Datafied childhoods in every day’s life

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Datafied Childhoods examines the multiple ways in which datafication, algorithms, and artificial intelligence transform the contexts for children: at home, school, and in peer and parent-child relationships. The COVID-19 pandemic provides an important moment for reimagining how data are repurposed for the social good and best interests of children.

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In contemporary society, media (technologies) have become ubiquitous (everywhere), invasive (cannot be fully ignored or avoided), and invisible (merged with all aspects of life).

The media are intertwined in our everyday experiences to the point they cannot be distinguished from the latter - we live our lives in the media, rather than only with the media i.e. media are to us, as water is to fish (Deuze, 2012: 10)
Datafied society

- "Datafication can be defined as the **massive and systematic monitoring, recording, and transformation of social actors’ everyday practices online and offline**—including aspects of the world not previously datafied and measured, such as friendship ties and emotions—“into online quantified data, thus allowing for real-time tracking and predictive analysis” (van Dijck, 2014: 198).

- The mediatization and datafication of many everyday life practices now constitute for many a taken-for-granted experience and a **precondition for social action and interaction**.

- Watching and being watched has become “a way of life” (Lyon, 2018), consisting not only of a set of socially legitimized practices of surveillance and self-surveillance, but also of imaginaries of transparency and openness (Isin & Ruppert, 2015; van Dijck, 2014) that render **data sharing desirable and normative**.

- “Human life, and particularly human social life, is increasingly being constructed so that it generates data from which **profit** can be extracted” (Couldry & Mejias, 2019: 7)
Willson (2018: 1): “the world which the contemporary child is conceived and raised is one that is increasingly monitored, analyzed and manipulated through technological processes”.

“We are all now datafied – but children growing up today are among the first to be datafied from birth.” (Children’s Commissioner, 2018: 11).

Growing surveillance and commodification of the child through technologies (Siibak, 2019; Leaver, 2017; Holloway & Green, 2016)

Serious concerns about children’s rights and privacy (e.g. Livingstone & Third, 2017; Lupton & Williamson, 2017)
Caring dataveillance and parents-to-be

These Companies Know When You're Pregnant—And They're Not Keeping It Secret

Gizmodo identified 32 brokers seeing data on 2.9 billion profiles of U.S. residents pegged as "actively pregnant" or "shopping for maternity products."
Products of the babytech industry are meant to sell the promise of becoming a better and more relaxed parent.

Perfect example of the neoliberal gendered responsibilization discourse (Holloway, Mascheroni & Inglis, 2020).

Such “device-ification of mothering” (Johnson, 2014: 346) does not consider the fact that these technologies instrumentalize and quantify the baby’s and mother’s body according to a very particular set of measurements.
The Best Apps for Monitoring Your Teen Driver

INVISABLET

Track what you Love
Data-saturated homes

- The IoTs presently entering our homes are varied, including
  - **smart home appliances** (e.g. smart fridges, smart washing machines, robot vacuum cleaners);
  - **security sensors and surveillance cameras** (e.g. Amazon Ring Doorbell and Google Nest cameras and sensors);
  - **energy, lighting, and temperature-sensing technologies** (e.g. smart thermostats and switches);
  - **entertainment technologies** (smart TVs, smart sound systems, Internet of Toys, etc.);
  - **voice assistants embedded in so-called “home hubs”** (Amazon Echo, Google Home, Apple HomePod)

These sensing networks of connected things collect, create, and distribute an increasing variety of “**home life data**” (Barassi, 2020), including:

- **“household data”** relative to the family’s practices and routines of consumption and families’ interactions with media and the IoTs;
- **“family data”**, ranging from socio-demographics to political orientation, religion, health data, etc.;
- **“biometric data”**, mostly voice, but also images and vital parameters
- **“situational data”**, consisting both of environmental (number of rooms, social and individual uses of each room) and relational data i.e. any changes in family composition, potential conflicts between family members, etc.
Datafication as a practice of the self
Dataveillance in schools
Conclusion

Datafication not only redefines the very boundaries of social knowledge (Couldry & Hepp, 2017)—what we are able to know—but, more significantly, what is worth knowing about our social world is what can be abstracted into and represented through data.

Algorithmic classifications regulate and govern an individual’s position in society by shaping the directions and futures that become available to them, thus potentially producing new forms of digital and social inequality.

Algorithmic-automated governance may result in allocative harms, exacerbating pre-existing social inequalities and vulnerabilities, as well as representational harms that affect how we are represented, how we perceive the world, and ultimately, how we act within it.
By rendering children’s bodies, qualities and behaviours into digital data, the young are turned into data subjects who are not only positioned within partial and reductionist data templates with the possibility that their complexities, potentialities and opportunities may be circumscribed; but also represented and spoken for in ways they cannot understand or control (Mascheroni & Siibak, 2021: 182).

“Such increasingly prevalent dataveillance of the young – happening at home, in schools, workplaces and peer networks - involves more than a threat to young people’s privacy: what is at stake is the future of human agency—and ultimately, of society and culture—in the context of the material practices and infrastructures of automation and algorithmic governance“ (Mascheroni & Siibak 2021: 169).
Children are usually conceived of as digital pioneers, yet the internet “has been largely conceived, implicitly or explicitly, as an adult resource in terms of provision, regulation and ideology” (Livingstone & Third, 2017: 658).

Children have the right to have their views heard in matters that affect them (CRC, 1989, Article 12), however, presently the young generation is largely still unaware of how data about them is generated and how such dataveillance and datafication can directly affect their lives.

Children’s panels participating in recent policy processes have voiced their need for the digital environment to “support, promote and protect their safe and equitable engagement” (General comment no. 25), and emphasized their concerns related to the use of their data (Our Rights in the Digital World, 2021).
Thank you!

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