Children as Datafied Citizens

Veronica Barassi, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of St Gallen (SHSS-HSG)
child | data | citizen

How Tech Companies Are Profiling Us from before Birth

Veronica Barassi
Child Data Citizen Project (2016 - 2019)

• The project wanted to investigate how different parents made sense of the experience.
• Therefore, I worked with families in London and Los Angeles, with children between 0 and 13 years of age, whose personal information online is ruled by the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (1998).
• I carried out 50 semi-structured interviews and 8 months of digital ethnography of 8 families ‘sharenting practices’ on their social media accounts.
• Three years auto-ethnographic research on the datafication of my children
• ‘Platform analysis’ of 4 social media platforms, 10 health-tracking apps (baby apps and pregnancy apps), 4 home hubs, and 4 educational platforms.
• The analysis consisted in the study of the promotional cultures, business models and data policies of the different platforms.
Datafied Children?

- Inevitability and Inequality of Datafication
- The rise of *coerced digital participation* and the inequality of datafication (Barassi, 2019)
- Children as the very first generation of citizens datafied from before birth (Barassi, 2017, 2018, 202)
The Profiling of Children

- Data Brokers – e.g. Russell et al, 2019 on education data brokers
- AI Technologies increasingly used to profile children in different contexts (health, education etc.)
- Big Tech and the creation of unique ID Profiles
Data Traces in family life are messy, complex, and disconnected from intentions and behaviors.

Research Diary
Project News, Reflections and Findings

- Al Errors and the Human Body
  In the last six months, multiple errors have been
- The Politics of AI Ethics
  AI ethics is a much-used buzzword in the
THANK YOU

veronica.barassi@unisg.ch
@veronicabarlassi