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Workshop exploring children's understandings of online safety: Storytelling and roleplay as research methods.

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What younger children, parents and teachers really think about online safety: Using creative methods within a phenomenological framework.

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Aims of the presentation

- To provide an overview of the context of the proposed PhD research project
- To examine the proposed research aims
- To discuss the proposed methodological approach and how this impacts on younger children’s autonomy within the research environment
Background

- Multiple perspectives, a mother, an early years practitioner, a researcher

- **Attitudes and Emotions to Internet Safety: Trust and Digital Literacy in Mothers of Reception Aged Children**

  **Lower digital literacy parents**
  [Parent asked regarding technical internet safety]
  
  “... but I don’t know how I can stop her from going on it [Netflix]. When it comes to Netflix I don’t think there is anything? I don’t know I have no idea. I think she can just go on it, it’s a case of supervising her and stuff like that.” (Leanne)

  **Higher digital literacy parents**
  [Do you sit with your child at the computer?]
  
  “...when she is on the PC then we are mostly not with her, it is a small room and she wouldn’t want you to sit with her...” (Gayle)
Background

Lower child digital literacy

[When asked about influences from the mesosystem that encourage child digital literacy.]

“... you see I wouldn’t want that, don’t teach them how to use the internet, no I don’t like that.”
(Leanne)

Higher child digital literacy

[Encouragement of child digital literacy within the microsystem.]

“... so like for example we looked up ‘Whoops-a-daisy’ on You Tube, which is quite sweet. So it just meant I knew what the songs were and we could sing it together and it was quite nice. He is too young to do that on his own, just because he can’t type yet and stuff like that.”
(Jane)
Background

Socio-technical Systems Trust

DIGITAL TRUST WINDOW

DEVELOPING
SECURE
STAGNANT
UNINFORMED

Parental Digital Literacy

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Lindsey_Watson6
Proposed research aims

• Critically interrogate how the home and school environments work together to tackle the issues of child online safety

• Apply a phenomenological approach to deepen understanding of possible differences between younger children’s and adult’s perspectives on online safety, gaining insights into how best to support younger children with online safety

• Critically analyse the effectiveness of storytelling and roleplay in eliciting the views of younger children in the research environment

• Critically evaluate how Ecological Systems Theory can be applied to deepen understanding of younger children’s, parent’s and teacher’s contemporary perceptions of online safety.
Younger children’s digital engagement

What are the issues?

What does the literature say?

• There are many stakeholders involved in younger children’s digital engagement, who recognise that children are accessing the internet at younger ages and for longer periods of time (Sharkins, Newton, Albaiz & Ernest, 2015, p.437)

• Much of the research focuses on the engagement of older children over the age of nine (Chaudron, 2015, p.11)

• Widening gap, demonstrating a lack of understanding in how best to support younger children’s digital engagement (Holloway, Green & Livingstone, 2013, p.4; Ólafsson, Livingstone and Haddon, 2013, p.32)
What can younger children add to our knowledge?

- Chaudron (2015) suggests younger children show limited understanding of what the internet is, or the associated benefits and risks.

- There has been a plethora of research regarding child online safety issues over the last decade and some of this research has attempted to include the child’s voice (Livingstone, 2013).

- The current lack of research surrounding younger children’s online engagement may reflect difficulties in research involving the perceptions of younger children (Olfsson, Livingstone, & Haddon, 2013, p.20).

- Are there more creative ways to genuinely attempt to include children in the production of knowledge? (Lomax, 2012)
Different stakeholders

Different perspectives: Home and school environments

- Children’s, parents and teachers perceptions of the potential risks and benefits of online engagement are an important aspect of understanding child online safety (Kanthawongs & Kanthawongs, 2013)

- Sharkins et al. (2015) suggest that there is a lack of research that includes the perspectives of caregivers, such as parents and teachers regarding younger children’s use of digital technologies

- Shipton (2011) suggests teachers and parents’ views of online safety often differ, potentially causing barriers
Different stakeholders

Different perspectives: Home and school environments cont...

• The British Government recognises the influential position of parents and encourages them to take responsibility for child internet safety through ideals surrounding effective parenting (Byron, 2008, 2010; Lewis, 2014).

• Parents of younger children recognise the importance of taking responsibility for child online safety and are willing to share this with teachers (Chaudron, 2015)

• Holloway et al. (2013) suggest that sharing responsibility for online safety with teachers may lead to some parents of younger children having less support through a lack of communication
Ecological Systems Theory

- To encourage further understanding of younger children’s perspectives surrounding online safety, multiple environments need to be analysed (Chaudron, 2015)

- Opportunities to examine how individual’s views and perceptions are potentially influenced through interactions between different environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1977)

- Interactions between different perspectives to further examine and understand younger children’s digital autonomy, digital literacy and possibly leading to a safer digital environment (Chaudron, 2015)
School and Curriculum

- British society revolves around technology, recognising that children need the skills, competences and enthusiasm to function digitally (Plowman, Stephen & McPake, 2012)

- UK Government and schools have responded over the last decade by implementing strategies focusing on preparing younger children to be effective and safe digital users (Pinto & Younie, 2015)

- Changes to school curricula find computing and online safety taught much earlier, putting more emphasis on schools to develop children’s online safety (Adams, 2013).
School and Curriculum

- The EYFS (Department for Education, 2017) Early learning goal; children recognise that a range of technology is used in places such as homes and schools. They select and use technology for particular purposes.

- Development Matters (Early Education, 2012) and Early Years Outcomes (Department of Education, 2013a), suggests younger children are supported to understand that information can be retrieved from computers and are able to complete a simple computer programme through interacting with age-appropriate software.

- Ofsted suggests that younger children are taught about safeguarding risks, including those associated with being online (Ofsted, 2015).

- National Curriculum, Key Stage One - use technology safely and respectfully, keeping personal information private; identify where to go for help and support when they have concerns about content or contact on the internet or other online technologies (Department for Education, 2013b).
Methodology

• By focusing on individual experiences of younger children, parents and teachers, to help understand social reality, the research aims support a qualitative phenomenological and interpretivist approach (Gray, 2014; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009)

• The in-depth phenomenon data will be gathered from those who are immersed within it (Denzin, 1978; Henn, Weinstein, & Foard, 2013)

• Employing different research methods encourages triangulation and facilitates critical analysis through exploration as opposed to description, which assists when trying to uncover potential relationships between participants and contexts (Gray, 2014).
Children’s Voices Within Research

- Research that views children as respondents rather than competent potentially limits research quality (Kleine et al., 2016)

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Unicef, 1989) recommend that children have a right to participate within research that affects them in an age appropriate way

- Giving children their own voice rather than voicing opinions for them (Clark, 2010).

- Child-friendly methods to mediate issues of marginalised status and power hierarchies (Harcourt, Perry & Waller, 2011).

(Kleine, Pearson & Poveda, 2016)
Proposed methodological approach (1) Storytelling

- As a pedagogical strategy, storytelling capitalises on children’s desire to interact and talk to others.

- Engaging in storytelling is a way of motivating young children to engage within an activity.

- Storytelling has a potential ability to motivate children and to connect with the content.

(Miller and Pennycuff, 2008).


- Audio recording.

- Age appropriate storytelling five children (reception and year one).
Proposed methodological approach (2) Role play

- Role play enables children to communally explore and assign meaning to their worlds and themselves in it

- A pretend world that is reality grounded, where children are able to recreate aspects of their everyday world

- A medium of expression to demonstrate their current levels of understanding, anxieties and fears

(Papadopoulou, 2012)
Proposed methodological approach (3) Role play

Revisiting roleplay data with children

- Research with children continues to examine how their perspectives can help add to the body of knowledge about various issues in their lives (Einarsdottir & Harcourt 2011; Lansdown 2005).
- Increased use of video recording has also contributed to a paradigm shift within early childhood educational research, where the child is viewed as a competent research participant (Rayna & Laevers, 2011)

Data analysis

- Thematic Phenomenological Analysis
Asking Questions Ethically of Children

- Children are asked to express their life reality through the medium of words within the framing of the questions they are asked (Kleine et al., 2016)

- In comparison with classic interviews, the storytelling and roleplay activities will place less pressure on children to answer questions, potentially creating receptive and spontaneous participation (Đurić, Meško, & Popović Ćitić, 2010, cited in, Jug & Vilar, 2015)

- Participatory methods that allow for co-construction, may help to shape children’s futures, including their digital futures (Kleine et al., 2016)

- So how will the methodological approach of storytelling support these views?
Let’s have a think about this…

- How can these books support data collection?
- What are the key aspects to consider?
  - Suitability of content?
  - Ethics?
  - Ability to facilitate children’s voices?
  - What useful prompts could the book support?
  - Age appropriateness?

Links to the research aims?
Conclusion

• Provided an overview of the context of the proposed research

• Examined the proposed research aims

• Discussed the proposed methodological approach and how this impacts on younger children’s autonomy within the research environment
References


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References


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