, T. 2006. "The Social Model of Disability." *The Disability Studies Reader* 2 (3): 197–204.
- Shakespeare, T. 2013. *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*. London: Routledge.
- Shang, X., K. R. Fisher, and J. Xie. 2011. "Discrimination against Children with Disability in China." *International Journal of Social Welfare* 20 (3): 298–308. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2397.2009.00666.x>.
- Silverman, R. M., and K. Patterson. 2021. *Qualitative Research Methods for Community Development*. New York: Routledge.
- Singh, M. K., and J. Moody. 2022. "Do Social Capital and Networks Facilitate Community Participation?" *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 42 (5/6): 385–398.
- Srivastava, P., and N. Hopwood. 2009. "A Practical Iterative Framework for Qualitative Data Analysis." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8 (1): 76–84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800107>.
- Su, Hui., Monica Cuskelly, Linda Gilmore, and Karen Sullivan. 2017. "Authoritative Parenting of Chinese Mothers of Children with and without Intellectual Disability." *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 26 (4): 1173–1183. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-016-0628-x>.
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol. 2010. "Equality Commission for Northern Ireland."
- Thornicroft, G., D. Rose, A. Kassam, and N. Sartorius. 2007. "Stigma: Ignorance, Prejudice or Discrimination?" *The British Journal of Psychiatry: The Journal of Mental Science* 190 (3): 192–193. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.106.025791>.
- Trainor, A. A. 2010. "Reexamining the Promise of Parent Participation in Special Education: An Analysis of Cultural and Social Capital." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 41 (3): 245–263. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1492.2010.01086.x>.
- Turley, R. N. L., A. Gamoran, A. T. McCarty, and R. Fish. 2017. "Reducing Children's Behavior Problems through Social Capital: A Causal Assessment." *Social Science Research* 61: 206–217. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2016.06.015>.
- UNICEF. 2018. "Children with Disability Atlas 2018." <https://www.unicef.cn/sites/unicef.org.china/files/2019-06/11EN-Children%20with%20disabilities%20Atlas%202018.pdf>
- Wang, D. 2008. "Family-School Relations as Social Capital: Chinese Parents in the United States." *School Community Journal* 18 (2): 119–146.
- Wang, Y. 2021. "Teachers Did Not Let Me Do It!: disabled Children's Experiences of Marginalisation in Regular Primary Schools in China." *Disability & the Global South*: 8, 2053–2070.
- Wong, M. E., K. K. Poon, S. Kaur, and Z. J. Ng. 2015. "Parental Perspectives and Challenges in Inclusive Education in Singapore." *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 35 (1): 85–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2013.878309>.
- Wu, J. 2020. "Mothering Special Children: Negotiating Gender, Disability, and Special Education in Contemporary China." *Harvard Educational Review* 90 (1): 26–48. <https://doi.org/10.17763/1943-5045-90.1.26>.
- Xie, A. 2016. *Family Strategies, Guanxi, and School Success in Rural China*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Xu, W., and K. Zammit. 2020. "Applying Thematic Analysis to Education: A Hybrid Approach to Interpreting Data in Practitioner Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 19: 1609406920918810. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920918810>.

- Yang, X., V. Byrne, and M. Y. Chiu. 2016. "Caregiving Experience for Children with Intellectual Disabilities among Parents in a Developing Area in C Hina." *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities: JARID* 29 (1): 46–57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12157>.
- Yeung, P., and A. Towers. 2014. "An Exploratory Study Examining the Relationships between the Personal, Environmental and Activity Participation Variables and Quality of Life among Young Adults with Disabilities." *Disability and Rehabilitation* 36 (1): 63–73. <https://doi.org/10.3109/09638288.2013.777808>.
- Zablotsky, B., L. I. Black, M. J. Maenner, L. A. Schieve, M. L. Danielson, R. H. Bitsko, S. J. Blumberg, M. D. Kogan, and C. A. Boyle. 2019. "Prevalence and Trends of Developmental Disabilities among Children in the United States: 2009–2017." *Pediatrics* 144 (4): e20190811. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-0811>.
- Zhang, H., and D. Arya. 2024. "The Importance Of 'Guanxi' for Parents of Children with Autism: A Study of Social Capital in Navigating School Sources." *Review of Disability Studies: An International Journal* 18 (4): 1–40.
- Zhang, H., R. Han, L. Wang, and R. Lin. 2021. "Social Capital in China: A Systematic Literature Review." *Asian Business & Management* 20 (1): 32–77. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41291-019-00081-3>.
- Zhang, Y., and S. Rosen. 2018. "Confucian Philosophy and Contemporary Chinese Societal Attitudes toward People with Disabilities and Inclusive Education." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 50 (12): 1113–1123. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2018.1434505>.