

What can research on children learn from crosscultural qualitative research?

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ECREA preconference: Researching children, youth and media - lessons from the field





#### Overview

The project: Net Children Go Mobile

Smartphones and tablets

 Similar methodology and analytical approach to EU Kids Online

## Participating countries

- Denmark
- Italy
- Romania
- UK
- Ireland (self-funding)
- Belgium (self-funding)
- Portugal (self-funding)
- Germany (self-funding, only qualitative part)
- Spain (self-funding)



## Qualitative report

 Haddon, L. and Vincent, J. (2014) European children's and their carers' understanding of use, risks and safety issues relating to convergent mobile media

#### Goal

- Different ways in which this qualitative research enhances our understanding children and smartphones
- Examples of how does it do so
- Areas of discussion to which this contributes
- Different ways of using qualitative crosscultural comparisons, the different roles this material can play

## Acquisition and use

#### Children make/influence decisions about:

- buying smartphones
- what to download
- what apps to use
- when and for how long to use them
- where to use them

# Constraints on acquisition and use

 The qualitative research shows the <u>circumstances</u> in which they make decisions, the pressures, the <u>constraints</u>

 Children are constrained more than adult users (e.g. pressures from adults and teachers)

Various financial, time and space constraints

# Bases for making decisions

- What influenced parents decisions to buy/allow smartphones/tablets for children at that point in time (and not earlier)?
- What was the <u>content</u> of the negotiations?
- Examples: children's perceived maturity, rites of passage, rewards, automatic handme-downs

# Finding a place in an ecology of devices

- The <u>decision-making process</u> about when to use a smartphone, tablet, laptop, PC, console or other device
- New devices do not automatically replace older ones (remediation)
- We see how the ecology is re-arranged

What the 'post-PC' world really looks like

# Change over time

The different ways in which children's use evolves over time

- Not just a case of more of everything
- At the individual level some activities may be reduced (e.g. SNS)

## Children's concerns and frustrations

 Children's <u>concerns and frustrations</u> may sometimes be similar to their parents, but not simply repeating them!

- e.g. frustrations about disruptive/ unnecessary communications
- e.g. concerns about their own use taking time away from other things

## Children's concerns and frustrations

 The interviews show how negative some things are perceived to be <u>relative to</u> <u>perceptions of 'standard' risks</u>

- What do they talk about first?
- What do they talk about most?
- What do they get agitated about?
- What do they complain about?

## Children's concerns and frustrations

## Examples:

 Commercial sources trying to trick/cheat them, hidden costs

 Trying to repair social relations when a peer has pretended to be them online

 Complaints about peers being on their smartphones when co-present

## Subtle enhancements of risks

## Risk experiences and worries:

- Migration of harassment and meeting strangers to WhatsApp
- Ease of 'borrowing' phones and identify theft
- More private material on smartphones that peers might see
- Money can be taken from the device if an account has been set up

# Complexities of school rules

 Experience: the enforcement of school rules varies – e.g. concessions

Children's ambiguous <u>perception</u> of school rules

 Teach <u>reactions</u> - especially confiscating smartphones – can be problematic

# How did qualitative contribute?

Variety of constraints and why they exist

Content of negotiations in different households

Decision-making behind choices

Understanding individual change over time

## How did qualitative contribute?

 Insights into children's concerns and frustrations

New details of how smartphones effect risk

Perceptions of school rules and examples of issues

#### To what areas did it contribute?

Wary of industry rhetoric – e.g. 'always at hand'

Post PC era

Questioning always more and more use

#### To what areas did it contribute?

 How other concerns balance against 'standard risks'

Subtle shifts in risk experience

Complexities of school regulation

## Cross cultural qualitative: Pooling data

 Showing the same point is being expressed across countries (concern, perception, experience, issue)

 Using material from different countries to show the variations on a theme, how a similar point occurs in slightly different guises (e.g. hidden costs, identity theft)

#### Clues and illustrations

- Prevalence of phenomena in the qualitative in different countries - <u>clues</u> for future quantitative research (or for re-checking quantitative)
- E.g. fears about smartphones and plagiarism

 <u>Illustrative</u> of quantitative patterns vignettes, stereotypical households from different countries

## Reflecting country specificities

- History/historical claims about country differences (e.g. Romanian parents experience of parental mediation of TV when they when children) – can we see implications in the data?
- UK history of safety awareness arising –
  wary of showing smartphones in certain
  public spaces (prevalence makes sense
  given background knowledge)

# Predicting through understanding cultural variation

 Understanding motivations relate to country specificities in order to predict statistics

 Example: Buying smartphones when children are mature enough – particular markers of maturity specific to some countries (Catholic Holy Communion, Confirmation)

#### Conclusions

- There are various ways in which the qualitative could be used to understand the smartphone and tablet experience
- These could contribute to a variety of arguments
- Most of this involved pooling data
- These was a reluctance to explore differences (e.g. small samples)
- The data was used in a few ways to do this