

Imaginative mutual concept creation in digitalized daycare centers

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Theoretical point of departure:

Toward a sociomaterial + critical psychology

- from the standpoint of the subject
- from within praxis for the conduct of everyday life

(Holzkamp, 1983, 2013; Dreier, 2008; Schraube & Højholt, 2016; Højholt & Kousholt, 2019; etc. – shares many theoretical roots w/ CHT, as Holzkamp's foundation is strongly influenced by Leont'ev & Vygotsky)

Agency as *participation in the co-creation of sociomaterial conditions*

Development as *developing new forms of taking part in co-creation*

Learning as **mutual**: *collaborate on developing knowledge and thereby agency together – across age thresholds & other differences*

=> A deeply **caring** and **democratic** psychological approach, whose ethos is expressed in the methodology entitled **co-research** (Chimirri, 2019)

The empirical problem: in everyday life, we know so little... The purpose of technologically mediated communication has become opaque, the means its own end: who are 'we' communicating with and for what reasons?

Many-to-one communication: Communicating into the 'system' (Jensen & Helles, 2017)

	Asynchronous	Synchronous
One-to-one	E-mail, text message	Voice, instant messenger
One-to-many	Book, newspaper, audio and video recording, Web 1.0 / webpage, download	Broadcast radio and television
Many-to-many	Web 2.0 / wiki, blog, social network site	Online chatroom

Figure 1. Six communicative practices.

- ⇒ What is **one's reason to engage in invisible work** and feed supranational and national, corporate and 'public' servers and algorithms with data by communicating with their platforms, robots, etc.? Habeas data, habeas corpus – **enough there is some'one'**?
- ⇒ May this be an **indeterminate end of communication which is impossible for the single user to determine**? Does this indeterminacy not require (critical) **collaboration, a public engagement, to determine** why something may be worthwhile communicating with?
 - ⇒ So how to attain **meaningful knowledge** about digital analogue **relevance**?

The empirical problem for pedagogical digitalization: The **adult illusion of knowing (even) better** via digitalization of daycare and dataveillance



1. the promotion of children's (digital) learning (or rather: **instruction!**);

"Play materials ought not to be formalized function training materials where visual discrimination, remembering, and manipulations that dominate without a content or task that is meaningful for the child. Rather, educational material ought to be a help for children to explore and get competencies in relation to what happens in various social situations in their everyday life, and educational material should motivate them to enter new social situations and give them conceptual tools to explore these" (Hedegaard, 2007, p. 274)

The empirical problem for pedagogical digitalization: The **adult illusion of knowing (even) better** via digitalization of daycare and dataveillance



1. the promotion of children's (digital) learning (or rather: **instruction!**);
2. the monologic and/or dialogic communication with parents;
3. the monitoring and convergence of administratively relevant data, at the moment primarily attendance (on the datafication of Early Childhood institutions, e.g. Roberts-Holmes & Bradbury, 2016)

(Rather than attempting to exert control over children's behavior and their learning via datafication and digitalization:)

What does digital technology in preschool settings **invite us to pedagogically and societally reconsider as democratic citizens**, in order to render them more relevant for **society's development**?

- Toward a **new pedagogical and societal imagination** of what to do with this and other technology...

(At least) 3 divides must be questioned:

- **The child/adult divide** – children as co-equal centers of intentionality
- **The researcher/researched divide** – researchers as democratic citizens (just like children)
- **The human/nonhuman divide** – human cultures' inner relatedness with the natural world

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Reimagining *human-human-artifact-world-relations*:
Wartofsky's (1979) praxis philosophical **artifact**
theory for **imagining different perceptions of world**

Historical epistemology of modes of human perception: *Perceptual activity as directed praxis*

Sieland (2017, pp. 52ff): Wartofsky's artifact theory helps with decentering human subjectivity and with grasping *sociomaterial imagination as praxis*

3 orders of artifacts (or rather analytical levels):

Primary artifacts: tools for intervening in the environment and the skills, conventions, organizations for doing so – denotes material objects + modes of actions with the object

Secondary artifacts: representations of such modes of action, mimetic for preservation & transmission – denotes the mode of operation or action involving such objects

Tertiary artifacts: relatively suspended from the rigid objectifications and conventions governing first- and second-order artifacts – purpose of abstracting for rehearsal etc. + **(potentially alternative) worlds embodied in the artifacts can be explored and reconfigured**

The proposition: knowing little as potential for co-research
Communicatively co-exploring a different 'we' across the digit/analogue divide – after all, even scientific concepts and their sociomaterialized purposes/motives look very different from different perspectives in society...



Ontologic foundation for an explorative scientific, artistic, crafting, digitalizing communicative-pedagogical community?

Embracing 'not knowing' and *mutual learning*
(Højholt/Kousholt 2019) as **communicative potential!**

Transcend 'difference as apartheid' (Barad, 2014)

=> **Teleogenetic collaboration** on developing one another's agentic conduct of everyday life

Questioning adult (knowledge's) exceptionalism: Focus on children's sociomaterial contributions

Vygotsky (2004) criticizes the defectological view of psychology and educational studies, which focuses on 'disabled' children's negatively defined characteristics alone, i.e., they focus on what they seem to be missing when contrasted with the developmental norm, and may thereby neglect **what is constitutive of these children's subjectivity**:

“But we still know nothing about [these children's] positive characteristics, about the children's uniqueness: such is the research of the future” (p. 173).

Questioning adult (knowledge's) exceptionalism: Focus on children's sociomaterial contributions

“A child’s social situation of development is realized through the child’s interaction with others. In entering a new institutional practice, the child meets new demands both directly and indirectly but also put new demands on the caregivers; **the child not only acquires understanding of and competences to perform activities but also influences and changes the settings in which he or she participates in the different practices**” (Hedegaard, 2012, p. 128).

How can children's contributions help with re-imagining technology use in societal institutions?

A suggestion:

Vygotsky's ⁽²⁰⁰⁴⁾ 4 operations of imagination, constituting the **inner relatedness of imagination – reality**, for children and adults

1. Imagination re-combines experiences made
 - *richness-law?*
2. Imagination builds on social experiences & transcends them
3. Imagination and emotion are mutually interdependent
 - *all experiencing as perezhivanie?*
4. Embodied imagination affects other aspects of reality

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BUT: this presupposes that children's contributions are perceived, accentuated and acknowledged by potential collaborators!

Therefore **the scope of imaginable possibilities of collaborating** with children **must first be expanded**

”[T]he imagination, because it anticipates and pre-views, serves action, draws before us the configuration of the realizable before it can be realized” (Starobinski, 1970; cited in Sneath et al., 2009, p. 12; thanks to Stephan Sieland).

Back to the example:

I, the researcher, was also imagining that representing the child’s ‘authentic’ ways of playing and learning via my digital camera would be helpful for better understanding the child...

Different conditions for imagining different outcomes & collaborations – which are too often too easily guided by *an objectivizing, alienating ontology of the child!*

=> Discrepancy of child’s understanding from some adult norm
(Perret-Clermont & Greco yesterday)

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- Imagining & *enacting* alternative understandings and uses of technology requires conflictual, teleogenetic *collaboration*
- Children point to current developmental challenges, which are challenges that concern adults’ conducts of everyday life
- ‘Children’ can help us ‘adults’ in questioning the artifact enactments we cannot imagine transforming...

... if we take their collaborative actions, concerns, problems, and their experimental-curious playfulness as serious as any Other’s!

Preschool children's multimodal theatrical project:
Intentionally building on children's knowledges to
initiate **mutual digitanalogue learning processes**



Technology as potential for **learning from one another how to create a meaningful world** – not for controlling and teaching an Other
*=> a different perception of technology in preschool/daycare requires a different perception/concept of **the child as a co-learner-teacher***

Questioning the *child/adult binary*:
Christensen & Prout's *ethical symmetry*
for child(hood) co-research

“By this [ethical symmetry] we mean that the researcher takes as his or her *starting point the view that the ethical relationship between researcher and informant is the same whether he or she conducts research with adults or with children*. This has a number of implications. The first is that the researcher employs the *same ethical principles* whether they are researching children or adults. Second, that each right and ethical consideration in relation to adults in the research process has its counterpart for children. Third, the symmetrical treatment of children in research means that *any differences between carrying out research with children or with adults should be allowed to arise from this starting point, according to the concrete situation of children, rather than being assumed in advance*.

Thus, from this point of view, researchers do not have to use particular methods or, indeed, work with a different set of ethical standards when working with children. Rather it means that the *practices employed in the research have to be in line with children's experiences, interests, values and everyday routines*”.

(Christensen & Prout, 2002, p. 482)

Questioning the *child/adult binary*:
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Ethical symmetry as strategy and *methodological principle*

Departs from the standpoint that children and adults should be equally treated in social research

Differences that emerge in the researcher-child relationship can be reflexively scrutinized to obtain more general knowledge about child/adult-asymmetries in societal power arrangements

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Problem: it is the researcher who decides whether and how to act according to the principle of ethical symmetry *or not*

=> this *decision is a priori taken on behalf of the children as those 'researched' given the researcher's societal position(ing)*

Questioning the *researcher/researched binary*:
Stetsenko's **transformative activist stance**
for humanist and social research

“TAS highlights the notion that individuals contribute to collaborative transformative practices . . . through their own unique deeds and their co-authoring of historically unfolding social practices. In this vein, **collaborative practices are posited as ontologically primary, yet they are understood to be continuously and cumulatively evolving through unique activist contributions by individual participants**, who always act as social subjects, and always matter in one way or another because they are directly implicated in creating their realities of existence and their development, and thus, in social transformations of the world” (Stetsenko, 2013, p. 9)

- The **researcher as inextricable “part of the weave”** (Slunecko, 2019)
- **Ontological symmetry between all human contributors** to praxis as philosophical foundation, which requires ongoing dialogue (for Psychology from the Standpoint of the Subject: Schraube, 2013)

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Problem: **only human contributors are regarded as foundational** for initiating *sociomaterial* transformations of the world

=> Geologists (‘Anthropocene’) & New Materialists disagree

Questioning the *human/nonhuman binary*:

Puig de la Bellacasa's speculative **ethics of care**:
ongoing **ethopoiesis for a more than human world**

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“Ethical obligation is embedded in practices for remediating the neglect of Earth’s needs—including humans. As such, these ethics attract attention to the invisible but indispensable labors and experiences of Earth’s beings and resources. The **ethicality here is about making us care for what humans—most of us—have learned to collectively neglect**”. (p. 162)

“So while **we do not know how to care in advance or once for all, aspiring speculatively for situated ethicalities is vital** because no “as well as possible” on Earth is conceivable without these agencies, even those that do not intend themselves as ethical. Situations of care imply nonsymmetrical, multilateral, asubjective, obligations that are distributed across more than human materialities and existences. **Thinking with care attracts attention to ethical interrogations meant to seem untimely and worthless from the perspective of predominant unilinear futurities, but we cannot let productivist stories, or even the earnest economies of service, define how nonhuman worlds will be appreciated. There must be other ways to get involved in fostering the ethopoietical liveliness of the more than human agencies that support, currently mostly coercively, that we get the care we need**”.

(Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 221)

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Caring for the more than human world, including each other as human beings, requires conceiving of an **ethics that supersedes human exceptionality & supremacy**

Researchers continuously need to let their knowledge of the world (including themselves) get explored into, by all vital forces of the more the human world:

- Co-exploration thus requires fundamentally renegotiating deadlocking binaries
 - child/adult - researcher/researched - human/nonhuman - nature/culture - etc.

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A first conclusion: like New Materialist approaches, CHAT (and PSS) brakes with the nature/culture divide, but tends to forget questioning human exceptionality and supremacy from within this internal relation

- to many children, meanwhile, **this presumption remains open to co-exploration**
- More debates between CHAT and post — humanist Environmental Educational Research, for instance Payne's (2017) *ecocentric* educational ecophenomenology

Returning to the proposition:

Communicatively co-exploring a different 'we' across all sorts of divides and technologies – grasping oneself by mutually grasping the other's contributions to the world in relation to my own contributions

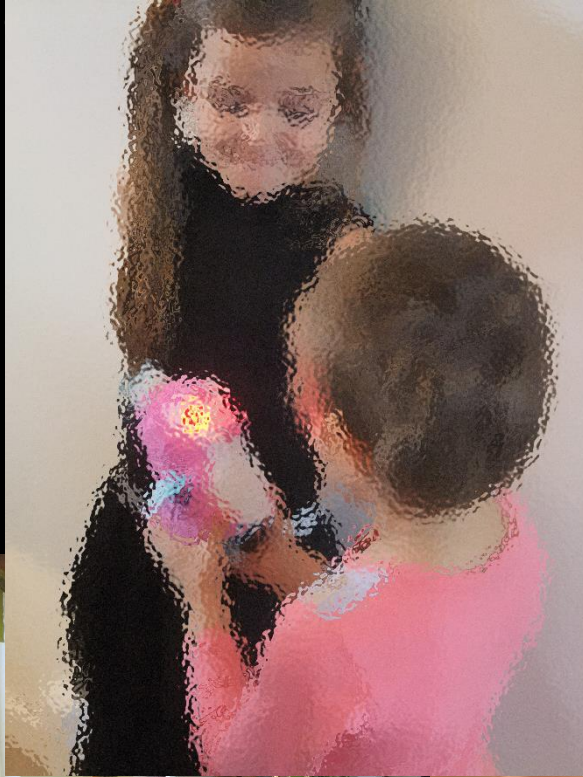


But: **WHO** decides what is *relevant* to imagine, explore and conceptualize with whom in everyday life, what calls for our fellow inquiry?

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Children must be acknowledged as contributors, citizens, co-conceptualizers of what is *relevant* to explore-imagine in everyday life!



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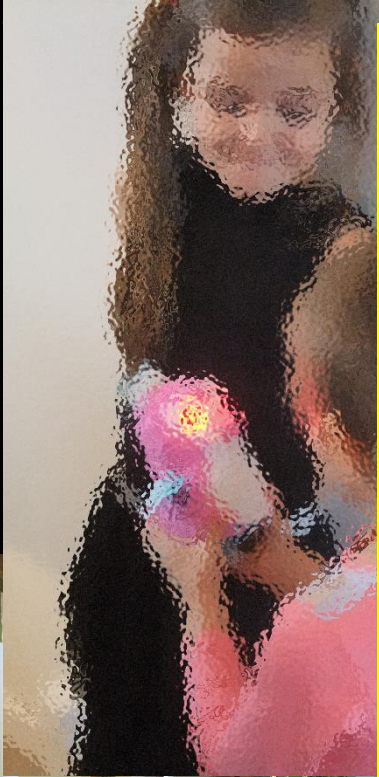
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Our teleogenetic collaboration:

Exploring, communicating and caringly co-deciding on where our child-adult collaborations will take us, given our *different perceptions and knowledges or conceptions of technology and of world*

⇒ Let the things, let the world co-influence our **communicative knowledge and ethics**, but let us not forget to always ask for the *emancipatory relevance* of our fellow doings!

⇒ Towards a *Caring Communication about the meaningfulness of technology*



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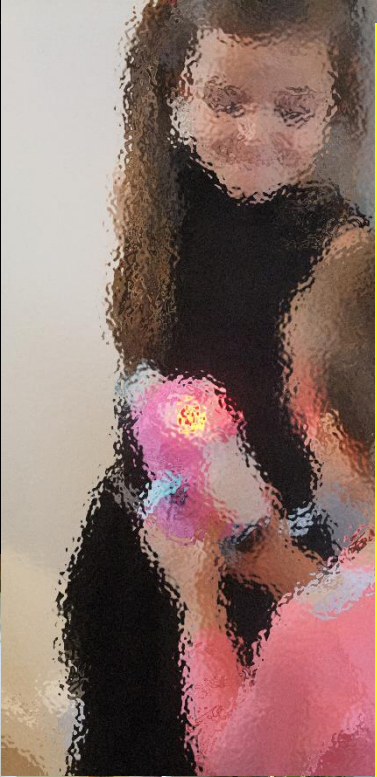
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Thank you for your
teleogenetic collaboration!
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My latest publications on related topics:

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Annual Review of Critical Psychology
2019, Vol. 16, pp. 605–633

Toward a transformative-activist co-exploration of the world? Emancipatory co-research in Psychology from the standpoint of the subject

Niklas A. Chimiri and Sofie Pedersen

Abstract

With a fundamental interest in further developing and specifying the theoretical and ethical framework of *Psychology from the Standpoint of the Subject* (PSS), the article at hand asks: What is the PSS researcher's position in and responsibility toward society? What does the theoretical concept of the co-researcher, which is so pivotal in this tradition, entail for conceptualizing the relationship between the academic researcher and all those others who participate from different societal positions? Is there a specific, emancipatory contribution the PSS researcher is to make to the production of societal conditions, including the production of knowledge? What is the contribution of the other co-researchers then, and how do they gain from the PSS researcher's labor, in particular her scientific explorations of the world? The article's analyses delve into various versions of understanding and implementing emancipation through psychological co-research, i.e. of how PSS research differently aims at bettering one another's living conditions. First, the original methodology developed in the Berlin context is presented, which can be roughly described as a theoretically informed dialogical exchange between academically trained people. This is secondly followed by a critique of this model, articulated by the Scandinavian Practice Research tradition and mounding in substantial conceptual and methodological developments – in particular of the understanding of the (co-)researcher relationship. Thirdly, it is illustrated that Practice Research instantiated some new ambiguities, by analyzing its methodology of fellow knowledge gaining through the lens of cultural-historical psychology and foremost Stetsenko's texts on the researcher as a transformative activist. Finally, it proposes *mutual knowledge-sharing* as the primary

Chapter 7 Generalizing Together with Children: The Significance of Children's Concepts for Mutual Knowledge Creation

Niklas Alexander Chimiri

Despite repeated attempts by childhood researchers and contextual developmental psychologists to promote the systematic integration of children's knowledges into the scientific generalization process, and to thereby produce concepts that are of more relevance to children's everyday life, their knowledges are still granted too little societal and pedagogical significance. Drawing on Vygotsky's 1929 article "The fundamental problems of defectology" (Vygotsky 2004a), I suggest that children's knowledges remain surrounded by an aura of defectiveness when contrasted with adult knowledges, and are first and foremost negatively defined as what they have not yet become. In his own article, Vygotsky couples his analyses of the defectological view to the study of mentally and physically differently developed children, of those children that would nowadays be labeled as "handicapped." He criticizes that psychology and educational studies focus on these children's negatively defined characteristics alone, i.e., they focus on that which they seem to be missing when contrasted with the developmental norm, and may thereby neglect what is constitutive of these children's subjectivity: "But we still know nothing about [these children's] positive characteristics, about the children's uniqueness: such is the research of the future" (p. 173).

From the vantage point of this chapter, Vygotsky's critique and call for an alternative child research, a child research that empirically investigates how each child is different from any other, is unique, and on these grounds develops scientific concepts for creating better pedagogical praxis, is untimely. Moreover, it is of argumentative significance for every knowledge creation process that seeks to be of practical relevance for children's everyday life. The idea that "defective" or "deviating" children do not live up to developmental or other societal norms, as other children supposedly do, can be applied to a more general attitude in our contemporary society

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in the Human and Social Sciences, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29977-4_7



Human Review (2019) 2:451–487
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12667-019-00609-7>

ARENA OF ETHICS

Specifying the Ethics of Teleogenetic Collaboration for Research with Children and Other Vital Forces: a Critical Inquiry into Dialectical Praxis Psychology via Posthumanist Theorizing

Niklas A. Chimiri¹ ✉

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Abstract

This article draws on posthumanist theorizing to critically inquire into and thereby specify the relational ethics ingrained in the dialectical praxis co-research approach of psychology from the standpoint of the subject (PSS). It departs from problematizing power imbalances manifest in participatory research with children, and argues that attempts to question the child/adult binary via the concept of ethical symmetry have failed to address this binary's entanglement with power imbalances propelled by the research/researched as well as the human/posthuman binaries. In contrast, PSS' co-research ethics, implicit to the remembrance of coexistence of everyday life and emotional coexistence, already attends to the research/researched binary, but has little attended to the child/adult or the human/posthuman binaries in explicit ways. Therefore, the article discusses how the posthumanist quest for fundamentally questioning human exceptionalism may inform psychological praxis co-research, by radically opening its inquiries up for ongoing renegotiations of deadlocking categories. It strives to co-explore what it means to be part of this world across all conceivable binaries. Implicitly, PSS already shares two central tenets with this posthumanist ethos of differentiation: its co-research strives for indeterminate and early-going speculative beginnings, and it does so via the collective engagement in difference enacting knowledge praxis. Finally, it is suggested that the concept of teleogenetic collaboration, as a specification of PSS' co-research methodology, explicates these tenets. The concept calls for continuously finding out about one another's knowledges and directionalities for future action from within everyday life, across all vital forces and across dialectical-materialist and new materialist theorizing.

Keywords Relational ethics · Posthumanism · Dialectics · Psychology from the standpoint of the subject · Participatory childhood studies · Sociomaterial praxis co-research

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