

“You’re filming us, right?”: listening and children’s participation in research

“Você tá filmando a gente, né?”: escuta e participação das crianças na pesquisa

“Nos estás filmando, ¿verdad?”: escucha y participación de los niños en la investigación

[Márcia Buss-Simão](#)  [Lucilene Moraes Agostinho](#) 

| Highlights

We should tell children our interpretation of what they have said.

The choice of “make believe” names (as they named it) was spontaneous.

This study contributes to reversing the process of “invisibilization” of children in research and their modes of participation.

| Abstract

The article brings methodological reflections regarding the process of listening and involving children throughout the research process. The analyzes are based on data collected in an early childhood education institution, through written, photographic and filmic records of a group composed of 25 children aged 5 and 6 years. As a theoretical basis for analysis, the knowledge and productions of Social Studies of Childhood. The research findings indicate the participation of children in choosing their names and authorizing records and use of footage as contributions to the need to reverse the process of “invisibilization” of children in scientific research and their modes of participation.

[Resumo](#) | [Resumen](#)

| Keywords

Ethics in research. Research with children. Participation. Early Childhood Education.

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| The empirical field and research subjects

This study seeks to dialogue with the theme of the Dossier: *Listening and participation in ethnographic research with children in Early Childhood Education: epistemological, ethical, and methodological discussions*, which aims to gather publications that thematize the notions of listening and participation in research *with* and *about* children. In this dialogue, this study offers methodological reflections on the process of listening and involving children in their choice of their names, authorization of records, and use of footage throughout field data collection.

To consider listening to children and their participation requires revising the concept of participation since tracing a historical trajectory of the concept suggests that Modernity reduces this action to representative democracy and that this perspective continues to exclude children from the public scene. This interpretation recognizes that legitimate participation implies the right to vote and to receive votes. *Social Studies of Childhood* have claimed a counter-hegemonic view that entails understanding individual and collective participation “[...] beyond the legal framework of representative Western democracies” (Sarmiento et al., 2007, p. 185) as only thus we will be able to contribute to the need to reverse the process of “invisibilization” of children in the public sphere and, in a more circumscribed way, their “invisibilization” in scientific research, at the same time inquiring how ethics (which precedes scientific knowledge) enables us to arrive at another knowledge about children and childhood.

Based on this premise, we have argued that participating “[...] implies having a part in the decisions and not just being informed or receiving part of something” (Wertetheim & Argumedo, 1985, p. 16). To take part in decisions still requires passing the trial that involves “[...] how much one takes part but how one takes part” (Bordenave, 1983, p. 23), evincing a process that requires collectively building effective participation. This challenge becomes more complex when subjects are children aged from zero to six years, as in the studies we have been carrying out over the last few years.

Considering these assumptions, children’s participation in research is deemed to entail, as per Agostinho (2010), developing approaches that begin from children’s position and recognize their differences based on the paradigm of listening. Their right to participation is fundamental for the acknowledgement of their social competences, and adults must ensure the time and space for effective participation during research “[...] in an exercise of intergenerational dialogue and power-sharing [in] a democratic practice that involves negotiation and compromise” (Agostinho, 2010, p. 101). To this end, adults must be able to create effective conditions for a non-adult-centric interpretation of children’s actions and relationships, the claim and creation of spaces for children’s action, and interventions so they can build these backgrounds and experiences of participation since “[...] the consolidation of a discourse for the promotion of children’s rights indisputably involves the creation of

structures that make a connection between principles and practices” (Soares, 2005, p. 7).

In this study, reflections and analyses are based on data generated in a public early childhood education institution by written, photographic, and filmic records of a group of five teachers, two classroom assistants, and 25 children aged five and six years. This master's degree research aimed to analyze how normative whiteness determines ethnic-racial relations in a preschool¹.

To carry out this research, we defined the locus of investigation as a public early childhood education institution in downtown Florianópolis within its Municipal Education Department. As soon as this research was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, participant observation began in August 2022, in which methodological tools such as field notes and photographic and filmic records were performed.

Field notes were used as the main resource to record events, used to register significant moments and actions that led to reflections that could meet the objectives outlined in the research. Photographic and audiovisual records were also performed with the researcher's private smartphone to support observations.

Photography enabled a greater approximation and reading of reality, bearing in mind that such reality can be interpreted and captured in diverse ways according to the researcher's gaze and their subjectivity since

[...] Photography and images are always a researcher's “look” at a reality, not the reality itself because lens captures what aroused the researcher's interest and attention, and other researchers present at the same event can photograph and detail other aspects of this same reality. (Buss-Simão, 2012, p. 87, free translation)

Thus, photography shows researchers' attention and interest in a given reality in the search for answers to their research object. This resource was essential to record the relationships among children and between them and adults and to capture the spatial organization and materialities that compose the educational setting.

The filmic records were used to capture several actions that would concomitantly occur in time and space. Filming made it possible to record several situations that were later converted into images to meet the objectives of the investigation. During the observation, filming was set to about 10 to 30 daily minutes since data generation requires a large investment of time in subsequent transcriptions.

1 We situate our research problem only to describe its context as this study will refrain from addressing its theme as it aims to describe its methodological process to collect field data.

| "You're filming us, right?": Children's claim to negotiate filming authorization

Following Coutinho's (2019), Ferreira's (2010), and Buss-Simão's (2022) indications and accumulation of productions demarcating specificities of *consent* and *assent* in research with children regarding the "[...] essential need to obtain children's permission to participate in research in a comprehensive and contextualized way throughout the course of research" (Buss-Simão, 2022, p. 57), the investigation was initiated aiming to create spaces for children's action and intervention so they could decide whether they wanted to participate throughout the course of the research. The following excerpt was taken from the first meeting with the children. It involved the process of obtaining their *assent*:

I sat in a circle with the children. I introduced myself and we arranged for them to introduce themselves to find out their names and so we did. I explained that I am a teacher at another 'daycare' and that I am there to conduct research. I asked who knew what research was. Answers such as 'search on the computer,' 'on the tablet computer,' 'on the smartphone,' and 'in the book' emerged. A child said: 'we research to find things out!' Another contributed 'we research the plants in the garden.' So, I added that I would do research to find out what the children like and don't like to do in daycare and to understand what they like to play, who they like to play with, and what they like to learn... That's why they would see me with a notebook and a pen, to write everything down so I wouldn't forget. I asked for their permission so I could take pictures or film them at some moments, and most answered 'I accept.' Some said: 'we accept.' I explained that they could change their minds at any time and that I would respect their decision. We agreed that all agreements made by the teachers should be maintained or negotiated with them as I am not the teacher of the group. The children looked at me attentively and some also looked at the other teachers there to make sure the information was right. As I learned that there were shy children who don't like to talk in a circle and feel intimidated when exposed to the group, I tried not to ask any questions individually as a way of respecting them. The conversation took place collectively. Then, those who felt comfortable expressed themselves verbally. (Field note – 08.22.2022)

To meet ethical requirements, a first step involved showing an informed assent form with colorful images and in the format of a story to the children. Thus, it was read as if in storytelling, using an accessible language, and, according to the images, exposing who the researcher is, where she studies, and what she would be doing with the group. Thus, we follow Coutinho's indication (2019, p. 63) that "[...] assent implies the capture of the participant's acceptance through different procedures given the singularities of the subjects to whom one turns, children, adolescents, or people prevented from consenting."

Storytelling highlighted and asked if children agreed with the presence of the researcher, i.e., if they allowed notes to be taken on a notebook and their games and interactions be photographed and filmed. At the end of the story, they were requested to register this permission by drawings (self-portrait) and/or the of writing their names (whoever could and wanted to): Cristiano: *I won't draw, I'll just write my name*, and thus he did (Field note – 08.29.22). The other children were distributed across benches and chairs, helping teachers organize the tables and looking for colored and writing pencils.

The request for a self-portrait was also considered the objective of this research and enabled the negotiation of *assent* and the initial observation of how the children represented themselves since the research sought to analyze how normative whiteness determines ethnic-racial relations in an early childhood education. The records in the Term of Assent were diverse, with varying shades of skin colors: beige, yellow, black, and blue. Most children only drew themselves, whereas others also drew their families, and some drew the researcher. Gustavo said: *I drew myself with my family*. Ana: *This is me and you, we're walking backward* (Field note – 08.29.22). Attentive to methodological reflexivity, such as “[...] a political attitude toward the process of elaboration of knowledge and the citizenship of those who accept to participate in this process” (Coutinho, 2019, p. 65), we ask ourselves what other ways can we create to conduct this process? How can we create participatory strategies that connect the principles and practices of children’s participation in research?

Considering the warning from the accumulation of knowledge produced on research with children, to avoid that *assent* become a mere formality to be fulfilled at the beginning of research, we tried to follow the interactions from afar throughout the observation, approaching the children if any gap was perceived, following Skånfors’ indication (2009) on the need for researchers to mobilize a kind of alert, which he calls the “ethical radar.” By this “ethical radar,” researchers are warned to be sensitive to the several ways and strategies children may express their *assent*, refusal, or unwillingness to participate or be observed at certain times or situations during research.

Records were initially made in field notes that tried to observe the dialogues, plots, and the most recurrent and favorite companions in children’s games. In the third week of observations, Marcos and Daniel² were playing on a carpet with a box of toy cars. When they noticed the researcher was near them, they performed a kind of “performance,” encouraged by her interest in observing and recording their play. They interacted and dialogued with each other, inventing new plots. From time to time, they looked at the researcher as a way to make sure that she attentively observed and recorded what they were doing, evincing their comfort with her presence:

Marcos to Daniel: Pretend I was going to fix this car here.
 Placing the two cars on the ground and joining them with one hand as if one were ‘towing’ the other.
 Daniel fiddles with the box of cars while Marcos plays by pushing two cars with the same hand, reproducing the noises of a moving engine. Marcos watches me often to make sure I keep watching.
 Marcos: Daniel, the strength of this car makes this one tip over.
 Marcos lets go of the cars and takes a car hauler, puts several cars inside it, and pushes it.
 Marcos: Daniel, I arrived to fix these cars. I’ve been trying to fix this ‘old piece of junk’ for a long time!
 Daniel shows me the car in his hand — ‘Watch what it does’ — twirling around with the car in his hand.

² The children chose these fictitious names themselves, a process that we will detail later in this text.

Marcos: When you run out of gas, you go to the gas station. Bye, I'll take this one for repair.
Daniel: Bye!
The two boys continue to push the cars, making the sound of a car engine with their mouths. They briefly look at me and resume their play. (Field note – 09.06.22)

This experience provided a certain assurance that, initially (even if indirectly) the children already consented to the presence of the researcher as a spectator of their play. Even with these indications, field permanence was mobilized by this kind of alert — or this “ethical radar” (Skånfors, 2009) — to the sensitivity to the many ways and strategies by which they could express their refusal or unwillingness to be observed, photographed, or filmed. Methodological reflexivity led us, all the time, to the question of how to create participatory strategies that could connect the principles and practices of children’s participation in research. As Pereira et al. (2018, p. 777) indicate, as a researcher, having children as research participants and social actors confronts us with “[...] a series of theoretical, empirical, ethical and moral challenges, including taking responsibility for children.”

The strategy of making records with the field note was challenged by the dynamics of the group composed of 25 children aged five and six years and the vast variety and speed of interactions, relationships, and games, so that recording the context of their games sometimes faced difficulties, only capturing “stills.” Thus, it was difficult to record the discourse, conversations, and plots during play, so the photographic record was subtly used to gather more information and data from significant situations. However, even the photographic record failed to contemplate the context of children’s interactions. Faced with this challenge, in the third week of observation, filming was also used to capture the dialogues and contexts that eluded written and photographic records. Despite the approval and *assent* given by the children toward written records, they manifested a certain discomfort when they caught the researcher discreetly filming their interactions:

At the end of the afternoon, I sat down at the round table, around which Gabriel, Daniel, Luluca, David, Ana, and Gabizinha are playing with playdough. I discreetly start filming the children’s interactions, resting my cell phone on my leg.
I ask Daniel: What are you doing?
Daniel: A chocolate snake.
Ana: I made the star on my bracelet.
Carlos (sitting next to me): Do you want my pizza?
Me: Yes! What toppings did you put on it?
Carlos: It’s meat with cheese.
Carlos offers me a piece.
Me: Hmm, this meat and cheese pizza is very tasty!
Carlos smiles and then offers me another piece: This one has chocolate and condensed milk and coconut mixed in.
I taste it, thank him, and return his playdough.
Carlos: That will be R\$ 200,00.
Me: Wait a minute, I’ll give it to you.
I pretend to take the money out of my pants pocket.
Carlos: There’s nothing there, it has to be money.
Carlos offers me a piece of playdough: This is money.
Me: Take it, young man, your money.
Carlos: Thank you.

Carlos: Now I've made a hot dog. I put chocolate, coconut, and all the flavors of stuffed crust in the world on it!
 He offers me it so I can taste it.
 Daniel rolled up the playdough and shows it to me: A snail!
 Laura and Luísa, who were playing on a little house, approach our table.
 Luísa sees the cell phone on my leg and asks me: Lu, you're filming us, right?
 Look, Ana, she's filming!
 Me: Can't I film? Don't you want me to film?
 Luísa: I like it but not now!
 Ana: Yeah... Not now!
 Me: Okay, I'll turn it off.
 Carlos: You better!
 I turn off my phone and continue writing on my notebook. (Field note – 09.15.22)

In the excerpt above, when Luísa sees the cell phone and asks: “Lu, you’re filming us, right?” the challenge of being able to generate data and at the same time (or rather, in the foreground) ensure that the collection of these data is negotiated with the children, shows how much “[...] aspects such as protection, participation, tutelage, and authorship are not just themes or categories of analysis, they are theoretically affirmed or denied, evidenced, or made invisible realities” (Pereira et al., 2018, p. 777) in the research process and practice. This situation leads us to ask: in what way, contexts, and circumstances are their rights, discourse, and actions recognized? To start filming without consulting the children also shows the “[...] power relations between adults and children that can limit, conceal, or restrict their participation, their words, their actions, and how childhood wants to be perceived in and by society” (Pereira et al., 2018, p. 769). It evinces how ethics crosses empirical research and theoretical constructions and demands different and new perspectives in treating, listening, and relating to children and childhood from researchers.

The non-*assent* of some children to filming at that moment of interaction (as well as at other moments) invites us to reflect on what Ferreira (2010) states about the importance of “recontextualizing and rethinking” the principles of *consent* (thus proposing *assent*) children offer given the limits of their understanding of research during the process of participant observation, deeming their *consent* as an ongoing process (rather than a permanent approval regarding their authorization of the use of footage — a claim they negotiate) in which they may change their opinion during the process according to their understanding.

The author invites us to reflect on what she calls “ethical sensitivity” as a condition inherent to research. According to Ferreira (2010), the processes for obtaining permission must be “as informed as possible” so children have a glimpse of their right to claim negotiations or even, returning to Skånfors’ (2009) “ethical radar,” a kind of “sensitive alert” to the numerous ways in which children can express their resistance and refusals to be observed. Following these premises, the researcher continues to build an approximation and construction of bonds so that, in a negotiated way, she starts to earn their *assent* as her attempts of filming unnoticed are frustrated, as we can see below:

Gabizinha, Carlos, Leandro, Victória, Taila, and I were playing in the little house in the room. I'm sitting on the cushion at the little house and discreetly position my cell phone to record the play.
After a few moments of recording, Victória notices the smartphone and says, smiling: Teacher Lu is recording!
The other children also look at me smiling as if they had caught someone red-handed!
I ask: Can I record?
Victoria and Taila answer: yes!
The other children agree with positive gestures, and we continue to play. (Field note – 11.01.22)

In addition to earning their *assent* for filming, the children begin to ask the researcher to film them and even suggest the best angles for it. One such scene takes place in the woods in which Artur, Cristiano, Leandro, and Rafael are playing soccer. Sitting on the roots of a tree, the researcher is taken by surprise while filming the soccer game:

Artur runs in front of me, looks at my smartphone, points his finger at the camera, and exclaims: You're filming!
Me: You're all playing so well that I decided to film it. Can I film?
Rafael: Yes!
Cristiano overhears the conversation: Are you done filming?
I answer: Yes!
I ask: Do you want to see it?
They answer: Yes!
The boys come running toward me. I get several warm hugs around me as I show them the footage.
Raphael exclaims: Look at Cristiano!
Cristiano: I dribbled!
We had a lot of laughs as we watched the footage together.
Artur: Keep filming us then!
The boys get back to playing. Now aware of my footage, they change their behavior, glancing at me from time to time and seeming to want to show their skills to the camera. They seek to interact with me during the game, narrating their actions.
Rafael: Are you tired, teacher Lu?
I answer: No!
Rafael: Are you recording?
I say: Yes!
I ask again: Can I keep recording?
Artur and Rafael: You can!
Leandro: Pass the ball, Rafael! Pass it here!
Rafael dribbles past his teammates, kicks the ball to the post, scores a goal, and celebrates with his arms in the air: Didn't I say that "Neymar" is good? Didn't I?
Rafael comes to tell me: That goal was a lot of work!
The children begin to give testimonials before the camera about their favorite teams and players.
Rafael reminds his colleagues: She's recording!
Cristiano comes to me and asks: Can I watch the video? I want to see it to train with Rafael.
Cristiano carefully watches the video. (Field note – 11.01.22)

This experience was significant due to children's *assent* to the filmic record and their incentive to its continuation and positive feedback after the recording was watched as children agreed with the record made, greatly contributing to the

process of participant observation and to the necessary feedback in the research. For such feedback, it was necessary to take a close look at the various manifestations expressed by the children since:

There is no notion of ethics that remains unchanged if the verily different signs that the child agrees to continue participating in the research are not sensibly observed throughout the research itself: a look, a gesture, a smile, a hug, a refusal can express the desire to participate or, at least, their assent; they can also express forms of resistance and refusal. (Marcello 2022, p. 16)

While the football game was going on, I kept filming. Then, Laura, Luísa, Ana, and Victória approached me and tried to draw my attention by staging a circle game before the smartphone singing: “A-tisket a-tasket, a green and yellow basket, I wrote a letter to my friend, and on the way I dropped it.” As they realized I was still filming the soccer game, Luísa suggested: “Oh, teacher Lu, if you want to, you can film us, ok?” (Field note – 11.01.22).

Another situation that provided confidence about the children’s acceptance of the used record forms, especially filming, refers to Luísa and Laura playing airplane trips inside the little house in the corner of the room. They were sitting on a sofa with their backs to the carpet, where the researcher positioned herself and observed the play. The plot became interesting, and the researcher started recording. To capture the best angle for filming and with nowhere to rest her arm, she kept her arm partially extended, when Luísa turned her back, observed the researcher trying to film the play, and suggested: “Lu, put your phone here, it’s better!” She takes the smartphone from the researcher’s hand, rests it on a piece of furniture at the house facing them both, and continues to play without being intimidated by the camera, looking at the phone from time to time, sometimes forgetting they were being filmed. When the game ended, the researcher retrieved her phone and, when watching the footage, she found that the angle chosen by Luísa perfectly captured the intended scenes (Field note – 11.30.22).

Luísa’s initiative shows that participating implies taking part in decisions (rather than only being informed or receiving part of something) (Wertenheim & Argumedo, 1985) and the process of *assenting* throughout research (Buss-Simão, 2022; Ferreira, 2010), especially in the face of filming. At first, requests for permission elicited expressions such as “not now,” “I like that you film, but now I don’t want it,” sometimes uttered with a smile as a game of discoveries of the researcher’s frustrated attempts to start filming without their *assent*. Thus, with their denial, the children seemed to be “in control” of the situation, understanding the posture of respect based on an “ethical sensitivity” from someone who, although as an adult, sought to comply with their decisions, avoiding hierarchizing relationships, alleviating the differences of power in them, and enabling children to exercise their right to negotiate. A process that results in children allowing and, sometimes, suggesting and requesting that their games be filmed, even positioning smartphone to collaborate with the research, capturing the best angle for recording without being intimidated by the camera. The active participation of children in research removes them from anonymity or from the position of “passive objects” in the

investigation and protects them from unethical research. Thus, Alderson (2005, p. 423) stresses the need to

[...] involving all children more directly in research to be able to rescue them from silence and exclusion and from being implicitly represented as passive objects, while respecting their informed and voluntary consent helps protect them from covert, invasive, exploitative, or abusive research.

Throughout this process and the construction of relationships, negotiating and authorizing filming takes other contours. The children who initially claimed the right to negotiate the moments to be filmed now request filming, as in this episode:

As we are experiencing a Soccer World Cup context, the matches, national teams, and players' names are very present in the narratives of children, especially boys, who most enjoy playing soccer.
Cristiano and Gabriel were playing ball in the park opposite NEIM³.
Cristiano watches as I approach with my cell phone in hand and says: Teacher Lu keeps recording me play! I'm going to mimic Mbappé, how he plays and how he celebrates when he scores a goal!
I ask: Who is Mbappé?
Cristiano: He is a player who plays in France. He's really good, I like him!
I ask: How is he?
Cristiano: Mbappé? He's Black... And he does it just like this... Let me show you...
Cristiano: Keep filming. He does it like this, look...
Me: Show me, I'm going to shoot it!
Cristiano: That's how he does it, see? Did you record it?
Me: Yes, I did!
Cristiano: And he celebrates like this, look!
Cristiano kicks the ball hard, shouts "goal," runs to celebrate, jumps, and stops with his arms crossed.
Cristiano: Lu, look on your phone for a video of Mbappé celebrating. Don't I do it just like him?
I accept Cristiano's suggestion and we sit on the sidewalk and search for a video of that player on my phone as requested.
Cristiano, repeating the gesture: See? That's just how I did it!
Cristiano: Now search a goal by him.
When I pick up my cell phone again to conduct a new search, Cristiano says: Can you give it to me? I already know how to unlock your phone.
I hand it over to him unconvinced and Cristiano successfully unlocks my phone!
I say: I can't believe you figured out my password?!
Cristiano laughs and says: It was pretty easy!
Gabriel overhears our conversation and suggests: Lu, if I were you, I'd change your password for numbers!
I am impressed by that and say: You guys are very smart!
They both have a laugh! (Field note – 11.24.22)

This excerpt brings to light that while observing the children and their interactions in this process of participant observation, they also observe the researcher, so that even the password of her smartphone can be discovered without her realizing it! It also shows how a movement of attentive and sensitive listening, of "[...] access to 'children's communication cultures', whose meaning refers to the ways in which they engage and respond to research" (Buss-Simão & Lessa 2023, p. 347) one can

3 NEIM is acronym for Centers of Municipal Childhood Education (Núcleo de Educação Infantil Municipal), a name used in the municipality for early childhood education facilities.

overcome, in small actions, the tendency, as Qvortrup (2014, p. 30) indicates, of being “[...] at the same time belittling children's ability to employ their ability and competence and reinforcing the lack of confidence among adults in relation to such qualities in children.” The strategies used to conduct this research shows children's skills and capacities and the signs of a construction of trust between them and the researcher. It evinces how, in conducting research, children and childhood can be recognized as active participants in their spaces and times. A movement of construction that can also reach another knowledge, another narrative about childhood and children that recognizes them as subjects of rights and how childhood subtly and profoundly reflects society and is dialectically made in it.

“Call me South wind!” Participation and the choice of “make-believe” names...

Considering the inquisitive principle of how to ethically carry out an investigation with children with their real consent and show their modes of participation to legitimize their authorship and actions, we proposed a challenge for us to create spaces for action and intervention so children could build these experiences of participation in choosing their names.

A proposal to listen to the children and have them actively participate in their choice of names to compose the research offers a question that Kramer (2002) has detailed regarding authorship and authorization. If, on the one hand, the anonymity of the children may seem positive, on the other hand (the side that protects them), anonymity prevents them from having an identity in research via these names. The implications “[...] of the recurrent use of fictitious names for people and places in the presentation of research results” (Ferreira & Nunes, 2014, p. 118) are also considered a challenge by Ferreira and Nunes (2014), who argue that it is necessary to consider its implications in ethnographic practice.

Soares (2005, p. 7), discussing children's rights at the crossroads of protection and participation, also raises a question that mobilized the research: “How can we simultaneously claim children's competence, space for action, and intervention in the exercise of their rights and, depending on their degree of dependence and vulnerability, emphasize how much they need our protection?” It seems incoherent to consider and defend children as subjects of rights, to propose to listen to their voices, to instigate their active participation in research, and deny their authorship and identity at the moment they are given names. Resolution no. 510, of April 7, 2016 (Brasil, 2016), in its Article 9, when referring to the rights of participants, explains: “V - decide whether one's identity will be disclosed and what, of the information provided, can be treated publicly.” Considering these premises and the theoretical framework that guides our research:

[...] we beforehand refused alternatives such as using numbers or mentioning children by their initials or the first letters of their names as this denied their status as subjects, disregarded their identity, simply erased who they were, and relegated them to anonymity. (Kramer, 2002, p. 47)

Likewise, we consider it arbitrary to choose the names of the children ourselves. Thus, we seek to imprint, throughout the entire research, the principle that the defense of a paradigm that drives a culture of respect for the child citizen “[...] associate rights of protection, provision, and participation in an interdependent way, that is, [...] which, in addition to protection, also needs margins of action and intervention in their daily lives” (Soares, 2005, p. 9). Thus, to avoid only assigning fictitious names to the children, a choice was made to allow them to select their fictitious names to preserve their identities and, at the same time, enable them to participate more actively in this choice.

Coutinho (2019, p. 65) suggests that “[...] the modes of identification can be negotiated with the participant, such as the choice of a fictitious name by participants themselves, and the description of the contexts must guarantee anonymity, safeguarding their identity marks.” Thus, the choice of “make-believe” names (or “white lie” as they named it), took place spontaneously, resembling a game between the children that began at the large park of the institution, as we can see in the field note that, although long, we consider necessary to present in full to show children’s involvement:

Marcelo watches me sit in the tunnel of the park writing in my notebook and asks me: What are you doing?
 I answer: I’m writing the games you like to play in the park. It says here “Marcelo likes to run in the park.”
 Marcelo smiles, nodding to what is written.
 I ask: Oh, did you know I can’t put your name in my research? I need you to pick a make-believe name. Which would you like me to give you?
 Marcelo replies: Call me South wind!
 I ask: But why South wind?
 Marcelo: Because the teacher says I’m a south wind!
 I ask: But do you like to be called that?
 Marcelo shakes his head “no.”
 Me: Do you want to choose another name?
 Marcelo thinks about it and answers: Marcelo!
 I say: Good!
 Laura, Victoria, and Ana watch me talk to Marcelo.
 Ana: What are you doing?
 Marcelo: You have to think of a make-believe name...
 Barbara also approaches us.
 I explain: You need to think of another name for me to put in my research because I can’t put your real name. It has to be a make-believe name so people who read the search don’t identify you.
 Barbara asks: What is identify?
 Me: For example, if I put in here “Barbara took the doll,” the people who know you will identify you, will know that it is you, and in my research I can’t say it’s you, got it?
 Barbara states having understood by shaking her head.
 Laura: I like Laura.
 Victória: I can be Victória!
 Ana: My name is going to be Ana.
 Taila: I want Taila, my cousin’s name.
 Barbara (who hasn’t chosen her name yet) thinks for a while...
 Taila: I’m going to help Barbara, how about...
 Bárbara replies: Bárbara!
 Gabizinha approaches, listens to the explanation, and answers: I want Gabizinha!

Marina approaches, observing the crowd of children: What are you doing, teacher Lu?
 I explain to her and ask her to choose a name for her.
 Marina thinks and doesn't answer. I ask: is there a name that you like to be called in games? Another name instead of yours?
 Marina: I play with my cousin Marina.
 I ask: Do you like the name Marina?
 Marina smiles and nods affirmatively.
 I ask: So, can I write Marina for you?
 Marina: You can! (Field note – 11.21.2022)

As can be read in the record, the children, in this movement of choosing names, show they understand the proposal and mobilize the other children, sparing the researcher consulting them one by one, giving visibility and materialization to a perspective in which “[...] participating refers to making decisions in collective activities, it means deciding and doing” (Pereira et al., 2018, p. 771). It is also important to note that this moment allows both a feedback of the data to the children and to problematize the way a teacher referred to one of them when asking if he liked to be called “south wind.”⁴ This problematization and production of knowledge based on this involvement of children can also contribute to making a difference and modifying in some way how society perceives and conceives children (Pereira et al., 2018).

This moment dedicated to the choice of names also indicates that adults often fail to realize the complex words we use with children, as in Barbara's question: What is identify? Barbara's genuine question enables the researcher to rework the explanation. This field note excerpt helps us to overcome the idea in the social imaginary on the conception of children as incompetent, as Pereira et al. (2018) states by referring to the conditions of dialogue between researchers and children, highlighting *childhood on the razor's edge*, especially when research involves the participation of children since “Participation is a controversial subject because it brings to light the clash between the idea that children are irresponsible, irrational, and incapable of making their own choices” (Pereira et al., 2018, p. 770). Below, we offer another excerpt from this rich moment of involvement and mobilization of children regarding the choice of their names:

Marcelo calls Gabriel, Cristiano, and Dadinho: Look... Teacher Lu said we have to choose another name.
 I again explain the reason for choosing make-believe names. Gabriel chooses his colleague's name: I want Cristiano.
 I answer: But there's already a Cristiano in the group, it must be a name that isn't already in your group.
 Gabriel: Oh, I know! Gabriel!
 Then I realize that Gabriel is Cristiano's middle name and I conclude that the choice of that name must be related to their bond of friendship.
 Cristiano: I want Cristiano Ronaldo Júnior! (a football player's name)
 I propose to him: Can it just be the first name?
 Cristiano: It can!

4 The expression “south wind” is typical in Florianópolis: information collected on the website of the Municipality of Florianópolis:
https://www.pmf.sc.gov.br/sistemas/consulta/parqueMarina/pdf/Anexo%20VII%20-%20Diagnostico_Ambiental_Simplificado.pdf

Dadinho: Could it be Dadinho, my father's name?
 I say: Yes, it can!
 Gustavo keeps thinking and doesn't answer me.
 I ask: Gustavo, do you want to choose a make-believe name for yourself?
 Upon hearing (still halfway) my explanation to Gabriel and Dadinho about the impossibility of choosing a name that already exists in the group, Gustavo replies: But I can't think of a name that doesn't exist!
 I then explained that it can't be a name that already exists in the group.
 Gustavo: Ah... ok! Could it be Gustavo?
 I ask: Is there any Gustavo in the G6?
 Gustavo: No!
 Me: So be it! (Field note – 11.21.2022)

The record shows the children's involvement with the demand for choosing names. In this excerpt, it is appropriate to problematize the choice of names by children, when they choose the names of superheroes or soccer players, as per: "I want Cristiano Ronaldo Júnior!" Kramer (2002) drew attention, 20 years ago, to the fact that when children are asked to choose their own names, they produce the names of famous singers, television presenters, and acclaimed soccer players. In this case, Kramer (2002, p. 48) justifies that "[...] this choice once again points to social and prestige value as well as the burden of desire to be known, to be liked, to have fame." This situation also occurred in our research, in the choice of names in which Cristiano wished to attribute to himself the name and surname of his idol, a soccer player. The researcher's immediate solution of asking if only the first name could be listed (to which Cristiano promptly consented) was a good strategy, since "[...] bringing, in its entirety, names that evoke socially institutionalized meanings made the text strange, displaced the meanings, changed the focus of the reading, dispersed the reader" (Kramer, 2002, p. 49).

Most children in the researched context designated themselves with the names of people they knew in their social circle or their friends from daycare and relatives (parents, siblings, cousins), as we can see in two more excerpts:

I'm sitting at a rectangular table writing in my notebook. Leandro approaches me and asks: Research teacher Lu, what are you writing?
 I ask: Do you want me to read it?
 Leandro: Yes!
 I read him a piece of writing about a circle game.
 I took the opportunity and asked: Oh, I need to ask you a question. In my research I can't put your real name, it has to be a make-believe name. Would you like to choose another name for yourself?
 Leandro thinks about it and says: Leandro!
 I say: Okay, you'll be Leandro.
 The teacher, overhearing the conversation, asked: What was the name Leandro chose?
 I answer: Leandro!
 The teacher smiled and said: That's his brother's name. (Field note – 12.02.2022)

Bearing in mind that the choice of names, rather than random, carries a social meaning and refers to children's imagination, we can say that by participating in the choice of their names, children leave marks of themselves by choosing names that mean affection in their life experiences and social relationships. Thus, the methodological strategy of asking children to choose their names for research

enables them to participate in the process and allowed the researcher to know some of the children's singularities better, to know their affections, their friends from the daycare center, and relatives (parents, siblings, cousins), who are significant and special to them. It is also worth asking what other methodological strategies could we use to get closer to the social worlds of the children we research? How to access "children's communication cultures" (Buss-Simão & Lessa, 2023) and the meanings and ways in which children engage with and respond to research?

It is also worth clarifying that the process of choosing names by appointments or inquiries to the entire collective did not happen mechanically. In the fluidity of observation meetings, the researcher introduced the request, sometimes individually, but often arousing the attention of other children, even with the consultation process being coordinated by some of them. Participating in the choice of names enabled a better acquaintance with the children, being essential to recognize their social skills. As mentioned, for children to be able to experience participation, adults must create conditions and ensure the time and space for effective participation during research. Qvortrup (2015), discussing the dialectic between the protection and participation of children in the social worlds, suggests, based on research data, that the more we trust children, the more their responsibility and commitment increases. The possibility of choosing names for research shows this responsibility and commitment to choose their names and those of their peers.

The excerpts above recurrently contains questions from the children: "what are you doing?," "what are you writing?," "why are you writing?," or even, "how do you manage to write all this?," i.e., the research process and researcher's actions generated immense curiosity. Thus, as time went by, we began not only to respond, but also to read to them what was written and show them photos and footage, enabling their feedback and interpretation. To the extent that records were shared with the children, to solve their doubts and make them aware of the investigation about how their participation affects the research, we observe that they build their own knowledge about the research. Thus, we agree with Coutinho's (2019, p. 64) statement that the "[...] the ethical commitment assumed by the researcher with the participant, creating appropriate forms of communication to dialogue about what affects their participation in the study, assumes a special importance when it comes to the participation of children." The process of reading the excerpts *for* and *with* the children throughout the investigation is one of the possible ways of creating spaces for action and intervention to ensure the participation of children in the research, as suggested by Rocha (2008, p. 50):

[...] to include as part of the investigation process the moment of telling the children what we interpret about what they said, allowing some level of re-elaboration, contestation, revision, and criticism of our interpretations. This would, in fact, more consistently include children's participation.

Rocha's (2008) argument that we should include, as part of the investigation process, telling children what we interpret about what they said agrees with the recommendation by Pereira et al. (2018, p. 772) that adults must ensure "[...] the recognition of their [children] authorship and an active participation with the direct

involvement of the children in decision-making, in the production of their narratives, and an ethical position in relation to the subjects of the research and of daily action.” This process of daily guarantees (also in research) as an exercise of recognition exercised in practice results in a way of establishing a social world that recognizes childhood as a permanent social category of the social structure and that increasingly assures and legitimizes the participation of children in their spaces and times from the moment they are born.

| Final considerations

In conclusion, even if the methodological reflections regarding the process of listening, involvement, and participation of children in research go beyond this text, we consider that the shared research experiences can contribute to *Social Studies of Childhood* and reverse the process of “invisibilization” of children in scientific research and create, based on our pact as researchers committed to childhood, action and intervention spaces to ensure the participation of children in research.

This process of listening, involvement, and participation of children (especially regarding the choice of their names, authorization of records, and use of their image), includes Christensen’s (2004) decisive gain of awareness of the importance of effectively “looking and listening” to children throughout their research. As daily guarantees of listening also result in a way of establishing a social world that increasingly recognize and legitimize childhood, children, and their modes of participation.

The commitment to ensure children’s participation in research gains more urgency since this way of doing research also creates a narrative of childhood that theorizes childhood and children. Theorizing childhood and children produces ways in which childhood and children “should” live. Thus, as per Pereira et al. (2018), childhood theorizing should avoid only thematizing aspects such as protection, participation, guardianship, and authorship or deeming them as categories of analysis in research as theorizing makes invisible or evince a narrative of childhood, i.e., it creates a childhood experience and a concrete social reality for children that may include and evince their participation or, on the contrary, ratify their socially invisible place.

This commitment of the *Social Studies of Childhood* to contribute to reversing the process of “invisibilization” of children in scientific research returns to the initial question: does the participation of children in research due to the recognition of children as subjects of rights lead to a different knowledge of children? Do our investigations perform this recognition? What knowledge does the ethics of recognition produce? To recognize is to know in another way, another form of relating to the world, the other, and oneself, i.e., it is necessary to ask how ethics, which precedes knowledge, enables us to arrive at another knowledge about children and childhood that also constitutes other actions, practices, discourses, and narratives about childhood.

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About the authors

Márcia Buss-Simão

Federal University of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, Brazil

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6076-0640>

Doctoral degree in Education at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (2012). Tenure Professor at the Education Center of the Federal University of Santa Catarina. Head of the Research Group in Early Childhood Education. Email: marcia.buss.simao@gmail.com

Lucilene Moraes Agostinho

Municipal Teaching Department of Florianópolis, Florianópolis, Brazil

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6921-4572>

Master's degree in Education at the Education Graduation Program at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (2023). Tenure teacher of primary education at the Municipal School Network of Florianópolis. She is an integrant of the Research Group in Early Childhood Education. Email: morais.lucilene@gmail.com

Author's contribution: the authors contributed equally to the manuscript elaboration.

Resumo

O artigo traz reflexões metodológicas quanto ao processo de escuta e envolvimento das crianças ao longo do processo de pesquisa. As análises sustentam-se em dados recolhidos em uma instituição de educação infantil, por meio de registros escritos, fotográficos e fílmicos de um grupo composto de 25 crianças de 5 e 6 anos. Como base teórica de análise aciona-se os conhecimentos e produções dos *Estudos Sociais da Infância*. Os achados da pesquisa indicam a participação das crianças na escolha de seus nomes e autorização de registros e uso de filmagens como contribuições para a necessidade de reverter o processo de “invisibilização” das crianças na pesquisa científica e seus modos de participação.

Palavras-chave: Ética na pesquisa. Pesquisa com crianças. Participação. Educação Infantil.

Resumen

El artículo trae reflexiones metodológicas sobre el proceso de escuchar e involucrar a los niños a lo largo del proceso de investigación. Los análisis se basan en datos recopilados en una institución de educación infantil, a través de registros escritos, fotográficos y fílmicos de un grupo integrado por 25 niños de 5 y 6 años. Como base teórica para el análisis se utilizan conocimientos y producciones de los Estudios Sociales de la Infancia. Los resultados de la investigación indican la participación de los niños en la elección de sus nombres y la autorización de registros y uso de imágenes como contribuciones a la necesidad de revertir el proceso de “invisibilización” de los niños en la investigación científica y sus modos de participación.

Palabras clave: Ética en la investigación. Investigación con niños. Participación. Educación Infantil.

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