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CHILDHOOD REMIXED JOURNAL **CONFERENCE EDITION**

Papers drawn from the International
Children and Childhoods Conference
held at University of Suffolk – July 2019

WELCOME



Professor Helen Langton
Vice-Chancellor and CEO, University of Suffolk

As Vice-Chancellor and also a children's nurse it is a great privilege to welcome readers to this issue of papers collated from the Children and Childhoods conference. The quality of papers and topics covered mirror the excellence experienced at the conference itself and it is exciting to see this area of research and practice growing in depth and breadth over the years.

The title Childhood Remixed has never been so topical. As so many of our children are having their childhoods remixed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's good to reflect on the importance of ensuring that we don't just get stuck in one model of childhood – and often our own – but take the opportunity to continually revisit what childhood means and how context impacts, often in profound and long lasting ways.

The impact of COVID-19 on childhoods will be felt for many decades, socially, culturally, physically, economically and globally. It is not

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often that we are able to say that one 'thing' will profoundly impact childhood across our globe and whilst the experience will be felt and perceived differently, the outcomes will have some common factors which gives a fantastic opportunity for further interdisciplinary research and practice work and development in the coming years. Whether it's the impact of home schooling, lone parenting and not having enough to eat, or the impact of restricted and changed social interaction which we have always seen as so central to child development, following different cohorts of children and different ages, stages and in widely different genres global communities will bring insights that will serve us well for future generations.

Whilst we all hope that the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact becomes a distant memory, this is not the first pandemic our world has experienced and it is unlikely to be the last. We therefore owe it to children everywhere to research and learn from how this disease has both affected our children and how we either have managed well or could have managed better to mitigate the risks to children in the future.

I commend this issue to you and urge you all to consider what opportunities the current pandemic gives for future collaborative work for the benefit of childhood to come.

Times of change and notes from the editors

Dr Allison Boggis, Associate Professor

Just as the Vice Chancellor suggested in her welcome to this 7th publication of Childhood Remixed, we are clearly living in times of unprecedented change. My retirement from the University of Suffolk coincides with these changes and consequently this edition is my final contribution as editor.

In 2012, I had the privilege of being one of the four founder members of Childhood Remixed. It was an exciting time for us back then because whilst most journals were still being printed in hard copy, we took the opportunity to publish online and from within our own University. Our unique point of difference was that we wanted to build a reputation for being a safe, collegiate and non-threatening space to publish, where established and early career academics, professionals and students would rub shoulders, share ideas and embrace a variety of approaches to open up and critique extant and emergent debates about childhood and children's lived experience. Our aim was quite simple, we wanted to join emerging debates about childhood and engage intellectually with topics relating to children. Eight years and 7 editions further down the line, I am very proud that Childhood Remixed has achieved what it set out to do. The eclectic mix of articles and submissions published have investigated and explored many aspects of childhood, bringing together people from all over the world, from different backgrounds and discipline areas, to share ideas and explore various discussions which are innovative and inspire.

As I prepare to retire, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all contributors and supporters of Childhood Remixed. Special thanks go to the authors, reviewers, editors, those that have written the Welcome and the many people who have worked behind the scenes ensuring each edition looks grand. I am entrusting the Editorship to Dr Marianna Stella, a highly valued colleague of mine from the University of Suffolk, who I am sure will take this journal to new heights. I hope you enjoy this edition of Childhood Remixed.

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Dr Marianna Stella, Lecturer in Education and Childhood Studies

I am honoured and privileged to be taking over the role of Editor of Childhood Remixed. I would like to thank Allison Boggis for entrusting me with this great responsibility. With everyone's support, we can take Childhood Remixed to new heights by building on and further expanding the amazing diversity of authors and topics that we have seen so far published in this journal.

I hope you enjoy this 7th edition and I am looking forward to sharing with you many future editions of Childhood Remixed.

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Ian Ndlovu

Independent Social Worker/Researcher, United Kingdom

BORN ELSEWHERE, RAISED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM: CONVERSATIONS WITH 'CHILDREN' BORN IN ZIMBABWE

'It takes a village to raise a child', Old African Proverb.

Abstract

This paper interrogates the experiences of 'children' born in Zimbabwe and raised in the United Kingdom and how they adapted and integrated into the new socio-cultural environment that they found themselves in after relocating from their country of origin. The paper examines the cultural tenets of raising children and the concept of the 'voice of the child' which is emphasised in Social Work practice as well as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990). The paper seeks to draw important lessons from these experiences and the discourses that are mainly the child's voice, communication, safe spaces for children and cultural integration. It also highlights the African concept of 'Ubuntu' and how it is fundamental to African style of raising children. Finally, the paper argues that cultural tolerance and an understanding of divergent forms of parenting would be a good thing for children of migrants to settle in their new social environment.

Key terms: childhood, culture, discipline, integration

Introduction

This paper is primarily about seeking African (Zimbabwean) migrants' children views about the differences in their childhood experiences in Zimbabwe and England. The study sought to demonstrate that there are marked differences as to how childhood is defined and experienced in various regions around the world. To achieve this, the study employed a qualitative approach based on conversations with 'children' born in Zimbabwe and raised in the United Kingdom. These are children (some now

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adults) who left their home country behind with their parents/relatives at a very young age and came face-to-face with a new culture, language and for the first time feeling different or being ascribed the identity of the 'Other'. The dilemma of born elsewhere is illustrated by Cait Findlay who writes, in an article entitled *From Zimbabwe to Stamford: reflecting on my nationality*:

'Growing up in a different country to the one you currently live creates a unique set of experiences. There is no simple answer to the question, 'Where are you from?'. This may come with a complicated relationship with your accent, whether it is strikingly unusual, or whether it has evolved into something more conventional' (Cait Findlay, Tuesday August 14, 2018).

Findlay goes on to say, 'with time prior life becomes increasingly remote and memories are half-remembered'. Children of African migrants find themselves confined to the home space and not being able to play outside. They could not play their childhood games such as digging outside, running around wild kopjes, avoiding deadly snakes, making and driving wire cars. Another example is from Danai Nesta Kupemba, a Zimbabwe writer based in South Africa who reflected on experiences of arriving in England stating that 'I was four years old when we arrived and remember wondering where the sun had gone. But then it snowed and, convinced that I was living in my very own Christmas card, my infant self was won over. Any memories I had of Zimbabwe quickly disappeared' (<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/zimbabwe-england-story-war-home-identity-2016>). It didn't take long for Danai to get immersed in British culture and that earned her a nickname 'kasalad' (means a person who has lost their traditional ways). The big question is what happens when as a child you reject the identity of your parents and embrace or adopt that of those that your parents fought against.

One of the research participants, Noma (not real name) said 'It's a new life, just get on with it'. It can be viewed as making a choice of being an outsider or surrender and 'complete' adoption of the new culture. They had to learn new ways of doing things and make a lot of adjustments within their homes and outside their homes. Such changes were bound to affect the parenting style as parents and carers had to adjust to new expectations around parenting and discipline. I will discuss the fundamental tenets of the African way of parenting in the next section. There are tensions

in parenting, incompatible cultural practices around parenting and discipline and integration into the host community. This article will explore the implications for integration and safeguarding children in a new and challenging social environment. The paper juxtaposes that there is strength in the argument that childhood is social construction and is cultural specific or influenced by the environment and further that the concept of 'Ubuntu' (a sense of collective belonging) is fundamental in the experiences of African children raised in the United Kingdom. The fundamental focus of this small study is what the research participants made of these experiences and what they think they had, a mixture of Africaness and Britishness or more of the later.

Literature review

There is a dearth of literature on childhood experiences of children born in Zimbabwe partly because not many Zimbabweans lived in the United Kingdom prior to 2000 when there was instability and turmoil in the former British colony leading to the economic meltdown of the past two decades. According to Humphris (2010), there were no concrete figures for how many Zimbabweans were residing in the United Kingdom. The 2001 Census put the figure at 49303 which was a 130% increase from the 1991 Census which recorded 21 427. The UK Office of National Statistics stated that there were 122 000 Zimbabweans living in the UK in 2010 and put the 2001 figure at 49 5324. Looking back to 1971, there were only 7 905 Zimbabweans living in the United Kingdom. It is widely acknowledged that the National Health Service attracted many Zimbabwe nurses and doctors and that the political and economic turmoil of the early 2000s contributed to the influx of Zimbabweans into the UK. Some of the migrants have sought to integrate into the local ways of life and to raise their children in their host countries at the same time viewing Zimbabwe as home (Muzondidya, 2011).

As this study focuses on the lived experience of the children born in Zimbabwe and raised in the United Kingdom, it is imperative that the starting point should be in how childhood is viewed globally and in their country of origin and the difference of growing up in the host country. Ndlovu (2015) argues that that Zimbabwe, as a country, is characterised by multiple childhoods ranging from Ndebele, Shona, Xhosa, Kalanga, Sotho and Tonga among many other ethnic groups. This pattern is found

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across the continent of Africa. Aries, in *The Sociology of Childhood*, conceptualised childhood as a social and cultural construction influenced by large historical forces (Aries, 1965). Aries' strongest point was the acknowledgement of a gradual process of separating adults and children as new family attitudes around the child and education evolved. Jenks (1996, p.7) says 'childhood is to be understood as a social construct, it makes reference to a social status delineated by boundaries that vary through time and from society but which are incorporated within the structure and thus manifested through and formative of certain typical forms of conduct'. Childhood always relates to a cultural setting and as Maynard and Thomas (2004) argue, it is not the same in different times and places.

Perhaps the strongest argument about childhood is advanced by James and James (2004, p.15) who state that 'childhood is the structural site that is occupied by children as a collective. And it is within this collective and institutional space of childhood, as a member of the category that any individual child comes to exercise his or her unique agency'. Wells (2009) sees childhood as socially constructed but with profoundly different expectations depending on the society and culture of any specific time or place. It also has universal features in that all children have similar needs and limitations by virtue of their immaturity. There are others like DeMause (1998) and Pollock (1983) who argue along similar lines about the social construction of childhood including Holloway and Valentine (2002) who state that where children live will shape their experience of the world as well as expectations placed on them by society.

Childhood and the culture of raising children in Zimbabwe

To bring the point closer to home, Graves (1988) points out that a person, in Shona life, is a member of the community and the Shona culture (the Shona are the biggest ethnic group in Zimbabwe) subordinates the separateness of personal identity to the well-being of the community. Gelfand (1965) talks about the importance of communal identity in his writings about Shona life that demonstrates the importance of the family unit which is a strong and closely knit unit with a powerful magnetic pull drawing each one into its bonds. Tutu (1999) takes this point further by bringing the concept of 'Ubuntu' which means 'my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs. We belong in a bundle of life. We say a person is

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person through other people: It is not I think therefore I am'. It says rather: 'I am human because I belong'. The tenets of 'Ubuntu' are embedded in parenting of children into becoming good citizens. In such a society, the ideals of individualism are not appreciated. It is from such backgrounds that children born elsewhere arrived in a new environment where the family unit is confined to its own space. The multitude of extended family members playing a role in the upbringing of children was non-existent for many African families in England. The Zimbabwean migrant parent tends to avoid what Gelfand (1984) refers to as the 'unusual' and follows what is customary or usual practices of his/her society. The concept of 'Ubuntu' sets the gold standard of human behaviour and governs relations with those deemed to lack 'Ubuntu' considered deviants and at risk of alienation such as demonstrated in the case of Danam (introduction section).

The old African proverb above underlines that raising a child is a communal responsibility. The proverb embraces and embodies the fundamental principle of raising children in African societies. According to Gomba (2018, p.25), 'Traditionally children do not belong exclusively to their parents but also to the community and the broader group of kin, a fact that is recognised in Article 31 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.' This is a social reality that the researcher recognises from their own childhood in rural Zimbabwe and can relate to. In the broader African context and Zimbabwean context this means, in principle, the community and wider society has considerable authority over parents and by implication a need for parental and communal guidance. The cultural bond is stronger in rural areas where most of the Zimbabwean population live.

The reality is that everyone knows everyone in their village and children in the neighbourhood play together with little or no adult supervision. Their safety is a communal responsibility. Older children have the responsibility of protecting younger children when they are playing outside the family home and every adult has a responsibility to enforce discipline on any child in the community or bring to the parents' attention any misdemeanour observed. Every adult commands respect from every child whether they have met them before or not and it is a norm for children to greet adults first. Adults are not called or referred to in their first names but as 'mother of' or 'father of' or 'grandparent of', 'uncle of' or 'aunt of'. There are limits

as to what constitutes acceptable methods of discipline. Brutalising any child is against the law in Zimbabwe and the country has a Child Protection and Adoption Act (Children Act 5:6) similar but not as robust as the United Kingdom's Children Act 1989. In most cases adults tell young people how to go about their lives (emphasis on 'Ubuntu'). It is from the above cultural ways of raising children that the study sought to examine the experiences of children/individuals born elsewhere and raised in the United Kingdom. The study looks at what the experiences meant for the children and what lessons can be drawn from the experiences.

Methodology and theoretical framework underpinning the study

The study employed a qualitative approach to gather information directly from the participants. The paper takes a social constructionist perspective to explore childhood experiences of children of migrants from Zimbabwe, that childhood is not the same in different places and times (Jenks, 1996; Maynard and Thomas, 2004). Adopting a social constructionist perspective enables the study to explore what the participants make of their individual experiences in two culturally different settings and the challenges they faced in a new environment. Fundamental to the study is the concept of Ubuntu which underpins child rearing practices in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. Ubuntu underpins the Africaness and expectations on children.

The theoretical consideration taken in this study is based on the view of childhood as a social position in movement as 'beings in the process of becoming'. Furthermore, the theoretical framework draws from four terms suggested by Creswell (1994) on how to carry out qualitative research, that is, explore, understand, examine, and describe data generated in the study. The study was based on participants telling their stories in a way they understood their lived experiences which were recorded giving them space to reflect on those childhood experiences. The fundamental idea was to listen to their stories and their narratives as individuals with agency about their lives. Mack et al. (2005) postulate that the element of dialogue enables the researcher to work through the four key elements expounded by Creswell. The theoretical framework enabled the researcher to deepen the understanding of the lived experiences of children born in Zimbabwe and raised in the United Kingdom and in the process obtaining temporal and 'confined' knowledge about those experiences both in Zimbabwe and

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in the United Kingdom childhood context.

A total of seven semi-structured interviews were completed of which five were face-to-face and two recorded over the phone. The conversations were also influenced by the unfolding of specific lived experiences relating to research questions. Six of the participants live in Southend-on-Sea and one lives in Corby. They all spoke fluent English and spoke their mother language (Ndebele). Only one respondent came to the United Kingdom aged about four years of age and the rest were aged between 8 and 13 years. Their views were captured using a digital recorder. The respondents were asked questions starting with their ages and how old they were when they came to the United Kingdom. There were questions about their family background such as what they were doing and where they lived before coming to the United Kingdom. The interviews touched on their first experience of life in the United Kingdom and progressed to their experiences as they grew up in a new environment. The interviews touched on what they found easy or challenging and how they dealt with issues of identity. Reflections on the experiences was covered at the end of the interviews with a view to gain insight into what would be beneficial to children of Zimbabwean migrants.

Sample size

The selection and identification of research participants was based on a purposeful rather than randomness criteria, that is, they were recruited for having specific knowledge, experience about the topic under study and willingness to take part in the study. The main identifiable criteria were that they were born in Zimbabwe and came to England when they were children. These markers were important in capturing their childhood experiences. I also tried to balance gender to compare male and female children's experiences bearing in mind the different socialisation processes in the African context.

There were three females and four males aged between 17 and 28 years of age. All the participants were born in Zimbabwe and came to the United Kingdom when they were aged between 4 and 13 years of age, arriving in the United Kingdom between 2001 and 2010. They had either started nursery or primary school in Zimbabwe and most of them had a good level

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of spoken English. The participants were drawn mostly from families that live in Southend-on-Sea which has a sizeable population of Zimbabweans. The UK Office of National Statistics estimates that 200 000 to 500 000 Zimbabwean born people were living in the United Kingdom in 2013 with London estimated to have 40 000, Leeds and Luton with 20 000 each (Ndlovu, 2013). The estimates include undocumented immigrants.

The first participant was recruited after discussion at a funeral service of a young person from Zimbabwe and it was around experiences of people born in Zimbabwe and raised in the United Kingdom. It was strikingly important to reflect as the deceased was going to be buried in Zimbabwe. The interviews were conducted in English and the shortest was about 40 minutes and the longest was one hour and twenty-two minutes. Five of the interviews were conducted at the participants' homes. The interviews were conducted during weekends between March and June 2019.

Consent and anonymity

The issue of consent is of paramount importance to any research/study. Consent was negotiated directly with participants in accordance with the Gillick Competency Test and Fraser guidelines which arose from the legal case in 1985 where British courts ruled that those under 16 years could consent to medical treatment once they showed sufficient understanding to make sensible choices (Willow, 2002). All the participants were over the age of 16 years. A verbal explanation was given to each participant at the beginning of the interview on the objectives and aims of the study as well as how their information will be used. All participants consented to take part in the study and fully understood that participation was voluntary, and they can withdraw from the study at any point and that their information will be handled and treated with the strictest confidence. The participants were made aware of how their information will be anonymised to protect their identity by using pseudo/random names without changing the characteristics of individual narratives when presenting data (BSA, 2004).

Data analysis

A thematic approach was used to analyse the data gathered during interviews and to tell the lived experiences of participants in their own words. This approach was chosen because it offers accessibility and theoretical flexibility to analysing qualitative data (Braun and Clarke,

2006). A thematic approach also enables the explicit interpretation of the meanings and human actions based on the data descriptions and explanations from the data sets collected as well as offers the scope for a systematic search of patterns emerging from the data to describe the phenomenon under study (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998; Tesch, 1990). In analysing data, I listened to all recorded interviews and transcribed them, wrote summaries from where themes emerged, highlighting common experiences and different experiences. The narratives from the interviews provided valuable data from which patterns emerged and formed the bedrock of the lived experiences.

There were two sets of data with the first set focusing on demographic information and the timeline of when they first arrived in the United Kingdom and the second set of data dealt with the lived experiences both in Zimbabwe and in England. I used quotes from the interviews to highlight the lived experiences as well as grouping similar experiences and differences such as the tensions between Africaness and Britishness. It was evident that there are inherent tensions between the concept of 'Ubuntu' which underpins African childhood and the social environment which pulls children of migrants to a different direction as well as the dictates of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child for recognition of the child's voice to be heard.

Findings

The findings of this study show that children of Zimbabwean migrants faced unprecedented challenges in the new environment and had to adjust in many respects with some building a false sense of belonging. The participants described similar experiences of a cultural shift and having to adjust to be an 'African child in the house and someone else outside the family home'. This rhymes with the old Japanese proverb that that 'everyone has three faces, the one they show at home and the second they show the world and by extension a third that they keep to themselves'. To bring the point home one of the participants said, 'when I get home from school, I am a dishwasher, my friends did not know that we did not have a dishwasher. I spoke as if we had one'. For example, Benedict (not real name) stated that there was 'a risk of not being African enough and not being British enough'. There was an issue of 'not knowing where you are going to fit, a tendency to drift away but deep down you feel different'. There is a strong argument

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that norms about childhood and behaviour need to be understood in the context of where and when people live. This supports the view that childhood is a social construction and is influenced by the culture and environmental factors where people live.

They were new experiences like in Benedict's case such as picking up stuff in school like answering back and African parents would put you back in line (teach you 'Ubuntu'). In his view 'migrant children spend a lot of time being bombarded by English culture which you leave at the door when you arrive from school'. For most of the children they get asked the question 'where are you from?'. This alerts them to the fact that they are different and brings about the sense of being 'out of place' and it may have implications for the future. Benedict was called 'Nigger boy' at school and at primary school was kicked everyday by another boy with whom he later became good friends. He never told his parents about this experience. Most of the participants did not struggle adjusting to school in the United Kingdom because they had started their early years education in Zimbabwe and spoke a good level of English. There were new experiences like being taken to school by parents and being picked up after school which was new to many of the participants. In Zimbabwe, children go to school on their own from early age and are usually looked after by older ones including neighbours who go to the same school. They could go anywhere in the community if they are trusted by the parents or carers (depending on age). One participant found herself being the only one who stood up when the teacher entered the classroom. However, two of the participants felt they had to assume an English accent, 'wanted to fit with them, be accepted and be one of them'. Yet when they returned home, they would revert to be an African child and revert to the African way of speaking.

For most of the boys there was a change from having a lot of space outside to play, no need for toys as they drove wire cars and had lots of friends to play with outside the family home. There are family values that one cannot run away from such as that a community raises a child whereas in the United Kingdom your neighbour has nothing to do with you. In the United Kingdom they found themselves confined to the house and it was hard to go out to play with friends. Parents would ask a lot of questions like 'who are you going out with?'. Things like sleep overs are a big no for African

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parents. One of the participants described it as being 'yourself in the house and you play a caricature out there'. There is also a worry about being found out.

In the Zimbabwean culture a child must listen to adults, do as told and no questions asked. Benedict (not real name) said 'Parents do not listen to you when you are younger'. John (not real name) said the expectations from parents is that 'you have to come in, sit down, kneel down when I am talking to you'. He now questions why it must be that way. Mazondo (18) said 'I want a tattoo, I want to grow dreadlocks and ear piercing ', my parents won't allow that yet that's what I want and that's my identity'. Parental control was common across the group of participants and parents would say 'as long as you are under my roof you can't do certain things', remarked Mazondo. Most of the participants found it hard to deal with this and felt left out, unable to connect with their peers.

Mercy (21) came to the United Kingdom when she was 8 years old to join her mother. For most of her early childhood she lived with her grandparents. Mercy summarised her experiences as follows:

'I can't go out with my friends, can't do sleep overs. I went to a good school before I came over to the United Kingdom, so I had no problems with the language, had an accent and got picked on at school for a short period. I had to adjust the way I spoke in school to fit and change when at home. I became a child with two faces, one for home and another face for when outside the home. My voice was heard more as I grew older and got the trust of my parent'.

John (not real name) was 8 years when he came with his mother to join his father. He summarised his experiences as follows:

'In Zimbabwe I played a lot outside the yard and out in the streets and could go anyway. In Zimbabwe you can go and play after school whereas in the UK you are kept in the house more and it is overcrowded in the house compared to a lot of space in Zimbabwe. My first thought when I arrived in the UK was to eat a burger when I came off the plane. I had

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watched a television show about burgers. I was surprised that the school gave children food rather than bringing your own food. I was surprised that teachers did not beat you, but you would get a bit of telling off. Discipline at home was harsh when I was younger. We talked about it with friends at school and would laugh about it. White boys would say 'My parents would not do that to me, call Social Services'. John said 'you start getting silly ideas as friends tell you what their parents allow them to do. There was no point of asking for permission to go with friends to parties or sleepovers. His friends understood and would say 'it is typical of African parents'.

One of the regrets that he has about strict African values is having to miss the opportunity for a sports scholarship which could have seen him go to a prestigious school because his parents did not approve of the sport as a career. His friend went for trials and got into the prestigious school. When he was much older, he had a discussion with one of his parents who apologised and said that they did not know at the time that that would have been a good opportunity for him in the future.

The effect of the above on John is that he was very angry at the age of 14/15, 'very frustrated because I could not go out with my friends'. He said he felt that his culture was pinning him down and wondered why his parents wanted him to do all those things. He described it as 'feeling like in a mini cage and started hating my parents and my culture. In these circumstances you start to say, 'I am different, you cannot relate to your peers, you start having people around you that you think you relate with'. The common experience among the participants was that as they grow older, they assume the identity of the 'other' and the 'I am an African identity' and this leads to separateness. John remarked 'I look at them and think I am not them. I am different'. That is a turning point and sees one as 'other' and 'them' (those that do not share the same identity).

Maddie (not real name), who came to the United Kingdom at the age of 4 years, had a lot of reflection on the parenting by African parents who regard the saying 'Spare the rod, spoil the child' as a gold standard of parenting. She remembers very little about life in Zimbabwe as she had just started nursery when she came to the UK with her parents. She reflected on her experiences with African parents that when adults come into the room

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children must give way and sit somewhere. There is very little interaction with adults except when given instructions. In the African culture parents rarely tell their children who they are such as not being allowed to know your parents' names.

Maddie said she found that where parents find things difficult, they hide behind culture. Interestingly, her view was that you cannot pick and choose but it should be a balancing act. Her view was that 'you cannot raise your child to think their culture is inferior or western culture is what we are going to adopt and then say we are not going to do that'. Maddie went on to say that 'the country that we live in puts a big emphasis on the child's voice'. She said 'your children can tell on you, tell the police about your parenting because they can and that's not a bad thing. It is a double-edged sword'. She reflected on her own experiences to those of her younger sibling born in the UK and said she felt she was more obedient than her younger sibling who is called five times by her mother before responding or doing anything whereas for her it was one call and she will comply immediately. This is different parenting for the same generation and probably a result of adaptations made by parents. Even now at the age of 21 she is terrified of her mother and described this as 'blind obedience without any questions'. She said, 'I will do whatever I am asked to do'. This underlines the view that African parents have authority over their children and can do as they please and that underlines the status of a child in the family. On strict African parenting, Maddie said she has heard about stress positions and her view was that these should not feature in anyone's parenting style as they do not do these things even at Guantanamo Bay Prison anymore. Emphasising her view of striking the balance she said, 'the naughty step is rubbish; it is like classical conditioning' and the children realise that what they need to do is just sit down for any misdemeanour and that does not necessarily change future behaviour.

These findings bear the hallmark of retrospective research as the study was done at the time when most of them were no longer children. They had the benefit of hindsight as well as reflecting on their lived experiences by tracing their childhood journey from Zimbabwe. They had vivid memories about their experiences in England, especially in their formative years. Their memories about life in Zimbabwe were fading as demonstrated in Danai's

experiences. They became absorbed in the pull of the new culture and had to contend with different expectations at home and projected different behaviour outside the home to fit in with their peers. They re-discovered their African identity as they grew older. The findings show that the concept of 'Ubuntu' is central to the African parenting style and there are cultural expectations placed on children no matter where they live.

Implications for integration and safeguarding children

One of the most important views from the participants was that parents do not realise that they cannot bring their children into the United Kingdom and expect them to turn out as they would back home. For example, Bravo pointed out that there is an expectation that 'if you see an aunt in the bus or any black woman in the bus you need to behave otherwise one day you will find them sitting on the sofa in your home'. The African tradition that children belong to the large community context applied to the participants. Just as it would be in the country of origin, aunties will tell parents about the child's behaviour and that kept Bravo in check as he could not bear the consequences of his parents saying 'I am disappointed in you'. It is important for parents to realise that they are parenting in a different cultural and socio-economic environment. They are parenting children with two faces, one for the home and one for the outside. One respondent described his lived experience as having been 'an African kid at home, a dish washer' and another personality when out in the community with friends where there is pressure to 'belong'. Peer pressure is a big thing and one must strike a balance of Africaness and Britishness. Parents should understand that a child must assimilate some aspects of the culture of the host country without losing their cultural heritage and that life becomes difficult if they do not.

The lived experiences of children born in Zimbabwe suggest that they faced many challenges in maintaining the Africaness against the strong pull of the host culture that they interacted with most of the time in school and in the community. Most of the participants were conversant with the African culture around the child's place in the home and experienced differences to what their counterparts were experiencing. In the African tradition children are seen and less heard as opposed to the new environment where a child's voice must be heard. It is when they reach

their teens that children in African households gradually get their voice and start to exercise their unique agency. As Bravo (not real name), one of the respondents, remarked that 'the African culture gives you respect as you grow older'. They talk more to their parents as they grow older. Some of the young people long for the opportunity to be free from restrictive parenting such as going to university or going to work away from home. John (not real name) said, 'it is better to experience things while you are still living at home because there are more boundaries than when you are on your own'. In the big scheme of things the participants fit into what one of them (Benedict- not real name) called a 'hybrid generation', a combination of three 'worlds' (the African conservative, the urbanised Black African and the new British) or 'tester babies'. The parents never prepared to emigrate with children, losing your identity and not being British enough hence the term 'children with two faces', a term used by most of the participants.

Conclusions and recommendations

The aim of this study is to build on and extend current knowledge and understanding of the subject area where there is a dearth in literature. As stated in the literature review, there is a growing number of migrants in Zimbabwe, most of them having arrived in the early 2000s. Their children's experiences shine the light on what migrant children from Zimbabwe experienced in the new environment. The findings of this small study demonstrate that childhood is a social construction dictated and affected by contextual factors (Shanahan, 2007). The lived experiences of the participants in this study show that childhood experiences are affected by place and space factors, including cultural factors which place expectations on young persons. It was remarkable to do retrospective research given the huge age difference in participants (4-13) when they came to England and the age (17-28) when the interviews were conducted. Recollection of life in Zimbabwe was difficult for those just above four years old when they arrived in England. The older ones were mature enough to cast their minds back as well as introspect on those personal experiences and how different life was when they came to England, more of a culture shock. It was possible to see their journey in retrospect.

Central to the social construction of the respondents' childhood was the concept of 'Ubuntu' which put limits to the extent of integration into the new environment. The study demonstrates the difficulties faced by children

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born elsewhere in their new environment where they must adjust to a lot of things in order to fit, such as speaking with a different accent at home and when outside the home. This adjustment arises out of trying to identify with the new environment rather than wanting to be what they have not been on arrival. The language was not an issue for many of the children as they already had a good level of primary education where English was taught as a subject. The main issues arose when they tried to integrate into the local culture and to the dictates of the new environment. This caused a lot of tension between the children and their parents and led to angry young people who were frustrated that they could not join their peers and become 'irrelevant' when they meet their friends and have conversations at school. One respondent's way of dealing with this was to find a way by saying he could not meet up with his friends because he was playing basketball. He avoided taking cocaine by claiming that he gets tested in the basketball team otherwise he would have been a 'joke' to his peers. Children of Zimbabwean migrants had to cope with being 'different' or the 'other' while maintaining the balance in holding on to cultural values and norms. At the end of the day this makes integration difficult but also raises safeguarding issues as parents try to assert their African standard of parenting.

As stated earlier, the culture subordinates the separateness of personal identity. The experiences of those born elsewhere suggest that over time there are adjustments made by parents and things are much better for the younger ones as they gain a better understanding of the new culture. It is not only children who have to adjust but also the parents for the sake of their children. The parents must embrace the concept of the 'voice of the child' instead of excusing or dismissing everything. It is important to embrace what would give the child opportunities rather than restrictive parenting.

Overall, the Zimbabwean style of parenting plays an important part in the lives of African children raised in the United Kingdom in that they maintain an African identity as they become older. The concept of 'Ubuntu' plays an important part in raising a child as it is based on the principle of raising an individual who will uphold African values which include self-respect and disciplined. It is easy for one to be labelled 'un-African' or lacking

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'Ubuntu' due to lack of values imparted by parents during childhood. The big question could be whether there is a disconnect between the children's experiences and African parenting style. It would be interesting to explore the parents' experiences of parenting in a new socio-cultural environment and examine whether they adapted to the new situations as the children did. One may also look at what they found as helpful for their parenting and what they found difficult in raising their children in a new and challenging cultural environment different from what they experienced in their childhood. It goes without saying that many parents fear falling foul of the safeguarding laws. Finally, childhood and parenting style are not mutually exclusive and in the African context the later is tied up to the concept of 'Ubuntu' which embodies and underpins African parenting and an indelible marker for African childhoods.

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UNPACKING CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORLDS: THE BLACK, WHITE AND GREY OF 'METHOD' IN QUALITATIVE WITH CHILDREN

Abstract

This paper is based on the author's research with children in two different studies. One is a previously conducted study of the lifeworlds of children of sex workers in Budhwar Peth, Pune and the other is of the author's ongoing doctoral work on children's experiences of conflict and resistance in Kashmir. Both contexts exhibit distinct ontologies of vulnerability for children however, the sensitivity marking the research processes for both contexts remains similar. The paper tries to draw a comparative framework and analysis for research methodologies with children in vulnerable backgrounds. It attempts to analyse some basic "child-friendly" tools commonly used in qualitative research with children, in the light of the author's fieldwork. Building on primary data generated in both these studies, this paper fleshes out an ethnographer's field notes on the methods and challenges of fieldwork with children. It argues that the interview context is defined by social and geopolitical lifescapes. The paper concludes by discussing the similarity, difference, and grey areas in framing and using qualitative research tools with children.

Keywords: Childhood, children, research with children, ethnography, methodology, sociology of childhood, children's experiences

Researching children's experiences is a domain that is being developed gradually, as more and more studies with children, informed by tenets of the sociology of childhood, are being undertaken and published. However, it is still not a completely set path with concrete customs and traditions of a particular discipline. And more often than not, it requires greater initiative on the part of the researcher to carve out a path that can be used as a guideline, and which moves from the more specific to the general. However, I do not intend to suggest a linearity in this movement, rather a

confluence of the 'etic' and the 'emic' perspectives in order to arrive at a layered understanding of social realities. It is only recently that the emic perspectives are starting to gain significance in studies with children. The new sociology of childhood is bringing forth studies that move from considering the child as a variable in empirical research about children, to examining children's lives and social worlds as dynamic and dialectical phenomena.¹

Research with Children from Vulnerable Backgrounds

When we move from considering children as empirical data and variables, to the complex nature, manifestation and representations of childhood, we might be able to get certain axes on which we can begin to build a deeper understanding of children and childhoods. Childhood itself is not a homogeneous phenomenon, in that it is experienced differently by children in different social, cultural, political backgrounds.² In the politically unstable world today, especially in developing economies and nations of the 'third world', it is significant to develop an understanding of children's everyday lives in order to attempt to move towards any kind of solutions. Children and Childhoods today, are twice removed from their normative meanings and representations. The difference between the reality, the representation and the norms of childhood is an interesting theme being explored increasingly by social scientists across the globe. However, it is easy to get lost in the post-modernist discourses and take apart meanings; which leaves us with very little to work with when it comes to developing sustainable and immediate solutions for children living in vulnerable situations. Some universal guidelines established by agencies like the United Nations, have helped practitioners and social scientists come up with a frame of reference. When advocating or writing about children's rights, this helps us to come closer to understanding what constitutes an 'ideal' childhood. Most of which stems from the human rights discourse and the position of an inalienable right to life. Research in the new sociology of childhood therefore, offers opportunities to understand the various dimensions of childhoods, and the interplay of contexts - social, political, geographical, cultural - that shape it.

¹ Greene S. & Hogan D. (Eds.). (2005). *Researching Children's Experience: Approaches and Methods*. London: SAGE Publications.

Going by the developmental notions of childhood and conventional body politics, makes children one of the most vulnerable groups in the society. But there are multiple childhoods and so the axis of vulnerability for children differs owing to the intersectional nature of childhoods. Hence, the tools used to study these childhoods also cannot be homogenous. Having started my research with children, as a young student, I looked up at literature that concerns itself with research methods used for researching children's experiences and their social worlds. For in the case of research with children, there are some ground rules in ethical considerations - the age appropriateness, cultural appropriateness and other such factors need to be kept in mind while designing tools of research with children. These are however, a universally applied, basic set of guidelines. But it is only when one enters the field and actually conducts the study using these tools, that the complexities within method itself, emerge. The heterogeneity in childhoods also therefore extends to the designing, selection and use of tools of research with children. The ethnographic method is known to be the best suited for research with children. I have used the ethnographic method in both my studies with children.³ In the following part, I aim to draw out the similarities, differences and the grey areas of research with children by comparing methodologies in two separate studies conducted by me. I will begin with a brief background and description of both the studies. It will be followed by a detailed discussion on tools.

Study of the Lifeworlds of Children of Sex Workers from Budhwar Peth

This study was conducted as a part of my Masters degree requirement. I attempted to study the lives of children of sex workers in the Budhwar Peth red light area of Pune, Maharashtra, India in 2013. The details of the study are as follows:

² Hart J. & Tryer B. (2006). *Research with Children Living in Situations of Armed Conflict: Concepts, Ethics & Methods*. Oxford: University of Oxford.

³ Greene S. & Hogan D. (Eds.). (2005). *Researching Children's Experience: Approaches and Methods*. London: SAGE Publications.

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Research Questions

- Who are the significant adults and primary care givers in the child's life and how is the child's relationship with them?
- In what ways do these relationships support or discourage the children in their daily lives?
- What are the coping mechanisms or survival skills that the children use in order to negotiate with their immediate realities?
- How children are using education to understand their realities and how is it shaping their aspiration for the future?
- Do they want further inputs to shape these aspirations?
- What are the aspirations of the mothers for their children?

Research Objectives

- To understand the lived experiences of children of sex workers.
- To understand how the children deal with their lived realities.
- To identify various interventions those are already in place and the nature of these interventions.
- To look at education and institutionalisation as one of the several interventions and understanding how it shapes the children's perceptions.
- To study and understand the role of the mothers or any significant adults in the child's life.

Tools

This study was qualitative in nature. The research design was exploratory. The study aimed to seek narratives and interviews and focused on thick descriptions of children's experiences. I used the following tools with children:

- **interview guides,**
- **focus group discussions,**
- **non-participant observation,**
- **drawing,**
- **poetry**

The universe of the study was the entire area covered under Budhwar Peth in Pune city, Maharashtra, India. The sampling was purposive and the respondents were approached through the day care and night shelters in

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the Budhwar Peth area. The sample size was twelve children aged 8 and above, five mothers of the children who were too young to articulate, and one key informant each from the organisations working with children in the area.

Researching Children's Experiences in Conflict and Resistance in Kashmir

The study I am currently undertaking is titled, "Researching Children's Experiences in Kashmir: Perspectives on Conflict and Resistance". This is a doctoral study for which I have completed my fieldwork and would like to discuss the reflection on methods I used.

Research Questions

- What are the specific subjectivities of childhood in a conflict zone?
- What are the lived experiences of children growing up in Kashmir's conflict?
- What are the children's perspectives of conflict and resistance in Kashmir?
- How do the home and the school act as bridges between the children's
 - comprehending and coping abilities towards the conflict and resistance?
 - (Comprehending and coping with conflict)
- How does the child emerge as a political subject in Kashmir?

Research Objectives

- To understand the social construction of childhood in Kashmir and explore the notions of a Kashmiri childhood
- To study the lived experiences of children growing up in Kashmir's conflict
- To study and understand children's perspectives on conflict and resistance in Kashmir
- To study the child as a political subject in Kashmir

Tools

1. Happy/Sad Drawings: In this tool, a picture of a happy face and a sad face is shown to children. They are asked to describe the drawing and what they are seeing in it. They are asked what they think that the person in the

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picture is thinking about and why is the person sad/happy. These responses are recorded and they could be followed up with questions.

2. Mapping: Draw a map from your home to a place that you regularly visit: Darasgah, School, Any other place, shop, playing field, working area. After the drawing the child would be asked what he/she has drawn and asked to talk about the sights, sounds, smells they encounter on the way at different times.

Children can draw a figure representing themselves in the centre and on one side write the names of people they like the most and on the other side of people that they don't like at all. These could be any people in their social circle. The reasons for the same could be recorded in the audio.

3. Focus Group Discussions: This tool was also used in my previous study and was successful. It can be used with children who are comfortable in writing in Urdu/English/Kashmiri. The topics for poems can be as follows: (one can make chits of these themes and can ask children to pick)

- Things that scare me
- Things that make me happy
- My Kashmir
- Hartaal (Curfew/Strike)
- Pathraav (Stone Pelting)

4. Semi Structured Interviews using Interview Guide: Since the study seeks narratives and experiences of children, the research design was qualitative. The study is used ethnographic methods. Reflexivity in research was a key component of the methods. The sample included children between the ages of 7 to 12 years. The other set of respondents in the sample was the teachers, parents or other significant adults in the children's lives.

Building an Interview Context

In both the above studies, the primary respondents are children. The backgrounds in which both sets of children are living, makes them vulnerable in one or the other way. In the Budhwar Peth study, children

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are exposed to sexual, physical and verbal abuse; there is a disjunction with the normative concept of a home and a family; there is discontinued educational opportunities due to constant police raids in brothels, making it difficult for the mother or a significant adult to provide for the children; poverty; hunger; difficulty to connect with and integrate into the 'mainstream'; lack of effective child protection laws - basic instability that arises from non-normative structures of the home and family and other social institutions that are supposed to be children's support systems.

In the context of Kashmir, the specific vulnerabilities emerge as a constant threat of fatal violence and grievous injuries; the disintegration of families of victims of conflict, custodial deaths, and protest killings; disruption of daily normative civilian life due to curfews and hartals leading to discontinued schooling and education; constant state of fear and reproach leading to a feeling of disassociation and 'otherness' and alienation with the mainstream/mainland India; again, a context that is extremely unstable and volatile.

Methods and Challenges from an Ethnographer's field notes

The universal idea behind all kinds of tools used in research with children is that the tools should be non-threatening in a way that preserves the rights of children at the same time gauging their participation in it. Direct interviewing is almost never used as a sole tool in good quality research with children. The idea is to use tools that enable their participation and protect their confidentiality and be sensitive to their beings. Therefore, multiple non-direct yet effective tools are used and analysis is done by the method of triangulation. I have picked out 5 separate tools that I had commonly used in both the studies to generate data. I will be talking about each of them in detail and comparing my reflections on the same.

1. Non-Participant Observation: In my earlier study in Budhwar Peth, non-participant observation was a tool that I had used to begin with. It started with my visits to the day care centre and observing the children interact with each other in their natural environment. I would listen for things children shared with each other and the staff of the day care centre in dialogue and non-verbal communication. This enabled the children's comfort with my presence in the initial stages. I learned about the

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emotional trauma and the physical abuse that the children had been going through, with this method. Having an understanding of the cultural context and language that the kids used with each other, led me to gathering rich data about their everyday experiences and emotions. These were children, whose mothers had been trafficked or had migrated from regions like Bengal, Bangladesh, Nepal, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh. There were hardly any children whose mothers culturally belonged to Maharashtra. However, the fact that their environment was full of multilingual and multicultural people, the children were adept at using bridge languages like Hindi - with a mix of Marathi - which weren't the first languages of any of the children. But mixing with each other, they had acquired these bridge languages to enable communication. It was easier for me, having studied and grown up in Maharashtra, to catch colloquial terms and unpack metaphors.

In Kashmir, the language spoken largely and natively is Koshur - or Kashmiri. With the exception of a few words, intonations and accents, being different across regions in Kashmir, the language spoken is largely the same. The bridge language used here by people is what the locals call 'Urdu' - a mix of largely Hindi and Urdu words. This language is spoken more in towns and cities and more by the younger generations - a result of modern city education and tourism. However, the language spoken by most women, children, young people and the elderly - basically all the people who could not get opportunities of exposure with outsiders or English medium schools, or jobs requiring knowledge of the bridge language, still converse and understand only Koshur. The areas I was covering for my study in Kashmir was mostly rural - therefore it was difficult to find very young children who would be speaking the bridge language as they would either be too young to go to primary school, or would have studied in non-English medium schools - nonetheless their knowledge of the bridge language was limited. This made it difficult for me to understand conversations among children in their natural environments. My limited working knowledge of Koshur was not the language spoken by the children. As children's languages are different and functional and often imaginative. Adults often have to 'derive' meaning out of children's utterances. It was impossible for me in this context to catch this children's language as they spoke to each other in their native tongues. I would get a sense of their temperament but not the exact words they were using. I had to rely on the co-ordinator for

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translations that caused interruption in the observation process. Because translations often interrupt the natural process of conversations among children as they would become conscious of me asking the co-ordinator 'what are the children talking about' - in their context this also seemed to them like a kind of surveillance.

2. Drawing: As a young researcher working with children and having read multiple studies and papers on method, I was under the impression that the children would be excited to see coloured paper, coloured pens and crayons - something that would make them more interested in drawing and producing data for me. Coincidentally in my first study - this idea did work out exceptionally well. The drawings of children were my main and maximum data generators. I used self-portraits, social mapping and audio-visual mapping that gave out great results - thick descriptions of drawings from children, rich data, intense and dense narratives. Especially the self-portraits, that gave me a peek into their world views, their imaginations, their aspirations and dreams.

Taking a slight pride in this success, I designed a very holistic drawing tools set for my study in Kashmir as well. When I went on to use it in the field, only then I realised the gaps in my myopic understanding of children's worlds. My understanding that drawing is a great method to use with children - sometimes even better than verbal tools, grew out of a single experience and Western literature. Drawing as a tool completely failed in one instance in my research in Kashmir. Most of the children who were my respondents had never even seen a drawing paper or coloured pencil before. These children were all being educated in government schools with very limited resources and little attention given by the government. They did not have the monetary resources to afford stationary like drawing books and coloured crayons and origami sheets. Some children who knew what these items were, had been introduced to them through their elder distant relative who lives in the city or 'outside'. Even if some children had seen drawing and colouring books before - they did not have any shops in the village that sold them. Resources are extremely limited in a conflict zone, sometimes making it difficult to procure even the basic essential supplies. This learning added a whole different dimension into my understanding of childhood in a conflict zone. The conflict, coupled with poverty, very

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limited access to media, led to most children experiencing a drawing and colouring book - which is a very basic children's stationary in the West and even in other parts of urban India - into a thing of novelty. To the extent that most children could not hold the coloured pencils and use them - the skill was never experienced by them. Initially, when I asked them to draw, for some time I assumed the children are hesitating and hence none of them is starting to draw. Later on I realised it is not hesitation, but the unfamiliarity with the props that is making them uncomfortable and even scared and hesitant to say the same. It struck me when one of the older girls told me, "They don't know how to do it. They don't know what to do with the pens and paper." Surprised, I asked them, "Have you not done this in school?", and they shook their heads in a hesitant "no".

On reflection, I realised that the children in Budhwar Peth, had also never been able to own this kind of stationary due to poverty - but the context of being schooled in government schools in urban areas, being in day care centres run by NGOs that frequently get volunteers like college students to come and undertake activities with the kids, their skills of expression through poetry, drawing and craft had developed greatly.

3. Interview Guides: I used this tool in both my studies. When I used interview guides with children, they were never used in direct interviews with them. Rather I interjected the guides in between the activities in order to probe and to gather children's descriptions of their drawings in their own words. The drawing activity was always a model on which the interview guide was based. For instance, I used a ranking exercise with children in Budhwar Peth to rank their experiences in school - their responses on the paper were probed by me using interview guides. In Kashmir, I used the interview guide to interject with the happy face/sad face activity. I drew a happy face on one side of the paper and a sad face on the other side of the paper - I asked them why they thought this person is happy/sad. And used the guide that I had structured around this activity to probe further.

In both instances, the interview guides and individual structured conversations with children did not yield to be as successful as the other tools. The biggest reason for this is that despite building a rapport, and despite exercising and practicing children's rights to participation and despite being sensitive to their responses and their comfort, sometimes

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children might still feel the pressure of confrontation. The power equation in the adult-child relationship is so ingrained in children's minds, especially when they come from vulnerable backgrounds where most of the abuse and repression, manipulation happens at the hands of the adults - that it might take a long time before a child can develop a bond of trust towards the adult. The act of trying to talk to children individually in separate spaces still makes them inhibited and hesitant of the adult researcher. This inhibition was observed at a greater intensity in Kashmir due to the overall situation of insecurity - where how to say, how much to say and whom to say to - can become the definition of a brutal surveillance, a violent beating or even arrest and killing. In both the studies, children often went out after their individual interviews were done and exchanged information such as "what did she ask" with the children who were next in line for the interviews - this gave them the anxiety induced by an oral examination - even after repeatedly assuring them that there is no right or wrong answer. This slight difference in the situations was also because, as I said earlier, the children in NGOs in Budhwar Peth were used to young volunteers coming from the 'outside' and interacting with them. While the children in Kashmir told me that it was the first time that they experienced an 'outsider' coming and asking for their views and opinions.

4. Focus Group Discussions: I used Focus Group Discussions and adapted variations of it for both my studies. I made some changes in the format of the FGDs to adapt it for the suitability to children and the research requirements. In both my studies, FGDs proved to be the most successful of tools used, in that they helped generate significant amounts of thick data.

In Budhwar Peth, since all the other tools including drawings had worked out as well, the FGD gave the group of young male children that participated, most of them in their pre-teen and teen ages, an opportunity to talk about their infatuations and romantic interests in girls as well as the ways in which they pursued romantic relationships. Since it was a group, they talked uninhibitedly about their 'girlfriends' and 'love stories'.

In the case of Kashmir, the FGD turned out to be a much more effective medium to generate data. There were a couple of observations that I

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would like to share from the FGD session here. Firstly, in an environment where there is already a lot of insecurity in children's minds, the fact that they could talk about their issues sitting in a group, relieved them from the fear of being singled out for saying something. Secondly, having random topics listed in chits and then asking children to pick chits anonymously helped in creating an environment of fair choice - to develop a feeling that they have not been targeted. Thirdly, I deliberately mixed sensitive topics like 'Pathraav' and 'Hartaal' with the more hopeful or neutral topics like 'My Kashmir' and 'things that make me happy', in order to distribute the emotional environment. Finally, I feel the FGDs also acted as a catalyst to reinstating the solidarity that the children felt with each other. This came forth very prominently as children would often add to each other's experiences of conflict.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, there are a few things that come out very prominently. Firstly, research with children can be as diverse and heterogenous as childhoods itself. The axis of vulnerability and intersectionality will guide the researcher to make their tools more effective and sensitive to children's rights. Secondly, there are certain universal ground rules and ethics that apply, nonetheless on any research context studying children, that makes it slightly different from research with adults. Thirdly, the prevalent literature and research on children and childhoods is still dominantly Western - which has definitely given us, in South Asia, a clearing in a path. However, we need to create our own routes of methods, ethics, age and cultural appropriateness, which is more suited to contexts of developing economies where children are still to get some of the most basic rights. Finally, it is ultimately the sensitivity and reflexive capacity of the adult researcher with children that would be directly proportional to the quality of research produced. Since, it needs a level of passion, compassion and training to be able to cater to and capture children's specific vulnerabilities and aspirations.

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SPIRITUALITY IN CHILDHOOD STUDIES: ENCOUNTERS WITH IMAGINARY FRIENDS AND ANGELS

Many children appear to move seamlessly between the daily, material world and invisible worlds where they encounter imaginary friends, deceased people and pets and ethereal or divine beings. Often deemed to be routine elements of children's play, adults regularly dismiss them as imagination. Yet for many children, these are a fundamental part of their spiritual and/or religious life but the broader literature on childhood makes little mention of them. Instead, they focus more on social constructions or psychological development when exploring definitions of childhood(s). This paper draws on primary and secondary research to argue that for many children these spiritual experiences are not only a fundamental part of childhood but can be particularly meaningful. Therefore, academic works exploring the nature of childhood(s) would benefit from venturing into these unseen worlds.

Key words: Imaginary friends; invisible companions; angels; children's spirituality; spiritual experience; religious experience

Into the unknown

The interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of childhood studies brings rich insights into our understandings of children and childhood(s). Disciplines and fields which contribute include psychology, anthropology, education, sociology and the new sociology of childhood which centres around social constructionism (Woodhead, 2008). Alongside art, religion and literature inter alia we gain a variety of perspectives of children and childhood(s) across the world, throughout history.

Children's spirituality and religiosity are established areas of academic research in their own right, but they largely remain separate from childhood studies. For example, James and James (2012), leading authors in the latter field, document key concepts in childhood studies in their book

of the same name. Whilst they note that their list is not exhaustive and still evolving, neither spirituality nor religion appear in their 63 identified themes. Religion makes a brief appearance within their section on Innocence, where they suggest that the conceptual roots of children as innocent lie in the Christian tradition, but neither topic is considered in its own right.

This paper focuses specifically on one element of the literature on children's spirituality: their spiritual worlds. These are not necessarily religious worlds, albeit that for some people they are, as exemplified by a Christian child encountering an angel. Widely agreed definitions of the term 'spiritual' remain elusive and any proposed definitions will inevitably be contested. As Watson (2001) noted some two decades ago, academics agreed on one thing: that the definition of spiritual is not agreed upon. Little has changed in the intervening years. Indeed, I argue that 'spiritual' is a term which is better described than defined. Here, I broadly frame 'spiritual worlds' as those which a child experiences through one or more of their five senses, and sometimes their sixth sense. The child is usually the only person who can access these worlds. In some cases, the interactions contribute to the child's sense of meaning, purpose and beliefs.

Reference to these worlds does not imply a separation of the spiritual from the physical or mental worlds; as Webster (2013) and Pettersen (2015) suggest, holistic approaches to body-mind-spirit are essential. Specifically, this paper focuses on encounters with others in these worlds. Some of these will be deemed religious by either the child and/or author of the text cited. For transparency, I describe myself as spiritual but not religious and my approach to researching with children is to learn how they understand their experience by capturing their spiritual voice(s).

Studies in different parts of the world report a range of similar experiences, albeit with some cultural differences. For example, encounters with angels are common, sometimes in waking life and sometimes through dreams in sleep (see Hart, 2003; Newcomb, 2008; Pettersen, 2015; Lovelock and Adams, 2017). Many children have dreams which hold significant meaning, some of which involve meetings with the divine (Adams, Hyde and Woolley 2008; Bulkeley and Bulkeley, 2012). Others have imaginary/invisible friends

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or companions (Taylor, 1999; Davies, 2017; Wigger, 2019), whilst some report meetings with the spirits of deceased loved ones (Hoffman, 1992; Lovelock and Adams, 2017).

Whilst not every child will resonate with such experiences, many do and for some they are not merely parts of imagination or play, but can form a significant part of their spiritual journeys, where they seek and find meaning and purpose in life (Adams, 2010). Yet these spiritual worlds are largely absent from the mainstream discourse of childhood studies.

This paper illustrates this element of childhood through two common examples: first, 'imaginary' friends and second, angels. It argues that childhood studies would benefit from engaging with young people's spiritual lives for two key reasons. First, because spirituality is an innate aspect of life yet one which is easily overlooked, passing by unnoticed, often dismissed as imagination. Second, and crucially in a field which values children's voices, it is important because many children not only describe experiences, but also ascribe meaning to them.

Imaginary friends

Sammie sits at the kitchen table waiting for her lunch. Her teddy bear sits in the chair next to her but she picks him up and places him on her lap.

'Come on Teddy, you sit with me so that George [not visible to adults present] can eat his dinner. George, you can sit down now.'

Sammie moves a piece of bread from her plate onto George's. Occasionally she whispers something inaudible to George and seems to be listening to his responses. I ask her mother how long George has been here.

'Sammie has talked about him for over a year now, since she was five. I gather it's quite normal for children to have imaginary friends, it's all a bit of fun.'

I met Sammie as part of a study with 40 children aged 4-11 in which we explored their beliefs about a range of worlds which often remain unseen to others. Invisible companions such as George emerged, with almost

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half of children (45%, n=18) describing them. This finding supported her mother's belief that 'imaginary friends' are indeed a common feature of many childhood(s), which numerous other studies have confirmed. Singer and Singer (1990) recorded a rate of 65% in a study with 111 children in the UK, a finding echoed by Taylor (1999) with 63% of 152 children in the USA. These intriguing friends are more commonly referred to in the literature as 'imaginary companions' or 'invisible companions' after various studies show that not all of them are as benign as the word 'friend' implies. As Taylor (1999 p.19) discovered, some are annoying because they never go away, others 'put yoghurt in my hair', 'won't share' or 'hits me on the head'.

Imaginary companions taking the form of children are common, although studies illustrate that they can take different forms. These include objects such as toys which children animate (Singer and Singer, 1990; Hallowell, 2007; Carter and Bath, 2018; Wigger 2019). Animals are often cited (Taylor, 1999; Hallowell, 2007; Wigger, 2019), as Solomon explains:

Solomon aged four and his brother Neil aged eight shared a friend, Baby Bear. They met him whilst on a family camping trip at Acadia National Park, Maine, USA. Since then, Baby Bear travelled with the family. He also went to school with the boys, taking the invisible slide rather than the school steps.

'He can use invisible things, since he's invisible' Solomon explained.

Baby Bear had his own playground at the school, 'like right under my playground... they look exactly the same except for smaller.'

(Wigger, 2019, pp. 65-66)

Texts which explore this phenomenon are primarily located in psychology and specifically in developmental psychology (Carter and Bath, 2018). Wigger (2019), however, took a different approach. He and his team spoke with children in five countries – the Dominican Republic, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal and the USA. Whilst using psychological tests including theory of mind, he also draws on wider theoretical approaches, making links between how novelists create their characters and bring them to life. In addition,

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drawing on his background as a pastor, he also extends his thinking to the religious imagination to explore this cross-cultural phenomenon.

These companions walk and play alongside many children. They often disappear quickly although some remain into adolescence (Taylor, 1999). Most children who describe them explain they are 'pretend' but others such as Sammie do not. For this group, the companions represent an unseen world which others cannot directly access, one which seamlessly blends with their concrete world, giving most children comfort and company.

Angels

Few people would ordinarily associate angels with imaginary companions in the usual definition of the latter. Yet Taylor and Mannering (2007) and Wigger (2019) both noted descriptions of angels in their studies of invisible companions. However, encounters with winged beings descending from the skies transcending, the spiritual and earthly worlds, have a long history across cultures. As Jones (2011) notes, our ancestors depicted them in ancient stone carvings. Latterly, such winged beings became known as angels. In Judaism, Christianity and Islam they are messengers of God/Allah, and in the contemporary secular world, they command a strong presence in the 'new age'/mind, body, spirit genre.

People, both from religious and non-religious backgrounds, have long reported encounters with what we now recognise as angels (Byrne, 2008; Newcomb, 2008; Jones, 2011). For some, these take place during childhood. Hoffman (1992) collected adults' retrospective accounts of their childhood spiritual experiences which included a small number of angelic encounters. Christopher recalled hearing, when he was six years old,

the most sublime and beautiful music coming from the left side of my room. I looked and saw an extraordinarily beautiful winged angel gliding through my room and playing a harp. My eyes were forced closed. I opened them again to see her form exit through the right wall (p. 156)

Lorna Byrne (2008), an Irish mystic, recalls seeing angels since she was a baby. In her autobiography, she details how they appeared as,

wonderful bright, shiny beings in all the colours of the rainbow...these

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beings floated in the air like feathers; and I remember reaching out to touch them, but I never succeeded (p. 1)

Newcomb (2008) has been collecting accounts from both adults and children for years and publishing them for a general audience. A woman recalled a childhood experience of hearing tapping on her bedroom window one night. When she looked out, she,

saw seven angels in the back garden and they were telling me that I was very special. I remember being confused that I could hear what they were saying even though they were outside the house... they were large and had wings...one of the angels communicated with me that they would be watching over me, and he explained that my mother could not see them (pp. 93-94)

Newcomb (2008) notes that it is not uncommon that an adult cannot see what the child is describing. She takes a broad view of the term 'angel', encompassing the spirits of deceased people – usually relatives. Whether or not children call these angels is unclear. Some children told her that spherical lights (often referred to as 'orbs') are in fact angels. Byrne (2008, p. 3), in describing her own experiences, also believes that angels can appear as 'a sharp glowing light' with no human form.

Hart (2003), writing in the USA, also observes that children often report seeing angels, his own daughter included, who felt tingly sensations when her guardian angel was near her bed each night. Pettersen (2015), working with three to five-year-olds in two early years settings in Canada, details how children in her study conceptualised and, in some cases, experienced angels. For Pettersen's sample, they often took a caring, motherly role, akin to the concept of a guardian angel.

Wester Anderson (2012) collected 30 narratives of angelic encounters from children. One example told of a five-year-old American girl called Carole who crept under her porch and fell six feet into a cistern. Neither her friends nor parents could hear her cries. After some time trapped below ground, she felt a warm presence, silently telling her all would be fine. In her mind, Carole asked the presence if they would get her Daddy for her.

She felt comforted and reassured that he would come soon. After several hours looking for her beyond the house, her father felt a force directing him towards the porch, where he finally found her. He explained that he would not have looked in that location had he not had this overwhelming feeling to go there. Again, as in other studies, the child believed that the angel was looking after her.

Children who see angels do not necessarily come from religious backgrounds. In my study with 40 children, most were not from religious homes, although 70% (n=28) believed in angels. Overall the literature suggests that children often see them as having a protective role, bringing comfort. For those who believe in angels, the encounters can be meaningful and adult recollections illustrate the profound impact that they can have, often shaping their spiritual and/or religious beliefs for a lifetime.

Invisible spirituality

For those children (and adults reporting retrospectively), these other beings, which no one else can see, are a normal part of their lives. In many cases they prove, over time, to have been significant, as adults' testimonies illustrate (see Hoffman, 1992; Scott, 2004). However, in wider literature in childhood studies – and notably in the new sociology of childhood – there is scant, if any, serious reference to spirituality. The reasons for the lack of attention are complex and much influenced by wider culture, but three potential key reasons are considered here. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

First, attitudes to spirituality across the wider culture(s) play an important role in explaining why it may be overlooked in the academic literature on childhood, particularly for those writing on the Global North. The lack of shared definition of spirituality is certainly a factor, for what one person considers spiritual, another may describe as religious or imagination etc.

Evans (2016) summarises various surveys in the UK and USA which demonstrate an increase in the number of adults reporting spiritual experiences over the last 30 years. Despite this, an entrenched reluctance to be open about such experiences remains, as Jones (2011) notes with regards to angelic encounters.

Adults' lack of willingness to be open about spirituality in general and

spiritual experience in particular is naturally emulated by children. A number of studies report children not sharing their experiences for fear of ridicule or dismissal (Adams et al., 2008). Hence, in societies where the spiritual is not taken seriously, it can be marginalised. Children's spiritual voices are quietened and they can find themselves in an invisible space; a space where their experience is doubted or dismissed, or simply met with disinterest, as if it had never happened (Adams, 2019). Furthermore, although spirituality is a field of study in its own right, the number of academics researching with children is relatively small compared to those studying adults' spirituality. Children, therefore, remain relatively invisible in the academic literature. These cultural influences, negating the importance of spirituality, potentially impacts scholars in childhood studies who may be less aware of its relevance to children.

A second reason for the relative omission of children's spirituality relates to the conceptualisation of the imagination, particularly in relation to young people. The lack of inclusion might initially seem strange. After all, literature for children has long recounted tales of ghosts, magic and fantasy, telling of travels into worlds beyond the ordinary. Perhaps that is precisely part of the problem: these stories are told as fiction. As a result, it seeps into the adult psyche that adventures with talking animals, encounters with ethereal beings, travels to different worlds, or playing with children who may have lived a hundred years ago are, quite simply, works of the imagination.

In the Global North, psychology dominates research into the imagination, where studies of invisible companions are mostly located. Majors (2013) interviewed 8 children aged between 5 and 11 years in the UK and found that the companions offered friendship, playmates and entertainment, especially when children were bored, lonely or experiencing problems. Carter and Bath (2018) note that such findings can lead adults to view companions negatively, associating them with children's poor social skills and loneliness. Indeed, Harris (2000, p.32), in his psychological investigation of imagination, writes that young children 'begin to engage in an intriguing form of sustained role play. They repeatedly conjure up an imaginary person or creature whose identity can remain stable over several months'. For Harris, as for others, they are simply a form of children's play, albeit an important one psychologically. Of course, children's accounts may well be play or imagination but given

that many understand them to be real is sufficient reason for further exploration within the umbrella of spirituality. In addition, the importance of the child's voice and their co-construction of childhood is a central theme of the new sociology of childhood (Qvortrup, 2008; James and James, 2012) and this is mirrored in the spirituality literature. Children tell researchers about their spiritual experiences with clarity and often share how meaningful they are (see, for example Hart, 2003; Adams, 2010; Wester Anderson, 2012; Pettersen, 2015; Lovelock and Adams, 2017). Listening to them, as well as hearing what they say, and understanding how they make meaning from them, is crucial to understanding this aspect of many young people's childhood. This is the case even when the adult believes it to be imagination, play or story-telling.

A third potential reason for the lack of focus in childhood studies is anxiety or fear arising from the influence of psychiatry in many western industrialised cultures. As I have argued elsewhere, (Lovelock and Adams, 2017; Adams, 2019), if a child is adamant that they can see or hear a person no one else can, adults may naturally worry that is a symptom of mental illness. That is a deep concern for any parent/carer. In such cases, an understandable coping strategy is to assume that an experience was simply imagination and let it pass.

The relationships between imagination, religious/spiritual experience and mental illness are fascinating and beyond the scope of this short paper; but it is important to emphasise the wider variety of understandings of such experiences to demonstrate the complexity. A diagnosis of mental illness may indeed be made in some cases, dependent on a range of indicators (Adams, 2019). However, Maijer, Palmén, and Sommer (2017) studied the auditory visual hallucinations of 6-18-year olds attending a clinic for support in the Netherlands (n=95). They found that only 11.6% of the participants had a psychotic disorder.

There are other perspectives too when explaining reports of seeing/hearing/sensing other beings. This includes psychologists widely recognising seeing deceased people as a feature of the grieving process (Adams, 2019). Furthermore, the perspectives of people of faith are important, many of whom may believe that the experiences are real. For

example, Wester Anderson (2012), a practising Christian, believes that angels appear to young children, as does Byrne, a Catholic (2008). Of course, as noted earlier, we can and should also hear the individual child's explanation.

Concluding thoughts

This paper has only been able to highlight two types of experience which form parts of many children's lives, some others having been identified in the introduction. Despite a range of such experiences being commonplace, academic literature in childhood studies largely overlooks this spiritual dimension of childhood.

If we are to take children's voices seriously in our quest to understand children's worlds, then we need to embrace and explore what the young people say, even if it disrupts our ideas of childhood(s). An adult does not need to believe that a child's invisible playmate is 'real' or that angels exist and have appeared to them. Irrespective of adults' viewpoints, many children around the world inhabit a wide range of unseen worlds. They are, therefore, integral to our understanding of children's lives and deserve a more prominent place in our study of childhood(s).

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CONCEPTUALIZING CHILDREN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF CHILDREN'S VIEWS AND IDEAS ABOUT THEMSELVES

Abstract

From philosophical inquiries about the nature of the child in eighteenth-century Europe to more global theorizations by modern social scientists, questions of 'what is a child' and 'what turns children into children' are at the core of social constructions on children and childhood. Although extant literature within childhood studies accounts for how children are depicted across time and place, there is a scarcity of studies that have asked children about their own concepts of what it means to be children; Hence, this paper presents the results of a research study conducted in Norway that explored how a select group of individuals aged 8-10 conceptualized the term 'children.' Qualitative methods of participatory observation, word association task, and interview were used to obtain data. Five conceptual themes emerged from the data: children as possessing specific traits; children as having affinities with certain objects; children as defined by their activities; children as belonging to specific places; and children as a generational group. A theoretical reflection discusses in part how the awareness of their own biological development and anticipation of their future selves are integral parts of their self- characterizations, and how these in turn impact their present lived experiences.

Introduction

The significant interest in children as a distinct social group has paved the way for changes in the way they are seen, heard, and allowed to participate in our present societies. Essential to this interest are questions of 'what is a child' and 'what turns children into children' (Honig, 2011; James, 1995; Jenks, 1982). Answers to these pivotal questions do not only vary across different times, places, and cultures (Gittins, 2009; Montgomery, 2003), but they also largely depend on whose perspective is being taken into account and the dominant scientific theories that drive the main discussions on

children and childhood (Qvortrup, Corsaro, and Honig, 2011; James, 1995).

By looking into resources within Childhood Studies, which uses a social constructionist perspective, I found rich literature describing and explaining the variations in the conceptualizations of children. There is, however, only a handful of studies that ask children what it means to be children. This includes an ethnographical work by Allison James (1995) on children's consciousness of the self as a child, and an empirical study by Kate Adams (2014) on exploring the question 'what is a child' from the perspective of 7-11-year-old individuals.

Thus, the research outlined in this paper aimed to gain a deeper insight as to how children themselves make sense of what it means to be children. This is significant in addressing the scarcity of literature that is specific to children's conceptualization of their own identity as a social group.

Social Constructionism as an Approach to Studying Children

Perhaps the scarcity of scholarly works which incorporate children's perspectives on this topic can be attributed to the idea that we have all been children at one point in our lives. As Jenks (1982, p. 11) expresses it, 'childhood is a fundamental status within each of our existential biographies, that a commonsense understanding of what children are is assumed in our contemporary societies.' But while it is possible to validate adult-driven discourses on childhood because we were once children, backgrounds and experiences were never exactly the same for each of us.

Social Constructionism is therefore useful approach to studying children and childhood because it takes into accounts cultural and social contexts in explaining the variation of ideas from different worldviews (Stainton Rogers, 2003; Prout and James, 1997). In relation to this research study, social constructionism as the overarching theoretical framework has two strands:

- 1) Children's conceptualisations of what it means to be children are reflective of their personal experiences, interactions, relationships, and values;
- 2) Children's lived experiences are influenced by the existing social landscapes

Social Constructions On Children

One piece of literature that can exemplify the application of a social constructionist perspective on children is Philippe Aries' (1982) writing on the supposed discovery of childhood in the modern era. Aries argued that the concept of childhood in Europe emerged only after the Middle Ages, and that the term child was an ambiguous term that had no clear age group and can be synonymous with other terms that does not fit within the category of the modern definition of what a child is.

Montgomery (2003) further provided comprehensive examples of case studies to show diverging conceptualizations of children and childhood from different parts of the world, social groups, and time periods. More importantly, she encapsulated the following major discourses surrounding the constructions of childhood of the Western world: the puritan discourse, the tabula rasa discourse, and the romantic discourse. Each discourse is reflective of the influential forces driving European societies at a particular period such as the religious and moral teachings of the Church, and philosophical ideologies during Enlightenment. Hendrick (1997) surveyed on to proceeding constructions of childhood according to the political, economic, and social reform that was happening in Europe at the end of eighteenth century. It was marked by suddenly a shift in the attitudes towards child labour, citing exploitation and injustice in the way that children are subjected to conditions that are beyond their capacities or responsibilities. The eventual change in views clearly resonated an influence of the romantic (innocent child) and tabula rasa (natural child) discourses that pushed forth the most dominant construction of what is considered as an ideal childhood in Western Europe. It deems childhood as a time that should be devoted for education, having the freedom to play, and spared from adult obligations.

Children in Childhood Studies

Childhood Studies is a paradigm shift from the major themes of childhood that are propagated by scientific and scholarly disciplines, particularly those of the traditional approaches of sociology and psychology (Prout and James 1997). The 1900s was a significant era for the emergence of influential theories in Developmental Psychology. Perhaps the most influential psychological model that created practical impact on studying

children is the developmental staging in Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development. It has to be noted that these developmental models were premised on the idea of biological maturation which describes a linear progression contingent to age and does not take into consideration the sociocultural factors that can play a hand at shaping the child's development (Ryan, 2008). Thus, the emergence of a paradigm.

Chris Jenks (2009) rationalized the need to construct the child sociologically and culturally to be able to free it from biological determinism endorsed by the dominant discourses. Hence, social constructionism became the first defining feature of Childhood Studies. Additionally, Prout and James (1997) mentioned that in this alternative paradigm, childhood must be seen as a variable of social analysis in which children must be viewed as social agents and are worthy of being studied in their own right.

Research Aims and Questions

This present study aims at contributing to theoretical and empirical contributions to the literature. Its primary aim is to explore conceptualizations by asking a select group of children who are residing in Norway to generate and explain concepts they can associate to the term 'children.'

Specifically, this study sought to achieve the following questions:

- 1) What words do children relate to the term 'children?'
- 2) How do these words relate to concepts about children?
- 3) How do concepts related to children reflect participants' own experiences?

Methods

A qualitative approach was employed in my choice of methods. I specifically used the word-association task, interview, and participant observation. The selected participants 28 children aged between eight to ten years old who are attending an international school in Norway were observed. 12 out of the 28 participants consented to do the word-association activity and individual interview.

I used participant observation as a method to capture points of interests that are key in understanding the context of the other data that were

eventually collected from the other methods employed in this study. The primary purpose of the word-association task is to capture raw concept. Participants were asked to write down as many words that they can associate to the key word 'children'. It served as a springboard activity for engaging my participants in an interview. The structure of the interview process in this study followed a semi-structured format in which I employed the flexibility in adjusting the interview questions by making use of the word-association activity as the central basis for the interview questions.

Results

Children as Possessing Specific Traits

A large portion of responses within this theme related children with physical descriptions indicating size, height, and appearances. Participants described that children are shorter and smaller in comparison to adults and teenagers, and as such physical growth was linked to an increase in age in which babies are considered smallest and adults as the biggest. This awareness of bodily differences does not only draw delineation between adults and children but serves as a determinant of their physical capacities. Interestingly, children's physical traits were positively associated as factors that enable children to easily perform actions that adults might find difficult such as being flexible and having lightness in movement.

Yet, children's physical characteristics are also negatively considered. Notions of how children's physical constitution can render them vulnerable and weak is similar to how participants related fears about going to public places alone because they might not be able to physically defend themselves if a much stronger and bigger individual assaults them. Furthermore, participants consider physical characteristics as a justification as to why certain activities are restricted for children:

"A nine-year old is too short to drive a car. Because then you can't really reach the pedals, and you can't see very well. You need to be a little bit tall."

- John

Correspondingly, participants also related children to concepts that describe behavioral traits. When participants were asked as to how they come about with the ideas on how children should behave, most of them

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explained that their parents and teachers have always reminded them to be mindful of how they behave. In the same context, certain behaviors are deemed acceptable only for children because society does not tolerate them if otherwise exhibited by an adult. For example, one of the participants explains that the police would come to apprehend an adult who acts crazy and shouts loudly, an event that is unlikely to happen when a child exhibits a similar behavior.

Children were also described cognitively as individuals who still need to acquire more knowledge about how the world works and to learn skills such as writing, reading and counting. All of the participants who discussed about children's cognitive traits presented a future-oriented logical sequence of why children need to learn. They explained that learning leads to being able to know more things which leads to having a job and earning money in order to pay for things that are needed to live.

Children as Having Affinities With Certain Objects

Concepts about children were also represented through objects that they find agreeable or enjoyable such as those used for play and recreation, food and other items. Toys were mentioned across all interviews and were regarded as objects that are identified with children. For example, a number of participants indicated that they do not have siblings to play with at home, and that their parents usually do not have time to do so either. In such circumstance, toys become their companions in play.

However, there are also accounts in which toys were significant in their interaction with other children. For those participants who play with other children, toys were integral to the formation of shared fantasies for staging situations for interactive play.

"I play with my little brother. We have a box full of Lego and toys. And sometimes we build something like a big castle of Lego and we also make cars..." - Tommy

Additionally, toys were also regarded as children's possessions. A sense of ownership is evident when the participants discussed how they feel

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responsible for taking care of their toys. Part of this responsibility is the sentimental value that they attach to these objects that were often given to them as gifts by parents, family members and friends.

Children were also associated as having inclinations towards technological media such as television, computers, and tablets. These objects were considered a source of entertainment because they contain games, videos, and music that children enjoy. At the same time, these objects allow children access to information and learning through the computer applications designed for learning and television programs produced for instruction.

Aside from objects used for activities, children were also towards liking particular kinds of food. From the worksheets, food items such as 'candy' and 'chocolate' appeared as the ideas related to children. The interviews revealed that these kinds of food attract children because they taste sweet, but these are also considered as unhealthy. Children's food preferences included an emphasis on the types of food that they must eat instead of sweets, such as fruits and vegetables. Participants' reasoning behind the need for children to eat good and healthy food is related to the idea of having good teeth and becoming bigger, taller and stronger – physical traits that are also descriptive of adults.

Children as Defined by the Activities

The kinds of activities that children engage in also emerged as a common theme among the concepts generated by the participants. As it turned out, almost all the participants mentioned and discussed 'play' at one point during their individual interviews. It was indicated that play is an activity that usually involves games and other people. Games were described as a competitive physical activity that is structured by rules. Based on observations and participants' descriptions, rules to games are usually flexible and can be changed into what is seen as fitting for a situation. Games played at school were also described as an opportunity to be able to interact with other children from other classes. It was described that children not only play with other children from school or from the neighborhood but also with family members such as siblings, parents, and older relatives.

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Another important concept that emerged in participants' responses is the idea of 'work.' The concept of work based on the participants' responses refer to a broad range of activities that fall outside of playing and academic learning. However, it must be noted that the description of the type of money that they receive is not the same concept as to what a person in an actual labor employment receives. It was conveyed that children earning money refers to a small amount given by parents to their child as a token of appreciation for performing a task that is beyond what they are expected to do. "If I do five things like feed the cat twice, clean my room once, help with washing the plates, and make food once, I get 90 kroner." - Anna

In all the participants' accounts about receiving money for work that they have done at home, the common notion is that all of them has the choice to do the task or not. Responsibilities at home specifically pertained to helping out with the household chores. Participants have also indicated that children's responsibilities extend to the school where they are tasked to look after the keeping of their shelves and desk area.

Children were also identified with being occupied at doing tasks that are related to taking care of the body and physical maturation. Key concepts include words such as 'eating,' 'drinking milk,' and 'sleeping.' As was already presented in children's affinity for certain food, there was strong awareness that nutrition derived from food is important to keep one's body strong and healthy. Although children prefer to eat foods that are not considered good such as candies and chocolates, participants were mindful that eating and drinking are necessary actions to satisfy biological needs. Children's consciousness about the conditions and needs of their constantly changing body is translated into activities that become part of their daily routines. Additionally, 'running' and 'sports' were also regarded as activities that children need for them to be stronger.

Children as Belonging To Specific Places

The places identified by the participants are the common settings where children spend their everyday activities. With the exception of home, participants discerned venues of learning and recreation as places that are related to children. Specifically, the school is described as a place not only for learning activities but also for playing and meeting other

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children. Participants expressed that they consider the school as a safe place for them because the space and the people in it are familiar to them. Participants further explained that children are responsible over the organization and maintenance of their learning spaces.

Children were also associated with places that are especially established for children's recreation and enjoyment. Commercial places like Lekeland (play land) and Godteland (candy land) had been consistently mentioned by the participants as places where children prefer to go to during their free days.

Lekeland is like a big place. Almost like the school but with higher roofs. It's like a lot of things... There's like a play area for the kids... There is a birthday room there also. And children like to play around all over because the people makes big sets for children to like play and do fun stuff. – Cathy

Through participants' conceptualizations about children belonging to specific places, they were also able to identify certain places that are restricted to children, such as those that are considered dangerous or those that can only be occupied by adults. Some participants have rationalized that children are not allowed to go to certain places for various reasons. First, some places are considered dangerous because they inhabit tools and machines that can physically harm children. There are also places considered as unsafe because they are too big for children to navigate on their own, and that there may be a possibility of encountering strangers who might hurt them.

Children as a Generational Group

Participants have specified that children can be identified by their age. Some of them have stated that people can be grouped as babies, children, teenagers, and adults based on their age. When children are described as belonging to a specific age group, they are assigned to inhabit the one separating babies and teenagers, although the delineations become less distinct in some discussions where babies, children, and teenagers are simply considered one group that represents every individual that is not yet an adult.

Although specific number ranging for age groupings are difficult for a lot of the participants to ascertain, they were able to distinctively describe what

they perceive as the differences between the age groups. Most often, they would use for children the characterization 'younger than teenagers' and 'older than babies.'

Interestingly, the concept of dependency was also brought up as an indicator being a child. Children were defined as a group of being non-adults, were described based on their dependency on parents. The concept 'mom and dad' was not only explicitly written down, it is a significant piece of conversation within some of the interviews. Parents were not only considered as the more knowledgeable individuals in comparison to children in terms of cognitive abilities, they were also considered as physically bigger and stronger. Hence children were also regarded as needing guidance and protection from their parents, who were also the typical image of an adult as found in the accounts of the participants.

Discussion

An Integrative Approach to Biological and Sociological Conceptualizations of Children

When Prout and James (1997) expounded on the rationale behind the emergence of a new sociological paradigm for studying children and childhood, they were clear that one of the motivations was to find an alternative for psychological and developmental perspectives which tend to reduce children as biologically determined beings.

From the works of the proponents Childhood Studies, such as Alan Prout and Alison James (1997) and Chris Jenks (1982), I gathered that the dissent against the developmental and traditional socialization perspectives was largely about the prototyping of children based on a developmental model with an amplification of the universality of children's biological immaturity. By adopting a social constructionist stand, Childhood Studies was able to steer away from this concept of universality and instead espoused for variability that cultural and social contexts provide. Interestingly however, in a later work by Prout (2000, p. 22), he had reflected upon the notion that the social constructionist perspective had unnecessarily disconnected the biological and the social aspects of childhood when it is possible to understand it as 'a medley of culture and nature.'

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Looking into the results of this study, I also find that biological and developmental aspects of childhood should not be dismissed nor avoided in social constructionist discussions, and that both biological and social aspects of life are vital in the conceptualizations about children. Participants' accounts have strongly suggested awareness that children's physical attributes can be enabling or limiting factors in the performance of tasks and actions. Just as it was pointed out in their explanations, there are instance wherein children's restrictions are not created by social rules but rather from the materiality of their bodies and their physical capacities.

Children's bodies become significant in the manipulation of the cultural materials in their environment. For example, when toys were explained as materials for play, participants would always include the concept of imagination and fantasy wherein toys can represent something else that children cannot easily or absolutely manipulate or produce outside of imaginative play. It goes the same for the commercially established places for children where attractive feature of these places can be linked to how the space is designed in consideration to children's physical traits.

The findings of this investigation further suggest that my participants, who also consider themselves as children, are spending a significant part of their present state in anticipation of their future selves. This was strongly reflected in how they talked about why they need to learn and why they need to do certain activities associated to growing up like eating healthy and getting enough sleep. Dryden, Metcalfe, Owen and Shipton (2009) states that children's knowledge of what is supposed to be good for their bodies and the nutritional value of their food are reiterated in the social structures such as schools and politically-driven campaigns towards healthy eating. Children's conceptualizations about food are not only influenced by personal preferences but also by the explicit reminders and instructions that children receive from teachers and parents.

Hence, what may be a theoretical apprehension of this study is actually part of a compelling argument within Childhood Studies that children as 'beings' and 'becomings' are concepts that must not be exclusive of each other (Uprichard, 2008). Adams (2014, p. 174) similarly reflects in her work how 'a sense of future becoming also provides insights into children's

current sense of self and their cultural contexts.' Woodhead (2009) states that looking at children and childhood sociologically does not mean dismissing biological and natural facts, it simply wants to create a broader focus in order to also view factors like social interactions, relationships, and other social, economic, and political circumstances that impact children's lives.

Mayall (2009, p.175) asserts, 'the child is defined in its difference from the adult.' It was evident how children find themselves biologically different from adults, which then relates to the concept of competencies and capacities. James (1995, p. 65) claims that the difference between the child and the adult body is a traditional category marker in Western cultures. This awareness of bodily differences does not only draw delineation between adults and children but serves as a determinant for the formation of children's social identity. While it can be inferred that participants consider children as less knowledgeable and more physically vulnerable than adults, it has to be pointed out that children's characteristics do not have to be always negatively recovered in comparison to adult characteristics. Both children and adults possess different sets of traits of competencies that complement each other and define the quality of interactions and relationship that they form together.

Conclusion

In exploring children's conceptualisations of children using qualitative research approach, I was able to arrive at these five conceptual themes relating to traits, affinities with objects, activities, places, and generational grouping. Using social constructionism as the main theoretical framework, participants' personal experiences are central to how they substantiated ideas they related to children. Interestingly, what ties together the five conceptual themes are the developmental concepts which are overwhelmingly present within the responses. Certain aspects of biological development and a future-oriented way of thinking are found to be an integral part of children's way of characterizing their current selves, and therefore cannot be completely discounted in a social constructionist discussion.

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THE ASIAN-AMERICAN MODEL MINORITY MYTH: CHALLENGES AND REPRESENTATIONS IN CHILDREN'S ADOPTION STORYBOOKS

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine whether two elements (compliance, cultural knowledge) of the Asian-American Model Minority Myth (MMM) were reflected in storybooks about Chinese-born adoptees. Although a 'model' might have positive connotations, it has been argued that MMM can foster distress by creating unreasonably high standards and downplaying relational difficulties (Easley, 1995; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Qin, Way & Mukherjee, 2008). The authors identified 37 books (39 stories) which featured children adopted by US families. They utilized a directional coding approach to evaluate whether the (a) elements were portrayed at all, and (b) portrayals challenged or simply represented the elements. The results revealed that the compliance element was typically portrayed in a challenging manner, whereas the knowledge element was displayed in a representational manner. The relevance of addressing MMM in adoptive literature is noted.

Key words: storybooks; Chinese-born adoptees; cultural ambassadors; Model Minority Myth (MMM)

Introduction

Chinese-born girls represent the largest group of international adoptees by families in the United States (Dorow, 2006; US Department of State, 2020). Due to political and social restrictions, there is a lack of pre-adoption information which could support adoptees in personal and/or family identity development (Andrew, 2007; Ebenstein, 2010; Grice, 2005; Johnson, Banghan, & Liyao, 1998). In the absence of such information, books are a resource commonly utilized by adoptive parents (Song, 2004). Indeed, stories can be integrated into adoptees' self-perceptions over a

lifetime (Jue-Steuck, 2011; Kranstuber & Kellas, 2011; Ponte, Wang, & Fan, 2010). Prior analyses of children's books has identified messaging which reflect issues such as birth country acknowledgement for transnational adoptees, diversity of family structures and gender roles (Anderson & Hamilton, 2005; Fitzpatrick & Kostina-Ritchey, 2015; Rodman & Hidreth, 2002; Satz, 2007). The purpose of this study was to examine how Model Minority Myth (MMM) elements were portrayed in adoptive storybooks featuring Chinese-born children.

Literature Review

Although books' merits might be obvious in addressing origin stories (e.g., who cared for infants, how adoptive parents found infants), they can be meaningful in adapting to post-adoption life as well. The majority of adoptive US parents are White/Euro-American, and they are mindful of the racial differences between themselves and Chinese-born children (Louie, 2009). Prior research on these families has revealed that they are often exposed to intrusive inquiries and various levels of discrimination (Docan-Morgan, 2011; Kubo, 2010). Such inquiries often reflected myths or stereotypes which the parents reported were painful (Suter & Ballard, 2009). In addition, some parents admitted believing stereotypes which were disputed when they became more deeply informed about China and Chinese culture (e.g., Ponte et al., 2010). Thus, individuals within and outside adoptive families might be impacted by myths or inaccurate information. This can be true even in the context of positively-valenced beliefs, such as the MMM.

The MMM is applied to Asian-Americans who behave in ways which align, but do not provoke the broader White/Euro-American culture. There is an expectation that minority members will (a) be compliant in bending to cultural demands and (b) withhold complaints about unfair social conditions (Park, 2008; Saran, 2007). They are considered 'model' individuals because they are seen (in comparison to more vocal groups) as less challenging or threatening (Ho, 2014; McGowan & Lindgren, 2006). In addition, Asian immigrants/descendants are seen as applying traditional American values (hard work, family loyalty) toward their efforts in upward social mobility.

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Yet even positive prejudices can be harmful because they create standards which many group members will be unable or unwilling to meet. In addition, prejudices foster a restrictive view of others which denies their individual humanity (Docan-Morgan, 2011; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Suter & Ballard, 2009). The MMM has placed much pressure on Asian-Americans to fulfill the majority group's (White/Euro-American) expectations of them (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2009; Sue & Sue, 2003; Wong & Halgin, 2006).

Two elements of Asian-American MMM are submissiveness/compliance and cultural knowledge/expertise (Cho, 1997; Dorow, 2006; Ho, 2003; Kim & Yeh, 2002; Poolokasingham, Kleiman, Spanierman, & Houshmand, 2014; Poon et al., 2016; Qin et al., 2008). In reference to compliance, they are expected to adhere to other's expectations in public spaces such as schools and private spaces such as homes (Ho, 2003; Saran, 2007). Out of respect to elders, children are particularly pressured to be dutifully submissive and discouraged from questioning adult authority. Such compliance is considered the norm and aligns with collectivistic values such as social harmony (Hook, Worthington & Utsey, 2009; Lee, 2015; Park, 2008; Saran, 2007).

In reference to cultural knowledge, there are two common assumptions. First, Asian-Americans are portrayed as effectively adapting to White/Euro-American culture (e.g., 'learning the language'). Second, they retain deep knowledge about their cultural heritage, and there are no meaningful differences among Asian countries. This assumption contributes to expectations that information is generalizable and should be known by any group member – regardless of their immigration status or age (Lee, 2015; Saran, 2007). Given this knowledge, individuals are sometimes treated as cultural ambassadors who can respond to any queries from members of other social groups. The ambassadorial demands can be heightened when Asian-Americans are a small portion of a school or community population (e.g., Lee, 2018; Poolokasingham et. al., 2014).

Books can be a resource in either representing or challenging myths. The representation does not inherently serve as an endorsement. Rather, it simply acknowledges that stereotypes or prejudices might be part of children's experiences (Beck, 2009; Blaska, 2004; Suter & Ballard, 2009).

The challenging approach shows the viability or value of alternatives to MMM elements. This approach does not require a judgmental statement (such as “That’s wrong”). In the context of adoption, the books emphasize that children are loved (Ayres, 2004; Jerome & Sweeney, 2014) even if their behavior is contrary to positive prejudices.

In this context, this study addressed the following research questions:

- (1) Were the MMM elements of compliance and cultural knowledge evident in adoptive storybooks about Chinese-born children?
- (2) If yes, were the elements presented in a representational or challenging manner?

Method – Book criteria and Analytic coding process

Texts were required to meet several criteria for inclusion in the study. Each book must have (a) specified the adoptee’s birth country as China, (b) been written in English, (c) been written for children 3-7 years old, (d) been published after 1994 and (e) been publicly available [via libraries, online vendors, physical stores, or e-books]. A total of 37 books (See Table 1) which contained 39 stories (two books had dual stories) were included in the sample.

The authors selected a directional coding approach (Fitzpatrick & Kostina-Ritchey, 2013; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) to analyze the stories. This approach requires that researchers identified important characteristics of a phenomenon. This identification is drawn from academic literature (such as empirical and conceptual articles) about the phenomenon. Researchers use the characteristics list as a guide to determine whether they are present in the source material of interest (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

In this study, the authors read MMM literature to identify the characteristics of compliance and cultural knowledge. After they reached agreement on the characteristics list, each author independently coded stories (presence, challenge, representation). There were a small number of coding discrepancies (approximately 5%) which were resolved via a qualitative comparative method (Patton, 2002).

Results

Compliance

When the stories addressed compliance, it was typically done in a challenging manner. Children were not described as combative or unruly. Rather, they were described as having their own preferences and not inherently willing to defer to adoptive parents' preferences. Such descriptions have the advantage of portraying adoptive parent-child interactions in a realistic and transparent manner (Ayres, 2004; Fitzpatrick & Kostina-Ritchey, 2013). In addition, they align with MMM literature which highlights the weight of compliance expectations for Asian-Americans (Qin, et al., 2008; Sue, et. al, 2009).

Some stories challenged this characteristic during the early interactions between infants and adoptive parents. In contrast to fanciful descriptions of instantly communal unions, the stories portrayed children's uncomfortable reactions to unknown adults. In the book "The Red Blanket", a mother described a difficult first day:

"All day long I tried to comfort you...I walked you back and forth, singing all the sweet lullabies I could remember. But they were unfamiliar melodies, and you couldn't understand the words. Nothing I did consoled you" (Thomas, 2004, no page number [npn]).

Other books portrayed a noncompliance with parental plans (for comfort, fun) in subsequent days. Thus, a lack of submission was not dismissed only as an initial discomfort. For example, one family was described as staying in China for a few days after the child was given to the parents. They chose to take the child and her adoptive brother to a hotel pool. This event is told from the brother's perspective:

"I had this great idea to take Claire swimming. She took one look at the pool and began to cry. I jumped into show her what fun it was. That made her yell even louder" (McMahon & McCarthy, 2005, npn).

Such stories can have a humanizing quality. By choosing to portray the children's displeasures as realistic and not unreasonable, the books

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highlight that adoptees don't have to be perfect (or completely compliant). This type of realism can be a resource in alleviating pressures to please or hide problems from adoptive parents (Docan-Morgan, 2011; Raible, 2008). This compliance challenge was also evident in stories which featured older children who were reflecting upon the adoption process. Research with adoptive children revealed that their insights can become more complex or sophisticated over time (Ponte et al., 2010). This paralleled some stories in which adoptees were portrayed as considering alternative pathways to family formation. For example, one book featured a girl who speculated about a role reversal:

"What if...instead of an orphanage where kids without families live, there was an orphanage where all the moms who want kids live? They would stay there until a kid visits the Mommy Orphanage, picks out a Mom, and takes her home.' Now Mom wrinkled up her face as she thought about this. 'I don't know if I like the idea,' she said" (Krass & Krass, 2008, npn).

This approach aligns with girl empowerment principles in various domains, including children's literature (Hubler, 2000). Although there are obvious ethical and logistical constraints against a parent orphanage, the query emphasizes that adoptees might have their own preferences in the selection process. In addition, it hints at the power differentials between the choosers and the chosen. Contemplation about an alternative arrangement suggests that children don't simply exist to be passive recipients of adoptive parents' interest.

It should also be noted that one book framed noncompliance as a personal trait rather than a situational response. In this story, an oldest adopted daughter describes her adopted sister's traits:

"Jenny is the baby of the family and she's full of energy. She gives my mom a run for her money, and she's always very contrary" (Schaumberg & Schaumberg, 2007, npn).

The phrase "always very contrary" suggests that her attitude/behavior

is pervasive rather than triggered by a specific circumstance. The book highlights the mother's commitment to all daughters, so it does not suggest that this trait threatens or undermines a stable environment for this child.

Cultural Knowledge/Expertise

When the books addressed cultural knowledge, it was typically done in a representational manner. In reference to exposure to Chinese culture, adoptees were portrayed as gaining their knowledge from a variety of resources. In the US, there are some Chinese schools which are designed to teach elements of culture and history (Lu, 2001). Although commonly associated with immigrant families, some schools are open to anyone who has a cultural interest. Such schools are used by some adoptive parents to foster children's knowledge. Similarly, one book specified an adoptee's frequent attendance: "Elizabeth is my best friend. We go to Chinese school every Saturday. We learn songs and dance wearing beautiful Chinese dresses" (Friedman, 2009, npn).

Other books placed less emphasis on weekly classes. Rather, they presented attendance as occurring only for special events, such as the Chinese New Year. In contrast to the classes, these events were described as shared celebrations in which adoptive family members participated. This participation is a means for adoptive parents to be seen as supportive of traditions from the child's birth culture:

"Then my favorite day arrives when we all gather together to celebrate the Lunar New Year at the local cultural center....Chinese New Year will always be an important part of my life. Mommy and Daddy say they'll make sure of it" (Meadows, 2012, npn).

The most expansive commitments to birthcountry exposure were evident in plans for return travel. Given the expense of roundtrip travel for the adoption, it would be substantial to repeat the trip. Yet, some books seem to align with the heritage travel approach, which promotes that some immersion in their place of origin can help adoptees reconcile biculturalism (e.g., Miller, 2013). Given that the storybooks were written for a young audience (3-7 years), the travel was planned for an age-appropriate period:

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“In a few years, when Emma is older, Mommy and Daddy will take her to China to show her the country where she was born” (Hodge, 2003, npn). The utilization of Chinese schools and international travel characterize some adoptive families as having access to significant resources.

However, this does not align with the experiences of all US families. There is a diaspora, in which Chinese adoptees are given to families who are geographically dispersed across the country (Miller-Loessi & Kilic, 2001). Given this dispersion, there is great variation in parents’ access to cultural experts. In this context, some books portrayed parents as relying on explanations about basic elements of China. For example, one book had this description given to a child:

“‘China is far, far away – halfway around the world...Their culture is very, very old and amazing. Their Great Wall and Forbidden City are famous and amazing!’ her mom said” (Koh, 2000, npn).

Although this might initially appear to be a shallow depiction, it aligns stylistically with introductory country overviews for young children (see Mayhew, 2014; Toht, 2017). In addition, this introduction does not negate the possibility of deeper instruction in subsequent years. Collectively, these books highlighted parents’ efforts to provide exposure via formal and informal resources (e.g., Lee, 2003).

It should be noted that some books focused on US rather than Chinese cultural knowledge. Books emphasized the introduction of US customs (such as Independence Day celebrations) as well as English-language acquisition. This aligns with actual adoptive family trends. Given that Chinese-born children are often infants or toddlers at the time of adoption (e.g., US Department of State, 2020), parents might perceive that English will be the first fully-developed language. This US emphasis was typified in a brother’s description of his younger adopted sister. He noted that his sister is now quite different from as he knew her initially in China. Indeed, he refers to this initial girl as having disappeared:

“When I hear little kids running around our house or Claire singing

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“Old MacDonald” loudly in her first-learned English, I wonder if this disappearance is a good thing. But then Claire’s laughter always tells me that it is” (McMahon & McCarthy, 2005, npn).

As noted previously, one problem associated with the knowledge element is cultural ambassadorship. Individuals’ racial/ethnic identification can create a presumption that they are completely knowledgeable about their own country or nearby countries (Qin et al., 2008; Sue et al., 2009). When asked to provide information, some people experience an uncomfortable level of social pressure. One book depicted this dynamic in a classroom:

One day her kindergarten teacher posted a big map on the blackboard. ‘Do you know what country this is?’ she asked the class. No one knew. ‘Why, it’s China,’...‘What is China like?’ asked the teacher. Again no one knew. So all eyes turned to [Chan Ming]. Her classmates began to ask her questions. ‘How many people live in China?’ ‘What do they wear?’ ‘Does everyone eat with chopsticks?’ Then one little boy asked, ‘Do they play baseball there?’ [Chan Ming] turned bright red and said in a whisper, ‘I don’t know, but I’ll find out’” (Lewis, 2010, npn).

The depiction of physical features (turning red, whispering) are consistent with children’s anxiety or trepidation. The book does not specify the teacher’s (a) intention in asking the initial question, or (b) efforts to help Chan Ming manage the responses with classmates. Through subsequent events in the story, the girl was portrayed as creating her own plan to gather information and educate her peers about China. This aligns with the burden that some individuals feel to deal with the curiosity or intrusion of majority groupmembers in their communities (e.g., Owen, 2015).

Conclusion – Relevance of stories

In sum, the results revealed that two MMM elements were evident in adoptive storybooks. In reference to compliance, it was typically addressed in a challenging manner. One reason for this challenge might be that authors wanted to present the children in a humanistic and realistic manner (Beck, 2009). In their biographical statements, several of the authors or illustrators identified themselves as members of adoptive families. Thus, it is possible that their personal histories informed the portrayal of

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imperfect unions. A second reason might be that the books were a prelude to White/Euro-American values adaptation. Prior research has shown that in comparison to Chinese-American parents, Euro-American parents placed greater emphasis on children's expression of their emotions and individuality (Rothbaum, Morelli, Pott, & Liu-Constant, 2000). Given that the books were written in English and advertised as a resource for US adoptive families, it is possible that children were framed as behaving consistently with their post-adoptive culture.

In reference to cultural knowledge/expertise, the books typically addressed this element in a representational manner. It is noteworthy that books featured adoptees who were learning about their birth country. This aligns with research on actual adoptive families, which revealed that White/Euro-American parents wanted children to be familiar with their cultural heritage (Gill, 2012; Louie, 2009). In addition, books which featured Lunar New Year celebrations often described them as relational events which included nuclear (parents, siblings) and extended (grandparents, cousins) family members. Rather than simply leaving their daughters at cultural centers with Chinese community members (such as teachers or classmates), the Euro-American parents were portrayed as active participants in these events. Such portrayals are consistent with recommendations to support the development of a bicultural (Chinese-American) family identity (Louie, 2009; Ponte et al., 2010; Suter et al., 2011).

Consistent with concerns about the MMM, one book particularly displayed a child's discomfort with the ambassadorial role. This role can be difficult because it can reflect unreasonably high expectations and minimize interpersonal challenges that individuals face (Easley, 1995; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Qin, et al., 2008). It might be argued that such portrayals should be discouraged because they could be unduly stressful for children. A counterargument is that the portrayals can help prepare adoptees for some encounters which they might have with peers (and even adults). Research on actual families revealed that parents expected some interactions in which outsiders expressed critical opinions about the dual racial/ethnic identities (Suter & Ballard, 2009). In anticipation that parents can't always be with their children, they tried to model appropriate responses (Suter et al., 2011). In alignment with the view that "forewarned

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is forearmed” (Janssen, Fennis & Pruyn, 2010, p. 911), storybooks can be a meaningful resource in preparation for MMM-based interactions. Future research will provide more elucidation about the messaging within children’s books (Ayres, 2004; Fitzpatrick & Kostina-Ritchey, 2013) and the impact of myths/stereotypes on adoptive families (Gill, 2012; Kubo, 2010).

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Table 1: Adoptive Families' Book List

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VERTICALITY, POWER AND SURVEILLANCE IN THE CLASSROOM: DISABLED CHILDREN'S RESISTANCE

Abstract

This paper considers how vertical power dynamics play out in one English primary school classroom, based on a PhD study of young children's embodied school experiences. I consider how adults use vertical space to surveil and control, yet children can also use vertical space to their advantage by avoiding the surveilling gaze of adults. This paper elucidates the findings of part of a PhD study, namely that children can and do use their "lower down" position to resist adults' normative expectations of development and behaviour. This is especially applicable to children with a label of special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) who are considerably less powerful than the adults around them. Verticality is intimately tied to power relationships, and therefore to surveillance (Nemorin, 2017). It might seem obvious that adult-child relations "are vertically structured, with the adult in a dominant and the child in subordinated and dependent position" (Nordström, 2011). Yet, it remains valuable to consider the physical, embodied, assemblage-in-space ways in which verticality, such as literal height differences, plays a role in surveillance and resistance in the classroom.

I take the concept of "verticality" both as a metaphor and as a literal embodied experience. Firstly, I consider how child "development" is seen as a vertical process (Engeström, 1996). This normative understanding of development reinforces ideas of particular ways of becoming an adult (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2011) which do not allow for a "normality of doing things differently" (Hansen and Philo, 2007). Therefore, children who do things "differently" are especially vulnerable to bodily surveillance in the classroom. Then I consider how adults use vertical space to try to control classroom assemblages. I particularly focus on the way adults use vertical space (Readdick and Bartlett, 1994) to display information (including

photographs) about children labelled with SEND, and what this says about agency and representation in the classroom. Finally, I discuss how children resist adult power in the classroom (Gallagher, 2010) by using space in ways that adults might not expect or intend.

Introduction

The Reception classrooms of Harbour View Primary School are typical of a British early years setting: the space is divided into distinct areas such as a reading corner and sand pit; in one corner there is an interactive whiteboard with speakers; and in another corner there is a cloakroom area for the children's coats. But as well as being divided in the horizontal plane, space is divided vertically too: at the lower levels there are activities on the floor, and child-sized desks and chairs set up for children to draw, paint and write. Above this, the walls have colourful displays demonstrating numbers, phonics and children's work; other notice-boards contain information for adults, such as lists of children with allergies or labels of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). For those familiar with similar environments, none of this is particularly note-worthy. Yet when we begin to analyse these everyday early childhood spaces, we can begin to make the familiar unfamiliar and question assumptions about space, bodies, power and resistance in the classroom. Specifically, this paper focuses on the (often overlooked) use of vertical space by adults to try to surveil and assert power and control, and how children use vertical space to their advantage by resisting the surveilling gaze of adults.

Vertical surveillance, space and developmental discourse

Verticality refers to the metaphorical relationship of "traditional" forms of surveillance in which those with more power surveil and control those with less (Nemorin, 2017). In that metaphor, those with more power are higher up and those with less are lower down; quite simply, "verticality and social power are closely linked" (Niedeggen et al., 2017, no pagination). The school classroom is a classic example of a space of surveillance (Foucault, 1975), where adults hold power and surveil children: "adult-child relations in school are vertically structured, with the adult in a dominant and the child in subordinated and dependent position" (Nordström, 2011, p. 74). Recent literature in children's studies has taken an interest in power, surveillance and school spaces, considering how, in everyday school environments,

surveillance is both enacted and resisted. This has included US-American boys of colour resisting oppression by “standin’ tall” (itself linked to ideas of verticality and power) (Basile, 2020); incomplete surveillance in primary schools, allowing evasion and resistance (Gallagher, 2010); and troubling the idea of children’s “docile” bodies by viewing power relationships as constantly shifting and negotiated (Pike, 2010). There remains, however, a gap in the specific understandings of how both adults and children use their metaphorical and physical vertical positioning to their advantage.

Child-adult relationships in the classroom are also strongly influenced by a pervasive, traditional idea of “development” in which children progress ever upwards “along a vertical dimension, from immaturity and incompetence toward maturity and competency” (Engeström, 1996, no pagination); in other words, children are on an inexorable climb upwards to adulthood. This normative understanding of development reinforces particular ways of becoming an adult, in which disabled children’s bodies are “lacking” and not “normal” (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2011). The powerful myth of “normal” bodies has been reinscribed and exploited to serve the nation-state, in which the school system contributes to creating docile, productive bodies (Davis, 1995). This does not allow for a “normality of doing things differently” (Hansen and Philo, 2007) in which children can find their own way of doing, being and becoming in a compassionate, supportive environment. Engeström (1996) suggests that we think beyond the developmental ladder, instead considering the potential to cross potentially stifling boundaries, opening outwards to myriad possibilities.

Methodology

The findings discussed here are one part of a PhD study exploring school spaces and disability. For six months I spent one day a week with early years pupils at a large inner-city primary school in northern England. My research was underpinned by the idea that we should listen to disabled children to understand their experiences, and take them seriously (Beresford, 1997, p.1), and that “listening” takes various forms, including communicating non-verbally. I was influenced by the Mosaic approach (Moss and Clark, 2017) and used various visual and creative methods. These included asking children to draw themselves, their school environment, and their interests; giving children the use of a tablet computer to take

photographs of whatever they wanted in the classroom and playground; and conversations with children about their school, sometimes using their photos or drawings as prompts for discussion. This gave children a choice of methods to suit them (or the choice to not take part at all), and also had the advantage of building a fuller picture of classroom life from different types of data. This gave children the opportunity to express themselves as experts in their own lives, who can consider the meaning of their own experiences (Moss and Clark, 2017). However, I was also mindful that no person is a fully autonomous, rational “subject” with perfect insight into their own behaviour (Stephens, Ruddick and McKeever, 2015). Therefore, my research also involved observing the classroom spaces, focusing on assemblages in space (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) and the material world without returning to pathologising accounts of disabled people’s bodies (Feely, 2016). I tried to be critical and self-reflective, and I was never “just” observing, always recognising my role as an ever-present participant in the classroom space.

Findings

Many of my observations on the use of vertical space in the classroom came from re-reading and re-analysing my field notes. One such entry reads:

I am sitting with [two pupils] as they make a car out of a large cardboard box and decorate it. They tell me they are best friends. One of them tells me that her mum has a baby in her belly. The other says that her mum was going to go into hospital to have a baby. [She says that she] used to be a baby but now [is] big [...] and holds her hand above her head to demonstrate this. [fieldnotes]

In this snapshot of typical classroom life, a 5-year-old demonstrated her understanding of getting older and becoming an adult: that she would become taller. It is usual to talk about “growing up” as though upwards growth is the most obvious differentiation between children and adults. Children often refer to adults as “grown-ups” as though their key trait is having finished growing. I reflected upon this in relation to my own embodied experience in the classroom as an adult, taller than all of the children.

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One of the earliest observations was: I enter the classroom at about 9.30 am and put my coat and bag in a tall cupboard, which also [contains] various other bags, stationary, snacks and miscellaneous other things that adults do not want the children to access. (adapted from field notes)

My first act in the class space reconfirmed my adult status: placing my personal belongings in a cupboard, thereby accessing a vertical space which only adults could use. This illustrates how the physical environment is designed to divide adults' spaces from children's spaces and to prevent children from crossing this divide. Adults using the cupboard know that items on the upper shelves were out of reach of children. This thereby created a physical separation and a space that is "adult only" by taking advantage of the height differences between children and adults, rather than using a barrier such as a door or wall, which might separate different parts of horizontal space. It might seem banal to say that children are shorter than adults: this is simply accepted as fact. Yet digging deeper troubles these basic assumptions about children's and adults' bodies and the power relationships they embody. It is therefore a good starting point to consider how vertical power relationships work in the classroom setting.

My ability to access higher spaces illustrates how children and adults live in different worlds in the same space (Opie and Opie, 1991; Christensen and James, 2017). We might believe that adults and children occupy the same physical space, even if their cultural worlds are different; yet only adults have access to the space above about 4 feet (120cm). Thus the classroom is bisected by an invisible, horizontal line that divides space that both adults and children can physically access, below, and space that only adults can physically access, above. This exemplifies the socially accepted power difference (and behaviour differences) between adults and children. Even though it was possible for children to open the cupboard and access items on the lower shelves, I never saw a child do this, and the adults were not concerned enough about this to lock the cupboard. This suggests that the children did not open the cupboard because they knew it was an adults' space in an environment where they are used to adults controlling all aspects of their lives (Tisdall, 2003). In other words, adults exploited both their physical and metaphorical high position: the former, by using higher spaces to control what children had access to; and the latter, being safe

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in the knowledge that children knew the social rules and would not break them.

I have established that the early years classroom at Harbour View Primary School is bisected horizontally, with adult space established, metaphorically and literally, in the upper part of the classroom. It has also been asserted that “traditionally, the locus of child play and learning has been the horizontal surfaces of early childhood classrooms--tabletops, desks and floors. Vertical surfaces have been reserved for adult decoration and direction of child activity” (Readdick and Bartlett, 1994, p. 86). I found a clear example of adult use of display boards at Harbour View to provide information intended for adults, especially regarding children labelled with SEND and for illustrating children’s “progress” or “development”. I will now discuss how adults use the vertical space of display boards to communicate silently to each other the importance of surveilling children and recording evidence of their development.

“Learning journeys”

The metaphorical understanding of development as a linear, upwards process was shown through a wall display in the classroom showing a series of photographs of a child using outdoor play equipment. It was titled “Ahmed’s Learning Journey”, borrowing a term used by the Standards and Testing Agency (STA), an executive agency of the Department for Education, which provides a “robust testing, assessment and moderation system to measure and monitor pupils’ progress and attainment through primary school from reception” onwards (Standards and Testing Agency, no year). Each photograph in Ahmed’s learning journey had a caption written by an adult, along the lines of, “He climbs carefully down and back up again! (MH)”. This explicitly links the photographs to the Early Learning Goals (ELGs), with “MH” referring to “ELG04: Moving and Handling”:

Children show good control and co-ordination in large and small movements. They move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space. They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing. (Standards and Testing Agency, 2014, p. 1).

This is just one of seventeen Early Learning Goals which show “the level of learning and development expected at the end of the EYFS [Early Years

Foundation Stage]”; and these types of photographs and (adult) comments on them are encouraged by the STA as evidence of children reaching said goals (STA, 2017). This clearly considers progress to be a linear, vertical process, with children metaphorically climbing towards a goal. There is also no acknowledgement that children’s ability to achieve certain tasks (in this case, move through space in certain ways) is not an independent, individual skill, but is part of a complex, ever-changing assemblage involving multiple human and non-human actors (Feely, 2016; Stephens et al., 2015). This has particular significance for children with SEND labels: atypical co-ordination, balance, confidence and/or writing skills are considered to be incompatible with “growing up” normatively. Such children are placed, metaphorically, low down on the development ladder.

Furthermore, the placement of this learning journey at adult eye-level elevates its importance: its vertical positioning at this height reminds adults of their role in surveilling the children and photographing them to record their progress. It is a constant reminder, from adults to adults, that their vertical power over children is part of a higher power from the government, using its own various methods of surveillance to track the progress of schools on the basis of the progress of individual children. Yet despite this apparent concern with child development, and the minutiae and complexity of the associated bureaucracy, it has been argued that the neo-liberal concern with preparing children primarily for future employment is creating an “emerging compliant professional with an increasingly compliant pedagogy, which may not be commensurate to supporting child development” (Leydon, 2019). Instead, it is one link in a vertical chain of power, in which children are surveilled by practitioners and practitioners are surveilled by government. Clearly, then, the photographs depicting Ahmed’s learning journey are not simply an observation or celebration of Ahmed enjoying playing. Nor is this a value-free celebration of a child’s achievement. Rather, it is explicitly linked to government-mandated goals forced upon early years practitioners from above.

Small acts of resistance

Despite children’s relative lack of power, they do find ways to disrupt and resist the vertical adult-child power dynamic, intentionally or otherwise, by exploiting their own position. Inaya, a child with a label of SEND, liked to lie

on the floor. Adults considered this behaviour undesirable, and encouraged her to sit on the floor with the other children when the teacher was reading a story to the whole class. To sit with her legs crossed with the rest of the class was one goal on Inaya's personalised timetable, which laid out how adults should communicate and interact with her to help her reach various goals. Yet it was unclear why this was important, other than to encourage normative behaviour. Inaya's resistance took the form of getting as close to the ground as she could, physically; symbolically she was rejecting the "proper" way of sitting, with its uprightness and its association with more "grown-up" behaviour. Other disabled people have talked about the taboo of lying down in public: Sullivan Sanford, for example, describes her experience of "trying to inconspicuously lie on the floormat" (2006, p. 40), while Crow feels "censored" as she seeks hidden spaces to lie down in public (2017, p. 42). We might question why people feel that they have to be inconspicuous and hidden; perhaps we can imagine, and even try to create, a world where people's ways of "doing things differently" are normal (Hansen and Philo, 2007) but not homogenous, and where Inaya can lie down if she wants to; where, in Crow's words, her lying down "opens up possibilities for celebrating the rebel body and finding a more curious way of living" (2017, p.47, see also Engeström, 1996). We should consider a world in which a disabled child's choice to embrace low-down space is not discouraged in the name of creating upright, upstanding (or upsitting) citizens.

Children also exploited their vertical position in the classroom by resisting surveillance through literally turning the gaze of the camera upwards towards adults. Izobel, for example, took a striking photo in which an adult holds a tablet computer and looms over her, photographing her. Adults surveilled Izobel (and other disabled children) because of her position "low down" on the ladder. On one occasion, Izobel and I were playing and talking together. A practitioner suddenly interrupted to record evidence of Izobel meeting a communication goal (in other words, having a chat with me). (Incidentally, discreet observation from a distance, recorded in writing, is adequate for the purposes of the EYFSP). I have no doubt that this adult acted in good faith, and there is nothing wrong with celebrating the daily activities of children expressing themselves. However, the backdrop of normative development "goals", enforced through statutory powers, made

the moment quite hollow for me. It was a stark reminder of governmental pressures on schools and the resulting non-consensual, potentially damaging surveillance on children. Yet Izobel's small act of resistance, turning the camera upwards to face the adult and the camera, showed her potential for agency in a position of relative powerlessness.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that children find themselves "low down" in terms of power in the early years classroom. This includes surveillance, overt and covert, to which certain children are particularly vulnerable. All adults interested in childhood and education - researchers, practitioners, policy-makers - should be concerned about this. After all, we are caught between two worlds: we see the everyday joys and sorrows of children being children, and we are aware of the possibilities that lie ahead of them; yet we are also crushed by the weight from above of a neo-liberal agenda that values evidence of upwards achievement (narrowly defined) beyond all else. But we should also be heartened by children's acts of resistance, of opening up and pushing boundaries, and our own potential to question, trouble and disrupt dominant narratives of development and surveillance. In the case of this research, the disruption of the usual power dynamic came about as an unintended consequence of one method chosen to understand children's views: photography. This was a vital reminder that I was not an objective outsider in this research; rather, my physical presence in the classroom made me part of the environment and my "high up" status (and resulting power) as an adult was ever-present. We cannot erase that power, but we can and must consider how we use it and for what ends.

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HOW DOES CLASSICAL CONDITIONING THROUGH USE OF COLOUR SIGNALS IMPACT THE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT OF A SECONDARY YEAR 7 CLASS?

Abstract

Familiarity is conducive to a positive learning environment. When pupils are exposed to familiar circumstances throughout their studies, they feel greater ownership of their education, which makes for more proactive learners. In order to achieve this, pupils need to know the expectation they are subject to in the classroom, and the consequences of complying with or defying the rules (Payne, 2015). Classical and operant conditioning are interwoven into behaviour for learning policies across many schools, but simple sensory signals with corresponding associations are rarely used in secondary schools. This study exposed year 7 pupils to colour signals which conveyed our expectations at that moment, but they were given no explicit explanation as to what the signals meant. The results indicated that the majority of typically developing pupils quickly built associations between the different colour signals and the behaviour expected of them, suggesting there is value in using classical conditioning for classroom management.

Introduction

A key contributor towards a pupils' classroom experience is how the teacher manages the class. For pupils to get the most out of their lessons they need to know that the teacher can manage the class and keep the lesson on track. There are a number of factors that contribute to the attitude of a class, including the subject, the individual teacher's personality, the time of day, and the location of the classroom to name a few. Many of these cannot be changed. However, one factor that can be enhanced to promote a productive classroom atmosphere rooted in mutual respect is a consistently enforced set of rules (Payne, 2015). If pupils know the teacher's expectations at any given time in the lesson, and understand

the consequences associated with complying and not complying with them, the class can start feeling familiar and stable. While most schools have a standard reward and consequence system, each teacher is likely to differ in how readily they assign rewards and sanctions. In fact, there is likely to be a great deal of variety in how a single teacher uses the reward and consequence systems between lessons depending on their mood. While the same system is being used, the pupils do not always know what they must do to achieve a reward, or how much flexibility they have before their behaviour is deemed unacceptable and worthy of punishment. This inconsistency can cause pupils to kick back if they feel they have been treated unjustly or singled out; it also means compliant, well-behaved pupils can be overlooked when they should be rewarded. From a holistic perspective, it means the entire lesson is delayed as the teacher highlights why each instance of sanctioning does not meet expectations, or why each reward has been specifically given. This project investigated the effectiveness of a standardised method of classroom management, whereby different colours were visually displayed for different purposes: red when we expected the pupils to be silent and attentive, and green when we wanted pupils to be active and contributing to the lesson.

Literature Review

One of the most important and most emotionally-exhausting aspects of teaching is classroom management. Without the cooperation of the class it is impossible to teach a good lesson. Managing a class of individuals with different motivators and personalities is not a simple task; hence, individuals trained in specific means of managing behaviour substantially improve classroom management skills and the well-being of the educator (Dicke, Elling, Schmeck, & Leutner, 2015). This relationship between greater classroom management skills and reduced stress levels provided the motivation behind this action research project. There is then the question of which behaviour management strategies have the greatest effect. A study by Pas, Cash, O'Brennan, Debnam, & Bradshaw (2015) found that the most compliant classes were those where pupils have more opportunities to respond to the teacher and were subjected to less disapproval and negatively reactive management strategies. Thus, the intervention used in this research project was implemented with a focus on reducing the need for disapproving tones and encourage greater interactivity in lessons.

Numerous recent studies have been carried out that highlight the existence of associative learning across a number of species. Hymenopterans, such as ants, bees, and wasps, appear to form particularly strong associations between visual cues and extrinsic rewards (Bitterman, Menzel, Fietz, & Schäfer, 1983; Mancini, Giurfa, Sandoz, & Avarguès-Weber, 2018; Fernandes, Buckley, & Niven, 2018; Liefting, Hoedjes, Lann, Smid, & Ellers, 2018). Furthermore, early behaviourists such as Burrhus Skinner and Ivan Pavlov developed their theories after training animals, namely small mammals, through associative learning (MacBlain, 2018). If conditioning can be used to such great effect with animals that lack comprehension of language and verbal instructions, one would expect it would be of even greater use with regards to 'training' people. Conditioning humans is not a new concept, as MacBlain (2018) demonstrates. Operant conditioning, whereby positive and negative reinforcement measures are used to encourage desirable behaviour and discourage undesirable behaviour, has been ingrained into school behaviour for learning policies since the cane was common practice. Modern classroom management strategies rely heavily on operant conditioning in the form of extrinsic rewards and sanctions as positive and negative reinforcement respectively (Escobar & Nachev, 2017; Kelly & Pohl, 2018). While positive and negative reinforcement is utilised frequently in the classroom, very few of these modern behaviourist approaches use a memorable sensory signal to trigger a learned behavioural response. This research project combined the associative learning of Pavlov's dogs with the reinforcement of Skinner's operant conditioning to investigate whether subtle sensory signals, paired with positive and negative reinforcement, can be used to dictate the behaviour of students during a lesson.

Methodology

According to Mertler (2016) action research is a "systematic inquiry" undertaken by the educator for the educator, with a focus on investigating aspects of one's own teaching practice, how a school operates, or how students best learn. An educator may conduct research in their own classroom with their own students, consequently allowing them to implement a plan of action specifically designed with their own practice or pupils in mind. Despite this characterisation of action research, it is widely accepted that the term was introduced by Kurt Lewin as a means of "translating psychological principles and findings into practical

recommendations for resolving social problems” following World War II (Lewin, 1946, cited in Stokols, 2006), and not initially applied to pedagogy. Therefore, a more accurate and concise definition of action research, given by Coghlan and Shani (2005), is “undertaking action and studying that action as it takes place”. In certain fields such as pedagogy and education, using an action research approach makes for a collaborative, productive, and useful investigation with applicable findings. An action research approach also encourages the researcher to critique themselves and reflect on the findings of the research in the interest of improving their practice.

We decided to apply this new intervention to a year 7 class as a part of ordinary teaching practice. This was because we felt we had a good relationship with the class, meaning they were unlikely to reject new rules out of defiance, but their tendency to talk through lessons and classroom management had been highlighted in previous observations. Furthermore, they were a class of 29, meaning we could test the efficacy of this intervention with a full class rather than a small group that may adopt new interventions more readily. The pupils were also relatively new to the school, and thus would have minimal prior biases towards the application of the reward and consequence systems. We checked beforehand and ensured that none of the pupils suffered from colour deficiency that may make distinguishing particular colours difficult.

Ethical consideration was made in relation to seeking participation consent through advising participants of the research and the review of existing and new behaviour strategies in class. BERA guidelines were followed and University consent for the project was received. Participants were advised they were able to not consent to any findings being used in any written work (for example, their numerical data would not be included in the findings), however all pupils would be participating in the use of a range of behaviour strategies as this was part of the normal school behaviour policy.

We decided to use the colours red and green to represent a desire for silent attention and active participation respectively, as these colours have similar “stop” and “go” connotations in other aspects of day-to-day life, such as traffic lights. We made sure to always use the left hand to display the red signal and the right hand to display the green signal; consequences and rewards were written on the corresponding sides of the whiteboard. This

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was to account for any colour deficiency or colour blindness that we had not been made aware of, and further promote structure and routine for the benefit of the pupils on the Autistic spectrum in the class. When using a red signal, we always used a countdown or a call for attention alongside it, and initially held it aloft. When a pupil was given a sanction for talking while the red signal was on display, we would always reiterate that we should not hear any voices other than those of pupils we have chosen to answer. When using a green signal, we responded to all answers with verbal praise and bounced questions to other pupils far more frequently so to promote a classroom discussion. Where another member of staff addressed the class and sought a response, we also displayed the green signal. These actions helped the pupils build an association between the displays and the corresponding consequences, but at no point did we explicitly tell the pupils verbally what each signal meant as we wanted the pupils to make the link themselves, and through the use of our explicit behaviour we were showing; for example, holding up the green signal and using praise.

We used the signals for five weeks in total. Each week consisted of two lessons. Each week we reduced the strength of the signals. This was working on the logic that, as pupils begin to build an association between the signal and the desired behaviour, the need for something conspicuous should lessen until a subtle signal achieves the desired response. On the first week we used A4 sheets of paper, one red and one green, as our signals. In this way we ensured that all pupils could register the presence of this new signal, even though they were given no context behind it. With each consecutive week we reduced the explicit use of the signal; for example, on the second week we folded the sheets to A5 size, on the third week we folded the sheets to A6 size, on the fourth week we wrapped two whiteboard pens in the coloured papers, and on the fifth week we simply used red and green dry-wipe pens as the signals. The expectation was that, as the pupils became more used to the coloured signals, the strength of the signal could be reduced and still achieve the desired effect.

Results

The quantitative data of sanction and achievement point counts as our primary data, with qualitative observations and reflections as secondary data to support the findings. The trends displayed by the quantitative data

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have then been cross-referenced with the qualitative data to highlight any consistent patterns or inconsistencies.

From the baseline average number of sanctions, taken from lessons prior to the introduction of the signals, the number of sanctions per lesson fluctuates for the first three weeks. The number of rewards also showed an initial decrease in the first week, again suggesting a lag in the uptake of these signals, but seemed to stabilise by the second or third week.

Sanctions reached their lowest average frequency on the fourth week and remained at that level for the fifth week. The positive comments from self-reflections and observation forms for these weeks support this trend, reaching their most positive on the fourth week and self-reflection comments remaining this way throughout the fifth week.

Discussion

Observations and reflections indicate that the colour signals were being used to effectively manage behaviour, and evidence showed that, after being exposed to the colour signals for only a single lesson, the pupils had started to modify their behaviour for the next lesson.

This is consistent with the tone presented in the self-reflection for week four, where we have stated “that behaviour was largely positive,” despite a reduced frequency of rewards. From the comments on the observation form such as “good use of rewards,” it is evident that positive reinforcement was still being used and recognised. However, this subconscious increase in expectations and decrease in positive reinforcement should be considered with caution. Articles such as those by Corr (2002) and Fisher, Thompson, Hagopian, Bowman, & Krug (2000) explain that delayed rewards, or rewards that do not measure up to magnitude expected, can result in frustration and aberrant behaviour. Future applications of this or similar interventions should take care to persist with positive reinforcement to maintain associations between the signals and rewards for compliant behaviour.

There were some limitations to the study that should be considered and that we will be aiming to overcome in future applications of this

intervention. Firstly, we found we were prone to raising the red signal and calling for attention when we wanted silent attention but did not always display the green signal if they were permitted or even encouraged to actively participate in classroom discussion or the current activity. This meant that the red signal was recognised far more readily, and its meaning understood far better, than the green signal. This therefore meant that the number of sanctions given out represented the efficacy of these signals far more than the number of rewards. Furthermore, it limited how much positive association there was with following the signals and relied heavily on the negative association with ignoring them. Secondly, the results regarding the efficacy of this intervention are confounded somewhat by previous actions used to call for attention, namely raising our hand and waiting for them to silently mimic the action. This meant that the pupils may have already been inclined to fall silent and pay attention when we raised our hand, whether we were holding a red signal or not. This became less of a limitation later on when we did not hold the signals aloft as much but is possibly responsible for the rate at which pupils started reacting to the red signal. Lastly, as the quantitative data shows, despite using these signals to regulate our use of sanctions and rewards, our use of rewards and positive reinforcement decreased as the need for sanctions decreased. While subconscious, this is evidence that there is still a bias that leads teachers to give out more rewards in a class with a lot of disruptive behaviour to highlight desirable behaviour than in a class where all pupils are well behaved and meeting expectations. To effectively implement an intervention such as this, the green card needs to be used and acted upon as readily as the red card so that pupils are inclined to make use of the opportunity to achieve rewards, rather than just trying to avoid sanctions.

Conclusions

Overall, the evidence shows that after five weeks under this conditioning the amount of non-compliant behaviour, and hence the need for negative reinforcement through sanctions, was reduced. The qualitative data also indicates that compliant, positive behaviour increased, but the quantitative data shows a gradual decline in the number of rewards given, suggesting a possible increase in expectations. Thus, the colour signal intervention had a positive effect of pupil behaviour and classroom management and can seemingly be employed alongside the school's sanction and reward

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policy to remind pupils of the teacher's expectations and condition their behavioural response. Changes will be made to this intervention when it is next put into action. The greatest change we intend to make is to explain what the cards mean to the pupils before we use them. We also felt that the strength of the signal may have decreased too rapidly. Thus, we will write sanctions in red pen and rewards in green pen on the board. This will hopefully strengthen the association between the different colours and their associated consequence. Lastly, a confounding factor that could not be avoided in this research project was the existence of prior classroom management strategies and routines. Hence, we intend to introduce this intervention to the next class after only two weeks of being taught. This limits how many other routines the pupils can become accustomed to before they are introduced to the colour signals.

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ART SCHOOL AS A SPRINGBOARD TO SUCCESS: SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON ARTISTIC CHOICES

Abstract

This article aims to examine the school experiences of art school students in northern Italy. The focus is on one case study pupil with a middle-class background. The data comes from a larger qualitative research project, based on in-depth interviews and focus groups, realized at two secondary schools in Milan, one public and one private. It intends to investigate a link between class affiliation and artistic dreams (Allen, 2013). Art schools occupy an unusual position in the educational field: they offer a form of training which blurs the hierarchy between manual and intellectual work. The analysis of interview accounts allows reproductive devices in the art school system to be identified.

Introduction: studying art in Italian secondary schools

Artistic education has an ambiguous status in the Italian educational system. Secondary art schools are dedicated to the cultivation of an artistic sensibility, which still present distinctive features (McManus, 2006; McLeod, O'Donohoe and Townley, 2009; Friedman et al., 2017; Brook, O'Brien, Taylor, 2018) but are also places in which pure manual skills are developed. These characteristics raise relevant questions on the perpetuation of the class reproduction of educational qualifications and, especially, on the role of arts within it. An increasing corpus of research explores the maintenance of class inequalities in creative professions, therefore there has been less investigation of the phases leading up to entry into the art field. The aim of this study is to address some considerations of this gap.

In Italy, the school system is divided into four stages: elementary school (age 6-11), lower secondary school (age 11-14), upper secondary school (age 14-19) and higher education, including universities and academies. Artistic education concerns the upper secondary school level (with secondary art

schools) and higher education (with universities and art academies). This work directs its focus to upper secondary schools specialising in fine and visual arts curricula.

The higher secondary school system is made up of three types of school: vocational schools, technical institutes (which prepare students for the workplace) and 'lyceums' (which traditionally prepare pupils for university). Art schools are one of the lyceums. Until a decade ago, there were two kinds of art school: vocational art schools and 'artistic lyceums'. The 'artistic lyceums' focused on fine arts while vocational art schools were dedicated to crafts arts. The 'Gelmini Reform' of the Ministry of Education (2009) transformed all art schools into lyceums and eliminated vocational schools with an artistic curriculum. This preliminary framework permits us to formulate questions about how pupils interpret their academic experience and how they imagine their educational and working futures (Allen, 2013; Banks and Oakley, 2016). In particular, a key area is about the role of social class differences on perceptions of artistic education and cultural work in Milan, which is the most important city in Italy's creative economy.

Theoretical framework

This study develops a curiosity raised by Bourdieu who, in a short pamphlet (Bourdieu, 2001), questions the social genesis of the creative vocation. It is only a suggestion for research which has not been widely explored in the sociology of art or in studies on education, with only a few exceptions (Verger, 1982; Allen, 2013; Banks, Oakley, 2016).

The basic references of the study can be found in the cultural analysis of class perspective (Savage, 2000). According to this research paradigm, social class represents a significant dimension of ordinary life, even though today it mainly operates at an incorporated, tacit, implicit and subjective level. In this perspective, the lenses of Bourdieu - those of capital, habitus and field - allow an empirical investigation of how inequalities take shape in the meanderings of daily life and refer back to ways of evaluating, acting and feeling the social world.

In the study presented here, cultural capital and the habitus have been interpreted qualitatively in order to find dispositions towards school and

the meaning attributed to the scholastic experience (Reay et al., 2005; Ball et al. 2000). I therefore decided to study some aspects of the processes through which the learning identities and the social identities of young people take shape (Reay, 2010). This perspective mainly questions the ways students incorporate, interpret and assimilate symbolic materials offered by the scholastic context. This work also recalls research on the educational contexts of the privileged (Power et al., 2003; Maxwell, Aggleton, 2013; Brantlinger, 2003). In particular, some of the most recent studies show how the reproduction of privileges is a complex process and not at all to be taken for granted (Reay, Lucey, 2002; Power, 2001). They question the mere assumption that pupils with a high family cultural capital are more likely to be scholastically gifted. Power (2001), through a longitudinal study on the school experiences of privileged youngsters, detects trouble in cases of imperfect reproduction. Along these lines, Reay and Lucey (2002) explore the costs and the emotional implications of scholastic failure on learner identities of British pupils from culturally advantaged backgrounds. In this corpus of research, attitudes of dejection and tension are found in students due both to the high expectations placed on them by their families and the demands of school.

Finally, the study conducted by Aggleton (1984) represents one of the first and most significant studies to focus on the disjunctions and strains in reproductive dynamics. Aggleton (1984) explores the cultural processes which give rise to problematic scholastic experiences in youths from privileged families. This study remains today a valid point of reference for the analysis of those privileged experiences of young people in the field of creative education.

The research

The analysis deployed is based on interview data related to a young student enrolled in the final year of a private artistic secondary school. The data presented here come from a wider empirical work carried out in artistic lyceums in Milan in the 2014-2015 period. This qualitative survey was conducted in two schools, one state-run and one private, through in-depth interviews and focus groups with students aged between 16 and 21, and their parents. The students were selected according to a funnel procedure: at first, an informative questionnaire was distributed. Then the students

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for the focus group were chosen (a total of seven focus groups with eight students each) and lastly, the students were identified for the thirty in-depth interviews. The focus groups and the interviews allowed students' daily scholastic experience, the meanings attributed to their artistic choice, and their aspirations and ambitions for their educational and professional future to be explored. The interviews were carried out using the aid of the timeline (Bagnoli, 2009) as a projective stimulus to encourage reflection. The timeline is a graphic support tool employed at the beginning of the conversation in which the interviewee completes a line on a sheet of paper, indicating the most significant events in his/her life.

I used qualitative textual analysis software (QDA Miner 4 lite) to discover the areas and categories of analysis. In this way, the analysis is based on interpretative categories emerging from both a vertical biographical examination of every single interview as well as a horizontal comparison, by theme, of all the interviews.

The analysis explores the scholastic dispositions of the students with a high cultural capital and from high social classes. Artistic school is an atypical choice because it is the least prestigious of the lyceums. These students seem to make a choice which goes against the traditional educational paths of economically and culturally advantaged families. In this ambiguity, the 'distinctive' character of the creative fields also plays a part. These pupils represent a particular type of middle-class youth, characterized by early creative dreams.

The argumentation is centred on only one student, who is an emblematic case. I propose a case study to examine the way in which creative dispositions are shaped in privileged pupils. The case study is a pupil (aged 18) from a family with high cultural capital and belonging to a high social class. His parents are hospital doctors with degrees in medicine. He is enrolled at a private Catholic secondary school, which is quite small (100 students) located in a quiet residential area of Milan. This case is paradigmatic of the experiences lived by other interviewees from a higher family background. This youth participated in a focus group and individual in-depth interview, moreover I had the opportunity to interview him a second time, at a later date. He synthesises the characteristic traits

of the 'elite' of the privileged pupils in this school. His life pathway and his narratives are emblematic of the 'distinctive' positions and opinions common in those scholastic classes.

Becoming a young artist through a distinctive educational pathway

Art schools might seem to be institutions selected by those middle-class students distinguished with low levels of scholastic commitment. For these youths, this type of school would seem to be a reasonable choice faced with their difficulties at school (Uboldi, 2020).

Francesco is an emblematic case. During his interview, he describes a bad school career marked by one repeated year and two changes of school. His lack of interest in mere didactic study and his intolerance for school rules are linked to an attraction to art practices. It is possible to identify a particular class habitus in him, characterized by a distinctive distance from academic work (Bourdieu, Passeron, 1964) and a reflexive optimism for aspiration (Kehily, Pattman, 2006; Lyon, Crow, 2012). In his narratives, peculiar forms of conversion in the game of capitals (Bourdieu, 1979) can be read as vocational dynamics. As Bourdieu writes: "These reconversions objectively imposed by the need to keep the value of an inheritance could be carried out subjectively as changes in taste or vocations, in other words, as conversions" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 277). The poor scholastic results are effectively viewed as non-problematic as they are subordinate to a strong passion for art.

Francesco tends to emphasize his individuality and creativity, partially questioning the transition to the next stage of life, while also displaying a keen sense of entitlement (Skeggs, 2004; Allen, 2013; Brantlinger, 2003). In him, an attitude of 'distinctive distance' from school takes the form of a semi-serious, temporary rebellion (Aggleton, 1984). At the time of the interview, he was in his final year at a private school. He explains that he had finally found a school able to understand his peculiar character and discusses his new school as a different educational experience in which he can maintain some freedom, in terms of managing personal time and space, and in which academic marks, in non-artistic disciplines, are not so relevant.

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In his narratives, there emerges a tension between his wish to follow his own path, building a future in line with his family background, and a simultaneous desire to maintain liminal spaces and moments (Ball et al., 2000). Related to this and traced in the narratives are attempts at the construction of a social identity, still little-anchored to the scholastic world, but in which art is decisive. The social and leisure activities, focused on artistic and creative practice, are central in the construction of identity. This is an identity which revolves around an adolescent and rebellious elaboration of the artistic experience (Aggleton, 1984).

First with graffiti [...] I did a lot of graffiti and I hung out with [...] other graffiti writers [...] but now [...] I also realized, seeing that [...] I love that world, I love art and I no longer want to do something that they can take away from me so I want to extrapolate what I did and they do in the street, on trains or on the underground to take it into a gallery [...] I'm creative, a Basquiat of 2015! [...] (F., m., 18).

Experiences in the field of graffiti and the world of tattoos are crucial. This youth seems to go beyond his own class boundaries through playful and creative experiences, with a purely temporary character. Francesco recounts an involvement in urban graffiti, which led him to accumulate some minor offences linked to his artistic practice and the use of soft drugs. However, during the interview, he explains how, once he became an adult, he would "not [to] waste any more time" and make the move from graffiti to art galleries.

when you're eighteen you think that you've reached an age where you begin to make your choices, take your responsibilities [...] you try to take them well, not to muck around because in the end it's you who pays and now I don't want to pay anymore because I've already paid enough (he laughs) and stop! I don't have time to waste (F., m., 18)

In his narratives, there is a close link between creative expression, school and semi-serious work experiences. These are elements which can be read as explorations and a first attempt at constructing a creative identity, based on the close contamination between work and leisure. Francesco, who I met a few months later the first individual interview, explained to me his

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decision to take a 'sabbatical' year. He needed this time to think but, above all, to travel before entering the serious, adult life of university.

I absolutely have to leave and I want to leave and I'll succeed [...] but next year I'm going to start studying, definitely ... I'm beginning the academy here or in Florence, or Bergamo I don't know [...] I'll do five years straight of education because I want to learn and I don't want to ... use art as a hobby [...] I don't give a damn (he laughs.) I'll never be one of those behind a desk filling in forms, see? [...] I won't have a classic desk job, I'll have paint all over me! [...] I'm making myself known [...] this is the time to publicize [...] that is, I'm beginning a bit... I'm beginning to get inside [...] if the right people like me [...] for example, there's a friend of mine who has spoken to me about this gallery [...] it's definitely a visiting card for the others (F., m., 18).

In this student, the linearity of a life path is not perceived as an imperative or a real obligation. As his own words show, he can afford to postpone and creatively work out his life, exploring possible directions. Although the objective is very clear and solid, i.e. taking a degree and getting back onto the rails to take the right journey towards the future; daily life, on the other hand, is seen as a place of exploration and infinite possibilities. If these are clearly characteristic traits of the condition of contemporary youth, there is also a distinctive class demarcation in this (Allen, 2013). This privileged boy is skilled at taking risks and postponing his life choices, but he certainly does not exclude a future at university or at an art academia. As Ball et al (2000, pp. 68-69) explain, this is a skill at forging a "strategic and positional" identity for which "living in the present and having a good social life can sound like a tactic in times of economic uncertainty" A certain liberty in the definition of his lifetime therefore does not put into question his long-term projects, nor is it translated into a challenging of one's identity project. As Francesco explains, study and continuation at academia is simply a stage postponed in the face of other urgencies and, especially, of constructing a career as an artist.

Conclusive considerations

The contribution of this study relates to the relationship between art education and class reproduction. The paper offers a very specific

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vision of only one privileged pupil's experience; therefore, the proposed work would like to raise some points of reflection for further research, both in theoretical and empirical terms. First, the gender and social class composition of art schools are still under-examined and only a few studies have researched their students. The position of art schools has to be reconsidered in light of new creative rhetoric regarding educational policies and of transformations in the knowledge economy and, consequently, the market job oriented towards creative, flexible and temporary occupations (McRobbie, 2001). Second, at an empirical level, it may be interesting to investigate both the next step in the artistic higher education field and the previous step, at lower secondary school, to compare the dynamics in terms of social reproduction or mobility. Finally, similarities and differences with other national educational artistic systems could help to better understand the formation of inequalities in the global art field.

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BE MORE NIGEL: REFLECTIONS ON HOW ‘INTRA-ACTIONS’ WITH HORSES CAN HELP US TO BE MORE HUMAN AND LEARN ABOUT IDENTITY, BELONGING AND BEING CONNECTED

Introduction

This article arose through a mutual interest in posthumanism; discussions about ‘horse-butlering’ (a phrase coined by Julia’s son, Isaac), and a bereavement. As colleagues working closely together at Sheffield Hallam University, I would often message Julia and talk about mine and my daughter Rosalind’s adventures with our horses (Shadow and Nigel), either about being up to our knees in mud, mucking out in the moonlight or what Rosalind and Nigel had been up to; they had hundreds of followers watching videos documenting her liberty, bareback and bridle less work with Nigel. We would often discuss posthumanism and how the sensory aspects of the environment, atmosphere and entanglement of each create meaning together and this sense of intra-action and co-being sits with my experiences in the equine world. In Julia’s previous research (Sexton, 2016) on playgrounds she identified a link between Rosalind’s and Nigel’s relationship and how affective atmospheres are co-created by multi-sensory aspects; human and non-human and Julia outlines these theoretical concepts below. Many of these concepts we discuss were just a part of my accepted everyday world, which are tangible in that I feel and experience them but when linking to posthumanism and theoretical concepts and debates suddenly the everyday becomes entangled with theory.

We then lost Nigel to colic and the ‘text chats’ that followed, between myself and Julia, were our attempts to articulate the grief and the loss but also to more concretely discuss the relationship between human and non-human. Taking into consideration that Nigel was regarded and loved as a family member, the grief was manifest as ‘a complex and emotional experience’ (Rujoiu and Rujoiu, 2013,p.164). The text chat had a sense

of immediacy, with lived, raw emotion and as this created very sensitive material of both mine and Rosalind's lived experiences and also mine and Julia's private discussions it is important to acknowledge that each of us have consented to these being included and shared and particularly that Rosalind's direct comments in the experience should be italicised to show her role as co-author. In an analysis of the words we used, the most repeated ones included words that described Rosalind and Nigel's relationship, such as connection, heart, soul, co-being, loved, human, feel, together, attune and special. It also included many words about the death where I described how my daughter Rosalind (19) had to make the decision to euthanise him; hold him whilst this was done; say goodbye to him and leave him. There were many other practical considerations that needed to be dealt with. In this we want to acknowledge that this grief should be recognised and in this the strength of the bond that can be held between a human and an animal.

This article is not about grief but an attempt to articulate the 'feeling' of theory, experienced through a strong and profound bond, like that of a family member. Sadly, only a few weeks later we also lost Shadow and in both instances found that grief for an animal is not always understood and accepted by others and openly acknowledged, Rujoiu and Rujoiu, (2013, p.166) refer to this as 'disenfranchised grief'. By this we mean that for some people, they could not understand the significance of the loss, for us it was akin to losing an immediate family member, for some people it was regarded as an 'it's only' loss, 'it's only a pet, only a horse'. The focus of this article is to learn about how interacting with nature and horses can make us more human.

Background

There has been much research, across a wide range of disciplines, which recognises the health benefits of relationships between humans and animals, including impact on blood pressure, cortisol levels, stress and anxiety (Beresford, Meints, Gee et al. 2017, p.2). These relationships can also help to develop emotional well-being, 'thinking, learning and social relationships' (Holtum, 2018, p. 67) through heightened intuition, empathy and non-verbal communication. In this article we aim to articulate the complex and 'profound bond' (Rujoiu and Rujoiu, 2013, p. 166) that Rosalind and Nigel shared and how this helps us to understand how

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connections with horses (and of course other animals) and the natural environment can inform who we are, in terms of identity and belonging and about being human.

Theoretical concepts

A posthumanist perspective offers an alternative to the traditional anthropocentric lens which prioritises human experience (Hultman and Lenz Taguchi, 2010). Within this perspective all things, human and those 'more than human' (Lorimer 2005, p83) are viewed as important and these non-human aspects are no longer designated to the background as they would be in the anthropocentric perspective. Looking at Figure 1, through an anthropocentric lens, Rosalind, as the human would be foregrounded, as the focus of interest, and Nigel as a non-human and other aspects such as the environment, would be secondary.



Figure 1: Rosealind and Nigel

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Posthumanism aims to flatten this hierarchy, with the philosophical approach in which all things, human and non-human aspects, are viewed as important.

Central to this concept is a differentiation between interaction and 'intra-action'. Interaction emphasises the interpersonal relationships between at least two people with each other or things which are clearly separated from one another (Holleth and Ehret, 2015). Barad (2007; 2003) uses the term intra-action to refer to the relationship between any organism and form of matter, between which there are no boundaries; they are not separate. Rosalind stated 'I miss riding him so much, these last few weeks I have missed the connection of being on him and joining together', she posted a previous video of them saying 'I wish I could feel that with you again.' These intra-actions between human and horse involve multiple aspects such as movements, bodies, weight, rhythms, temperature, materials, sounds, smells; not as separate entities joining, but as 'becomings', merged and lacking independent, self-contained existences (Barad, 2007, p.361).

For these more than human 'intra-actions' that create this joining of entities between species there is a state of co-being. Through their co-being, they learn and adapt to being with each other through 'sensations and emotions, as well as attention, cognition and affect' (Maurstad, Davis and Cowles, 2013, p. 324). This refers to a state of relationship in which each partner evolves to "fit" better with each other, both physically and mentally, Rosalind explained that 'I felt like we were joined, when I was sitting on him it was like we were one and that is how he was the only one that was part of my soul and could see inside me.' This highlights what Maurstad, Davis and Cowles (2013, p.322) state, 'Horses are soul mates, but also body mates to many humans, and the relationship is one that affects and defines both parties.'

This helps us to recognise the complex kinds of relationships that can be formed between human and animal and about the relational engagements that focus on how parties meet and change as a result of their meeting. Riders get to know their horses as personalities; horses being different personalities individually, and being different personalities from the humans. A key focus of our 'text- chat' was how Rosalind described Nigel as a fun character, a kind and loving soul, being more human than some of

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the humans we knew, this linked to his individuality and his own personality. In co-being, riders get to know their horses as personalities through ongoing processes of deep engagement. Riders do not see their horses as passive reflections of themselves, they 'entangle as agentive individuals', (Maurstad, Davis and Cowles, 2013, p. 322), each have different characters, horses also have their own life story. An example of this entanglement, where each species attunes to each other, was as Rosalind said, 'We felt free together'.

In studies of animal psychology and behaviour, Viviers (2014) highlights arguments that suggest that animals only reciprocate instinctively, in a stimulus based response, for example an interaction in exchange or in response to being provided with food and safety. However, Viviers (2014, p.5) also highlights research that shows that meaningful communication is possible between species and this was one of the central features of our discussions, as Rosalind said about Nigel, 'He could always read my mind and was always fun'. Rosalind and Nigel as separate entities joining and becoming (Barad, 2007; 2003) created a connection where they were connected on a more intuitive and sensitive level, to have the ability to communicate on a level that transcends words, a communication between species. As Rosalind said, 'He always understood me'. Whilst always reading each other's individual characters, on a relational basis, where they learn about each other, one of the aspects of their partnership was that of fun. As individuals they both had these characteristics but when they were together their intra action developed into playful behaviours that became reflected in each other. For example both of them did not prefer the slow aspects of training, they would do it but as Rosalind said, 'We both got bored easily and just wanted to go and have fun, we didn't lose focus on one another, but on what the instructor was saying around us.' On a bridle less course they were trying to be taught to walk or trot, calmly up a field, without using the bridle, but they both decided to do this at a gallop, having a lot of fun and enjoyment. For weeks after Rosalind was told to work on doing this at a slow and steady walk so that they could work on their patience and brakes. In this we can see that not only does this intra action enable people to learn about themselves but how they relate to others.

Discussion

In this next section we will link each of the theoretical concepts above to examples of how these are practically enacted and experienced and the benefits of this relationship.

One of the key themes that arose from our discussions was about identity and belonging. Viviers (2014, p.167) discusses the socio-psychological support that companion animals provide and how, in therapeutic domains, 'animals have been used in a range of contexts to help provide consistency, connection, trust and acceptance.' This sense of identity and belonging was strongly felt by Rosalind as after losing Nigel she said how she did not feel whole without him and in the process of bereavement she acknowledged that afterwards it took a while to find herself again.

In our discussions we identified that in our 'horse-butlering' we learnt to relate to others. The ability to nurture and care for another being teaches and develops your awareness of the needs of others, how to be yourself and be around others on a social level. You also need to be connected on a more intuitive and sensitive level to have the ability to communicate on a level that transcends words, 'horse-human communication crosses the species divide through somatic attunements' (Maurstad, Davis and Cowles, 2013, p.326). They collaborate, attend to the feel of each other, 'intra-action' - the meeting between the two, through 'natural/cultural practices' (Maurstad, Davis and Cowles, 2013, p. 323) In Figure 1, you will see that what they are engaged in is not the usual way of riding and not every equestrian gets to ride in this way with their horse, for example there is no saddle or bridle, the way that Rosalind is riding is through communication between them of body movement and feel. They are reading body language through touch, breathing, listening in a different way, communicating without words. Through this reciprocal feel and mutual trust you are developing balance and proprioception both of yourself and the horse. When moving together you need to use your peripheral vision and have an awareness of the position and movement of your own body but also the horse's and be aware of the environment, sounds, noises, sights, not only how you are experiencing it but how your horse is experiencing it, tuning into what your horse may be attentive to. This develops an advanced conscious awareness of your senses for yourself and another being which is a multi-layered, embodied experience, providing a link between the inner and outer world,

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a conscious awareness of the world around us and how we experience it.

You learn to become aware of the other's breathing, and equally they become aware of yours, it is reciprocal. For example tension around a being as sensitive as a horse can create difficulties. By de-centering ourselves from just the human, and paying attention to another being in the present moment and our interaction with the environment, we can connect between ourselves and others and be aware of what is happening around us. Rosalind spoke of what it felt like to be more present in the moment, she said when she connected with Nigel in that moment, it 'Felt like riding on a cloud'. This 'disconnect' from the human world actually enables us to be more connected. It helps us develop emotional intelligence, feeling, being and empathy, enhancing social integration.

Another positive benefit of this relationship is that this also develops a connection with the environment, helps us become more responsible for things that happen around us. Being with horses requires a very real, hands on presence, both physically but also intuitively. You are connected to each season and the external environment with an awareness of the climate, the grass, the ground and the surroundings because these all impact on your horse. Evans and Gray (2012, p.602) highlight an ecological perspective where people 'develop and adapt through dynamic and reciprocal transactions with all components of their environment.' For example, not only did Rosalind learn to be very caring and empathetic but she also learnt the responsibility for caring for another's individual needs, on a daily basis she would take responsibility for Nigel's feed, bedding and other requirements, which helped to develop skills such as planning, decision making and practical skills.

Another key aspect of our discussion that linked to identity and belonging was about how the partnership between Rosalind and Nigel was as though they were part of a herd together. Horses are herd animals and being accepted into their herd, often as their leader, is a huge honour as they are prey animals, which is why they mostly sleep standing up. Rosalind's and Nigel's partnership and connection was recognised by others, not everyone gets to have this deep bond with their horse, as one person wrote when

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Nigel passed, 'Roz, such devastating news, you were possibly 'the' most worthy human I know to have had Nigel in your life- you were truly blessed to have found each other.'

To develop this sense of connection and acceptance you have to be able to read very subtle cues from the horse, a whole new level of non- verbal communication. You have to feel and read body language, using touch, breathing and listening in a different way, communicating without words. This level of observation enhances our capacity to observe and reflect and to also discover more about ourselves and the world we live in. For example we never need to tell our horse if we are happy, sad, angry or relaxed, they already know before we do, they know what is in your head, your heart and they connect with your soul. In this way those that teach us about humanity are not always humans, they teach us about identity, belonging and being connected. This co-being, learning and adapting to being with each other through sensations, emotions, cognition and affect inform who we are. Communication is fluid, generating a feeling of being in sync, it is a huge privilege to sit on a horse, you are uniting your body with that of another sentient being, one that is stronger, faster and more agile than yourself. When you are riding a horse there are two of you, each of your actions affect the other one, you are sharing and experiencing that moment in the world together, as one. The stronger the attachment, the stronger the partnership, cooperation, trust and bond. In many ways this way of 'being' links with mindfulness, connecting with our senses brings us more into the moment, a direct experience. Being connected with a horse means that you learn to pay attention to the present moment, be non-judgemental and open hearted. People who 'connect strongly with animals also have a large capacity for love, empathy and compassion' (Walsh, 2009, p.468).

Conclusion

In conclusion the aim of this reflective article has been to highlight how interacting with nature and horses can make us more human, focusing on the unique partnership between Rosalind and Nigel. By drawing on the theoretical concepts of posthumanism including intra- actions and co-being we have attempted to understand how these connections with horses can inform who we are, in terms of identity and belonging and about being human. These intra- actions and partnerships with horses can

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help us to build relationships; develop socially and emotionally; be aware of our senses with advanced observation and communication skills and create empathy and caring for another being.

By de-centering ourselves from just the human and paying attention to another being in the present moment and our interaction with the world, we can connect between ourselves and others and be aware of what is happening around us. This 'disconnect' from the human world actually enables us to be more connected. It helps us develop emotional intelligence, feeling, being and empathy, enhancing social integration.

Closing words from Rosalind

'Having Nigel took me away from all the usual pressures of our age group, the partnership that we had enhanced my self- confidence in general. I talked to him about anything, which sometimes helped me make sense of my feelings as he wasn't judgemental. He boosted my sense of achievement with the level of riding skills that I accomplished with him. I felt like he would only have done that for me as we both grew in our confidence together and that is what gave us such a connection and a bond. That's how we understood each other so well, which brought us together. He was one of those ponies that was meant to change people's lives and still help other's after he's gone. '

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A CHILD IN A MUSEUM: BETWEEN CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE AND EXPERIENCING TRADITION

Abstract

In this article, I would like to focus on the tasks of contemporary museums and centres that address their exhibitions to children aged 3–12. It is interesting that over the last two or three decades many museums have fundamentally changed their strategy for disseminating knowledge about different cultural phenomena and science in order to attract young children. Generally, museum exhibitions use different ways of attracting children's attention, but, most frequently, the museum staff create interactive areas that make it possible to strongly focus the attention of young visitors. This educational strategy is partly a consequence of new findings from research into psychology, and it is partly associated with the Froebel tradition (the idea of education through activities), which was disseminated in European countries at the turn of the twentieth century. Moreover, because of software applications and devices equipped with artificial intelligence, interactive areas in museums have become visually more attractive. We would like to present this process of changing the educational strategy of contemporary museums by providing two interesting examples – the Centre for Modernity – Mill of Knowledge and the Museum of Toruń Gingerbread – which were recently established in Toruń. The former makes it possible for children to better understand than they would in a regular kindergarten or school the crucial phenomena studied by researchers in such fields as anatomy, biology, physics, and geology; while the latter involves young audiences in unravelling the “mysteries” of the process of making gingerbread in the past.

Key words: museums, education, science

Introduction

In this article, I would like to present the contemporary ways of organizing space at museums and knowledge centres in order to create an environment fostering the education process of children. Therefore, an analysis of the two different examples of the “Enlightenment” establishments which were built in Toruń (Poland) at the dawn of the 21st century will be performed. Considerations related to the educational functions of these institutions will be placed in a historical context so as to capture the main tendencies of developing contemporary museums or knowledge centres. In the first paragraph of the article, both ancient and modern heritage museums will be depicted. In its subsequent parts, two examples of “Enlightenment” establishments, i.e. the Centre for Modernity – Mill of Knowledge and the Museum of Toruń Gingerbread, will be described from the educational perspective and the ways of using new media tools to build interactive space will also be presented.

The museum as a cultural institution appeared in antiquity when several thinkers tried to create space for developing various fields of science and collecting diverse objects of art (e.g. the Pergamon Library) (Hansen, 1947). The etymology of the word “museum” (*locus musis sacer* in Latin) relates to places that people went to for meditative and inspirational retreat. According to Pliny the Elder, the idea of the museum is heavily linked with the “natural” home of the Greek Muses in Kroton, the famous centre of Pythagoreanism. Additionally, the word *musaeum* referred to a place where young thinkers would sometimes eat together. Moreover, the *musaeum* and subsequently *Mouseion* were a crucial part of Plato’s Academy, as philosophers taught and conducted research in such places using manuscripts (Żygulski, 1993; Abt, 2011; Folga-Januszewska, 2015). Nonetheless, there were other kinds of museums in antiquity which appeared around the third century BC in two cities: Alexandria and Pergamon.

The *Mouseion* of Alexandria is one of the most renowned institutions of classical antiquity and the one whose accomplishments have resonated most strongly with scholars in subsequent eras. Yet the cultural memory of the *Mouseion* tends to conflate two distinct aspects: the community of resident scholars and the cult centre where their activities were housed

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(the Mouseion). A collection of texts, the acquisition, editing, cataloguing and in some instances translation into Greek of which formed a share of the scholars' work (the Library). While many details regarding the Mouseion and Library are still disputed to this day, there is a consensus about some aspects of the Mouseion. Some of the ancient world's greatest minds participated in the work of the Mouseion, and the text editing and cataloguing practices established there transformed the nature of Western scholarship and the Library's collections [...] (Abt, 2011, p.116).

The ancient museums in a figurative sense became the crucial area of a process of formation of scientific discourse, artistic activity, and religious rituals. Therefore, the current diverse kinds of museums or centres for modernity addressing the many fields of contemporary science (anthropology, biology, physics, geography, technology) also reflect ancient tradition. Then, during the period of the Roman Empire, there appeared a particular institution, pinacotheca, which consisted of citizen-organised exhibitions of paintings. Moreover, magnificent libraries containing not only manuscripts but also plenty of paintings and sculptures were built in these great cultural, artistic, and academic centres. Therefore, in the days of the Roman Empire, the word "musaeum" began to refer to a particular space for collecting and storing pieces of art or various archaeological finds.

Various institutions that accumulated collections for training were established to serve educational purposes. Collectively, it is difficult to treat them as an end in itself. The motivation behind collecting manuscripts, books, paintings, statues, documents, or creations of nature was a thirst for knowledge and curiosity but yet with a strictly practical dimension (i.e. the need to have teaching aids was equally important). The collections of the Alexandrian Mouseion "utilised" by students were used and consumed. The first museums in Poland emerged in Brzeg and Toruń in the sixteenth century within the structure of secondary schools and were the result of an academic mission and a new world view. Putting it simply, these types of "proto-museums" can be found in all academic collections, ranging from libraries to herbal, medical, mineralogical collections, and even collections of templates for production (especially in old factories). Nowadays, these academic collections function precisely as museum institutions (Folga-Januszewska, 2015, p. 54).

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The idea of the museum as a centre of comprehensive human activity was rekindled in the vivid interest of the Renaissance in Aristotle's legacy and more broadly in ancient culture (Findlen, 1989; Abt, 2011). Therefore, many scholars or collectors, supported by the church leaders, princes, and royalty, created magnificent exhibitions showing not only traditional exposures but also natural specimens called naturalia, which were used to develop natural science. These collections existed alongside artificial items such as ancient medals, coins, and manuscripts.

Today, museums offer visitors different ways of discovering numerous fields of human activity (e.g. the arts, science, technology, and the military) and diverse aspects of nature. Moreover, contemporary museums involve both the young and adults in the process which supports the dissemination of particular types of behaviour and attitudes connected with identity. According to Umberto Eco, the museum or similar institutions (e.g. private exhibitions of colonial "trophies" and trivia, centres for knowledge, libraries, etc.) demonstrate a modern system of thinking about reality and, mainly, reveal people's willingness to create an artificial space which attracts visitors by the diversity of its elements. In other words, these artificial, multimedia, and interactive spaces are a result of people's willingness to collect things and ideas in order to teach or educate. According to Danuta Folga-Januszewska, some written evidence from the past (e.g. memories, diaries, and biographies) convince us that people visiting museums very often touched exhibits and took them in their hands in order to get to know them (Folga-Januszewska, 2015). Obviously, this behaviour is natural for today's visitors; therefore, many museums and centres for science have been using new technology, primarily the internet, video installations, and interaction, and there are also museums in which visitors create certain things (sculptures, cakes, soap, butter, etc.). These modern ways of demonstrating art, applied art, science, and technology, both national and regional history or nature, have become most popular in Europe, although the traditional pattern of the museum has been developing continually since 1753 when the British Museum was established (Żygulski, 1993). Today, on the one hand, many museums attract visitors by exhibiting marvellous and valuable collections, whereas, on the other hand, very interesting educational centre projects, which were designed similarly to a museum space, have appeared since the dawn of the Digital Revolution (Black, 2012).

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In our article we would like to characterise two interesting examples: the Centre for Modernity – Mill of Knowledge and the Museum of Toruń Gingerbread, which were recently established in Toruń. The former makes it possible for children to understand better than would be required in regular kindergartens or schools the crucial phenomena studied by researchers in such disciplines as anatomy, biology, geology, hydrology, physics and construction; while the latter involves young audiences in unravelling the “mysteries” of the past process of producing gingerbread. Both museums share several values which, in our opinion, are a result of three socio-cultural phenomena referring to the system of education in Western societies and ways of managing communication.

First Thing, Emotions

The process of learning or getting to know about things should be immersive and, thus, an exhibition ought to comprise diverse elements which trigger emotional reactions in both young and adult visitors. According to Richard A. Schweder, emotions are complex narrative schemes that make it possible for people to give some meaning to their reactions, affections, and experience of the body (Schweder, 2003). Both the Centre for Modernity and the Museum of Toruń Gingerbread use different visual, acoustic, and organoleptic elements to create a sensory space.

It is obvious the internet and digital devices are a major part of daily communication between members of Western societies. According to Manuel Castells, the power of communication has penetrated people’s behaviour; therefore, the processes of their learning, getting to know things, and developing human skills are based on an emotional framework.

The framing of the public mind is largely performed through processes that take place in the media. Research into communication has identified three major processes involved in the relationship between the media and people in the sending and receiving of news through which citizens perceive themselves in relation to the world (i.e. agenda setting, priming, and framing). (Castells, 2009, p. 157)

Although the structure of the contemporary family has changed, and relationships between children and parents have become more democratic

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in Western societies, museums and educational centres entice all family members to visit them (Szlendak, 2012). Moreover, these cultural and educational institutions sometimes prepare separate offers for young and adult audiences. Indeed, to attract a diverse audience, many museums in the US and Europe offer not only attractive exhibitions or exposures but also attract both the young and adults with spaces for refreshment and shopping.

In today's economy, many museums have become more open about their economic activities and adopted business models to generate adequate revenue. Not all museums are as transparent about their market orientation as the Victoria and Albert, which promoted its café with the highly criticised advertisement, "An ace caff with rather a nice museum attached". More commonly, museums position themselves as tourist attractions. [...] Crowds move quickly through the galleries, and the exhibits become mere advertisements to sell reproductions on cards, coffee mugs, posters, and umbrellas.

(Marstine, 2006, p. 12).

Within the last four or five decades, museums have been shifting activity habits, offering visitors education and entertainment, interesting encounters with art, and time for relaxation. The majority of museums today have probably lost their previous shrine-like nature and have consequently rapidly become places enhancing the need to explore different fields of art and science. It is not surprising that many small cities have tried to build their prestige and boost tourist traffic by creating unique museums and science centres which take advantage of regional attractions or amenities; for instance, cuisine, biography of famous people, historical legends, and so on.

The Centre for Modernity – Mill of Knowledge

This educational institution was opened on 9 November 2013. The Centre for Modernity is located in an old, disused seven-floor cereal mill characterised by a large surface area (more than 5,000 square metres) and a stylish design. Seven different interactive exhibitions are offered by the Centre for Modernity: Foucault's Pendulum, On the Revolutions, The River, EXPERIENCING, reCONSTRUCTING, ... It Is So Simple!, and Ideas.

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Most of these exhibitions focus on the rules of physics and biological phenomena connected with the construction of the solar system, Nicolaus Copernicus' notion presented in his great work *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, exploration of the universe, the mechanical operation of various machines, and the different methods of constructing bridges or buildings. All of these exhibitions are based on interaction with visitors, who can also use a variety of blocks and puzzles to create their own models of bridges, houses etc. Nonetheless, the two (... It Is So Simple! and Ideas) call on people's mental activity and make it possible for young people to develop different skills, as many of the twenty-seven museum points invite visitors to cooperate. The main slogan of this exhibition is "It is only by doing things together that we can reach our goal". The exhibits make it possible to develop short- and long-term memory, as well as computing skills and manual dexterity. The general context of these tasks relates Pascal's rules and Newton's principles, which are fundamental to the physical world.

This exhibition features experiments relating to the process of converting potential energy into electrical energy, and the last of its points presents the interesting issues connected with transplants in medical science. Furthermore, all of these scientific issues were also prepared in a simplified form by providing different blocks and interactive media to suit young audiences. The last, but not least, and newest part of the exhibition (Ideas) is dedicated to the numerous dimensions of human life that are directly connected with art, philosophy, and biology. The main point of the exhibition was designed as a Whispering Gallery which consists of four elements called Communication, Art and Beauty, Life and Constructor. Obviously, scientific issues predominate in the exhibitions of the Centre for Modernity; nonetheless, each floor has exhibits related to some of the humanities and the arts. According to the curators, the contemporary world demands that knowledge be regularly updated by members of Western societies, because our reality has become too complex. Therefore, interactive and dynamic museum space, on one hand provides multitasking exhibits for both young and adult audiences, and on the other makes it possible to educate more successfully. The main idea behind all of the exhibitions still running in the Centre for Modernity in Toruń is the necessity to explain the contemporary world to young and adult people at the

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same time, but in diverse ways. Nonetheless, the spirit of family fun and entertainment perfectly binds both groups of visitors and, perhaps, can be the best path to stimulating imagination and curiosity among poles to increase their general knowledge of physics, chemistry, geology, biology, and technology.

The Museum of Toruń Gingerbread

The Museum of Toruń Gingerbread was opened in 2015 and housed in a former building of the gingerbread factory established by Gustav Wesse, a famous businessman in nineteenth-century Toruń. Wesse's factory produced very tasty cakes which were exported to several European countries, as well as to Japan and Australia. Today, the Museum of Toruń Gingerbread consists of three parts offering visitors two kinds of exhibits: material and virtual. The first part of the exhibition is located in the basement, where the atmosphere is a bit mysterious. Visitors are welcomed by a virtual vendor from the Middle Ages, who presents the "mysteries" of the old market square, as well as the stalls and booths. Moreover, the next part of the exhibition features a very attractive and beautiful collection of traditional (wooden) gingerbread moulds. In our opinion, the combination of virtual and material exhibits is a fine way to introduce today's audiences to the past. A huge factory oven dating back to the 1960s is located in the central part of the museum space. Although it is virtual exhibits that predominate in the museum basement, the general impression of the exhibition is positive. Except for the old wooden moulds used to bake gingerbread, visitors can handle all of the exhibits; therefore, younger visitors enjoy spending time in the museum basement. The virtual stroll through the long history of gingerbread production in Toruń makes it possible to precisely capture the social, economic, and cultural aspects of this phenomenon. In addition, today's application of both digital animation and old images increases the visual attractiveness of the exhibition for children.

On the first floor there is a variety of workshops and activities directly linked to the process of baking gingerbread using traditional methods and traditional ingredients, which are supplied by the sweet manufacturer Kopernik S.A. Obviously, these "gingerbread lessons" are, first of all, aimed at children, but when I visited the museum I saw many adult participants

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who were able to move through the past and feel like a child. In the other words, the curators of the Museum of Toruń Gingerbread have tried to combine entertainment with educational goals to develop curiosity about regional culture and history among its visitors. It is one of the most popular and efficient ways of advertising cities which have a long, interesting history but no unusual, magnificent “ruins”, “landscape”, or “historical landmarks”. Certainly, the Old Town in Toruń is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, but today this is not enough. Therefore, the city authorities decided to invest in establishing the Museum of Toruń Gingerbread, which should be associated with something tasty and sweet.

On the second floor, there many historical exhibits relating to the daily lives of the city dwellers from the nineteenth century to the final decades of the twentieth century. This part of the exhibition differs from the other as regards both its main goal and the participation of visitors. Nonetheless, the history of daily lives of the inhabitants of Toruń is created using sensory elements, and the space entices one to explore the past. For instance, a stroll along the large kitchen full of numerous traditional mugs, plates, glasses, clutter, etc. makes it possible to transport children into the past. Moreover, subsequent parts of the exhibition are arranged using realistic devices, machines, and elements connected with the gingerbread market of the past. The original Polish “Żuk” truck and the indoor Communist “design” of a gingerbread shop sometimes only bring a smile to children’s faces, but sometimes provoke discussion between the young people and their parents. During the visit to these parts of the exhibition, a documentary about the history of the gingerbread factory in Toruń is screened, and visitors can also use an interactive, old-fashioned telephone to talk with the first owner of the gingerbread factory.

Additionally, CNN Travel included Toruń and the Museum of Toruń Gingerbread on a list of the most beautiful places in Poland.

Conclusions

At the present, “Enlightenment” establishments, such as museums and knowledge centres, are spaces of interactivity which make it possible to educate children effectively and also to popularize among adults research findings of a variety of scientific fields. The analysis of the two institutions

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demonstrated that a combination of both ancient and modern heritage museums with a new pattern of communication and managing sources of knowledge has been a popular tendency. The Centre for Modernity and the Museum of Toruń Gingerbread are designed particularly for family visits. Both institutions use interactivity and digital elements, as well as the organised process of educating in a modern way, to attract mainly young audiences. The curators of both institutions strive to create more attractive narratives about science, art, and the history of daily life. It is probably the good understanding of the intellectual needs and the way of thinking of a child, not of an adult, that is the key to the popularity of the Centre for Modernity and the Museum of Toruń Gingerbread among visitors.

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