Beyond discipline? Methodological challenges in contemporary child culture studies


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Child culture studies is a multidisciplinary field, often embedded in academic institutions of education, social sciences, or psychology in addition to arts and humanities. Consequently, the fundamental research paradigms are becoming more heterogeneous than before. Yet a thorough discussion of different ontological and epistemological presuppositions, and how they affect concepts and research designs, is pending. In the proposed roundtable, we invite participants to reflect upon “discipline” in an extended sense, referring to the principles of research conducted in new settings, drawing on research from different fields (multidisciplinarity), with new types of data, and affected by new constellations and demands, related to research ethics and the sharing of knowledge.

Although contextually related to the concept of Nordic childhoods, the research network BIN – Norden have through conferences, publications and projects discussed how the conditions for cultural participation by children and adolescents are being negotiated and constructed in new ways through interaction on local, regional and global levels. This poses a challenge to a traditionally more uniform Nordic understanding of childhood, which is strongly in need of renewal. In particular, BIN-Norden have argued that we must deepen our knowledge of the diversity of children and adolescents’ cultural participation. Research related to children and adolescents retrieves its scientific and methodological basis from a wide range of disciplines and traditions. This condition has only been reinforced by the fact that cultural practices among children and young people has increasingly been mediated. Society not only seeks research in children and youth but research-based knowledge for political decision-making as well as institutional practices, and reflects the diversity that characterizes children’s culture. Multidisciplinary research designs and methodology seek to develop new knowledge and understanding of children’s cultural participation locally as well as globally. The roundtable will discuss how in research involving children it is crucial to reflect upon procedural, methodological and conceptual matters.

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