



SESSION ABSTRACT

Between protection and participation. How to do research with children on difficult subjects

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Abstract: This panel focuses on the challenges (and ideas how to overcome them) faced by researchers doing research on difficult subjects with children. While children are often conceptualized as helpless and at risk, in the paradigm of childhood studies they are perceived as competent actors with their own needs, views, and ethics, that should be heard and taken into account by adults and policymakers. One of the basic goals of childhood studies as a discipline is to empower children and allow their participation in the social life. At the same time, however, the researchers are aware of the imbalance of power between the adult researcher and the child participant and the risks such encounter make pose, especially when the subject of the research is difficult or traumatic.

The panel aims to explore how to research and write about painful and demanding experiences. How to recognize and define “difficult subjects” at the stage of research design and after? How to do participatory research that engages children as active, informed and informative agents? How to avoid secondary traumatic stress in such research? We would like to invite not only researchers who work with children whose situations are particularly vulnerable (for example children who experienced violence, migration, disease, etc.), but also researchers who investigate children’s perceptions of events such as problems within family or school, and researchers interested in children’s emic perspective on what is “difficult”, to together reflect on the ways such research should be done. Our panel is open for papers focusing on methodological, theoretical, and ethical dimensions of childhood studies. We especially encourage reflections based on ethnographic research and presentations of case studies.

SESSION SCHEDULE

Wednesday, September 28, 2022 | Slot 5 | Room 2

Ewa Maciejewska-Mroczek: Research of childhood during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ethical dilemmas and methodological challenges

Ahhyun Cho: Studying With Child, Studying With Confusion

Zuzana Terry: Marginalized education trajectory

Timothy Head & Alexis Sancho-Reinoso: Towards a participatory ethics in policing research: lessons from an East London youth project

Gabriela Piña: How do we talk peacefully about violence? Children's perspective of ethnic violence in southern Chile

SESSION PAPERS

Research of childhood during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ethical dilemmas and methodological challenges

Ewa Maciejewska-Mroczek

Research with children under restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic posed not only methodological challenges, but also provoked rethinking of certain aspects of relations between children and researchers. In my presentation, I will discuss ethical problems which arised in two research projects, which I conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In March 2020, shortly after schools were closed, I started collecting children's accounts about the pandemic. Via the social media and with the help of parents, teachers and journalists, I managed to gather several works, mainly drawings and photographs. All the works were made accessible for researchers and the public online. My aim was to find out what children thought about the pandemic, but I didn't have a chance to speak to the authors of the works gathered in the archive. Moreover, I was only able to reach a specific group of young people: mostly children from middle class families, whose parents made the effort of photographing the works and sending them to us. I will discuss ethical aspects of such method of collecting research data.

When most of education institutions were closed in Poland, preschools remained generally open, but it was not possible for any adults, besides the employees, to enter them. To be able to study children's views about their situation, I decided to conduct my research in cooperation with preschool teachers. I created the methodology of research together with teachers, provided them with ongoing support, and discussed the results on the regular basis – all of that online. I will discuss the value and risks embedded in such research from the ethical point of view.

I would like to make these examples a point of departure of the discussion on relations between the researchers and children participants.

Studying With Child, Studying With Confusion

Ahhyun Cho

Taking South Korea's Residential Child Care Institution as an entry point, this study shares the hardship of studying care in childcare facilities mainly through sights and voices of children who are currently in the facility. It first situates the residential child care institution in the contexts of South Korea's developmental transition and the universal rise of child rights. Drawing upon participant observation of a residential child care institution for child requiring protection in South Korea, I will share what I did to 'institutionalize' and sometimes 'deinstitutionalize' myself into the research site. By the term 'institutionalization', I mean to describe researchers and research in terms and methods familiar to the members. And the term 'deinstitutionalization' refers to the process of explaining to the participants the terms and methods unfamiliar to the members.

As research participation itself considered as one of additional experience of unnecessary pain of living without house and parent, or at least unnecessary discomfort to the participants, I focus on how me and facility members coordinate situations that are either typical or exceptional routines of institutional lives. Those coordinating situations are mostly due to confounding the research with much familiarized institutional lives – (1) The identity of a female researcher in her twenties being misidentified with another caregiver in the facility, which is mostly female in their twenties to thirties, (2) in-depth interview research for child participants being misunderstood as counseling child victims, and (3) participatory observation being misunderstood as child abuse monitoring by the caregiver. By experiencing these confusions, I argue how institution's daily practices and research about them can be grasped by taking confusion of research with others seriously.

Marginalized education trajectory

Zuzana Terry

Although the craftsmen are a scarce commodity in the Czech Republic, very few parents would like their children to learn the craftsmanship/ vocational education trajectory (VET) there. According to Korbel and Münich (2021), in the past 15 years, children in Czechia are applying for VET education because they are not able to participate in an educational program with a higher academic level due to their school results. Learning the craft is on the fringe, not only on the fringe of the interest of schoolchildren and their parents but also of politics and society itself.

I aim to describe the role of school institutions in pupils' navigation through the social landscape, describe the influence of the hidden curriculum and teachers' practice on the self-identification of pupils in vocational schools and the problematics of research with teens in precarious position. The hidden curriculum is not explicitly taught; it is an unwritten curriculum transmitted in the school through the interactions of social actors and internalising social norms and values. It aims to show the structures of formal education in the Czech Republic leading to low social mobility, not utilising the potential of an individual in society and creating a "working class" with injured dignity (Sennett and Cobb 1993). This school ethnography of a VAT class describes the passage of pupils with low educational ambitions through apprenticeship education and their teachers, who fail in their role as navigators of a smooth and safe passage through the social landscape of adolescence.

I describe the structures of formal secondary education on the basis of a three-year research of a secondary vocational school, where I worked as a teacher.

Towards a participatory ethics in policing research: lessons from an East London youth project

Timothy Head, Yolanda Lear, Alexis Sancho-Reinoso

When applying a degree of ‘institutional reflexivity’ to the disciplines of anthropology, sociology and youth studies, we can see how huge inequalities exist within hierarchies of knowledge production (Emirbayer & Desmond, 2012). Within studies of ‘policed’ children and young people, in particular, we can see how this field is dominated by a small selection of widely-cited white, male, middle-class academics. There are few researchers who share the demographic background – *much less the lived experience* – of the heavily policed young people and children researchers study.

In this paper, we argue that a paradigm shift is needed in research on the ‘policing of youth’ that reorients how the academy treats the young classed and racialised subjects of policing. In short, we argue that much greater work is needed to contest and challenge the structures of power and legitimation underlying research; structures we argue that lead certain (directly implicated) ‘policed’ children and young people to become excluded from processes of academic knowledge production.

Building on the work of critical criminologists (Phillips et al., 2020) and Participatory Action Research (PAR) scholars (Fine, 2018; Freire, 1970) we argue for the development of youth-led research programmes led by thus far excluded populations *from the start and to the end* (not merely during data collection) within alternative forms of research, theorising or theorising-in-action (Torre & Fine, 2011).

To explore these arguments, we draw on some reflections from two years of experience working with a youth-led police monitoring and research project based in Hackney, East London. This project, based on principles of community empowerment, critical knowledge-production, Black liberation and youth-led social justice, is evaluated as a case study in order to explore the opportunities and challenges of developing participatory research with children and young people who carry first-hand experiences of policing, police violence, and racial discrimination.

How do we talk peacefully about violence? Children’s perspective of ethnic violence in southern Chile

Gabriela Piña

The proposed paper is based on ongoing participatory research among Mapuche and non-Mapuche children and youth in southern Chile. The Mapuche people are the largest indigenous group in South America. Their homeland, traditionally located across southern Chile and Argentina, has been mostly occupied by the Chilean state and European settlers since 1883, leaving Mapuche communities living in crowded plots of land and forcing many to resettle in big cities. The Mapuche people have resisted this occupation and have attempted to reach a better stance in Chilean society through different strategies, some groups operate inside Chilean institutions while others through land occupations and actions of sabotage. In reaction to this, the

Chilean state has mostly responded with force making small progress towards coming up with a political solution. In the last years, violence has escalated on both sides affecting the lives of most people living in the area. The military is often deployed to the areas of starkest conflict and a faction of the Mapuche political movement has resorted to violence frequently staging roadblocks and arson attacks.

In this context, my research explores children's perception of ethnic conflict and violence, placing the focus on how children understand violence, how the conflict affects their everyday lives and how they exert their agency to avoid, lessen and resist the negative effects of the conflict. Though children's well-being is often mentioned in public discourse, children are always presented as passive victims. This research takes resilience and not vulnerability as a starting point and understands children as active members of their communities. Finding myself at the start of this project, this proposed paper discusses the methodological and ethical challenges of addressing the issue of ethnic violence with children who find themselves on different sides of the ethnic divide.