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MOTHERS FROM EXCLUDED PLACES, HEROINES OF SYSTEMIC FISSURES

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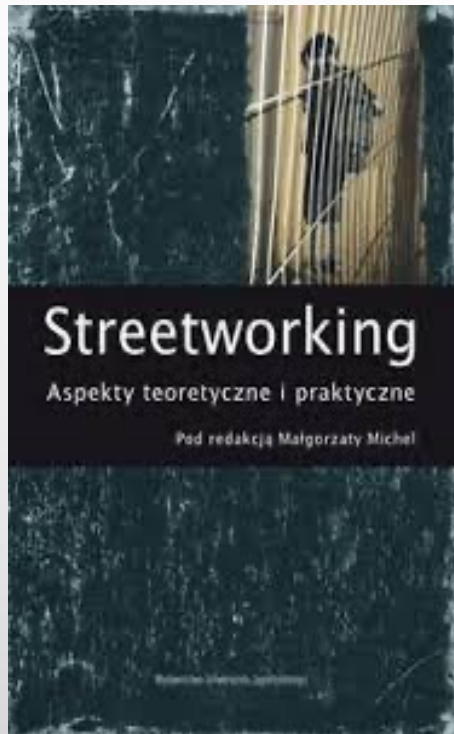


INTRODUCTION



- ❖ My name is **Małgorzata Michel**, i work at the institute of education at Jagiellonian University in Cracow (Poland) and I'm an expert in the office of the Ombudsperson for Children in Poland;
- ❖ My research interests include: street children's activities, child and youth crime, vulnerable groups-especially *invisible children*;
- ❖ I carry out research in the qualitative paradigm, ethnography, action (activism) research, urban action research in the context of *urban studies* and *childhood studies*.

INTRODUCTION



MOTTO..



☺R. PARK (CHICAGO SCHOOL'S RESEARCHER):
**IF YOU WANT TO EXPLORE THE CITY YOU
FIRST HAVE TO GET DIRTY WITH IT (GO TO THE FIELD-
STREET)**

STREETWORKING AND STREET EDUCATION IN POLAND- RESEARCH REPORT “S.O.S. SUPPORT FOR STREETWORKING NGO’S”

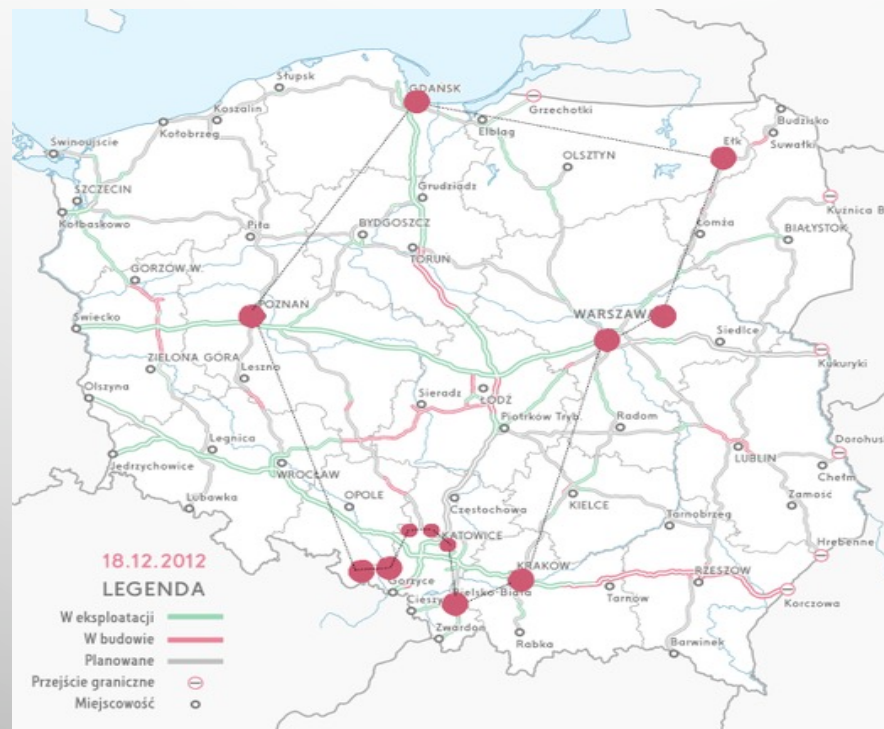


MOTIVATION TO START AND GOALS A NEW RESEARCH PROJECT

- ❖ I wanted to study the *street children* phenomena in Poland;
- ❖ *I wanted to listen to the voice of children - the “hole of unhearing”*- because literature, education and politics are dominated by neoliberal discourse on middle-class children, e.g., in the context of the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** adult narratives-through language reinforce the invisibility of children by keeping them on the street (“*children of pathology*”, “*pathus mothers*”);
- ❖ I wanted to reconstruct the knowledge of the “street” and the world of the child on the street;
- ❖ Together with street educators and streetworkers, construct directives for street work methodologies, special about education.

“CYCLING ETHNOGRAPHY”

❖ Two years ago I set out across Poland by bicycle, I wanted to reach all the NGO's working with street children, special streetworkers and street educators.



METHOLOGICAL APPROACH

- ❖ I practised radical, deep ethnography: field research in depth, for example, I slept in facilities where street children come (aid stations, help point, etc.);
- ❖ A month I was away from home and spent time with streetworkers and street educators in places where street children hang out (streets, backyards, emptys, poverty urban areas).



METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

❖ The main objective of the research was to answer the question:

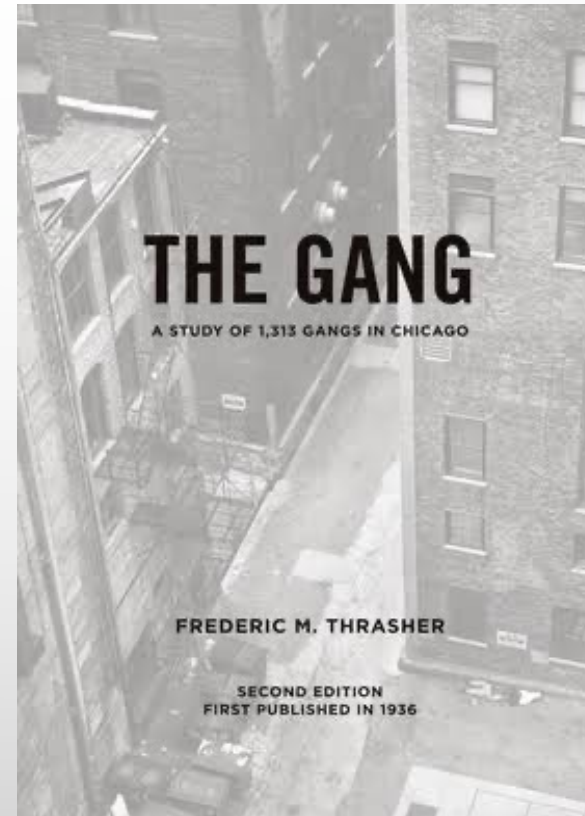
What is the activity of street children (invisible children) in local communities, peer groups (including risky and criminal behavior) and education in Poland?



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK-CATEGORIES

- ❖ ***The street***- is not a strand of asphalt poured between buildings, but a space that produces a certain kind of culture and creates living conditions for children, who recognize the street as a place that provides opportunities to meet their needs. at the same time, the “heroine” of my research (M. Mendel- urban and space pedagogy)- *Urban Studies category*;
- ❖ ***Street Children***- children under the age of 18 who *get most of their needs met on the street* because *they don't have the conditions to do so at home*. They are *victims of domestic violence, crim groups, poverty and violations of children's rights (protection, provison, partycypation)*. *they often don't go to school and work -illegally on the street* (international definitions- Unicef, EU comission);
- ❖ ***Invisibility (invisible environment)***- the central category around which i locate scientific reflection and at the same time establish it as the subject of my research (A. Harlbutt, H. Radlinska, L Witkowski, L. Gordon);
- ❖ ***Invisible children***- (invisible to the social system and education system, their needs are also invisible).. but after all, EVERY CHILD HAS A MOTHER....

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE CULTURE OF FISSURES AND THE PEDAGOGY OF COMMON PLACE



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE THE CONCEPT OF **SYSTEMIC FISSURES**

- ❖ **The concept of fissure** -fissure is belonging to the space lying between one thing and another (F.M.Trasher- “the gangs”);
- ❖ There are cracks and scratches in the structure of social organizations and in the system. these crack lands are filled, for example, with the activity of youth gangs but also with other people living and carrying out their practices in the “**in-between**” spaces, in the cracks;
- ❖ **Fissures in the system-cultural and moral borderlands** that create a “**culture of fissures**” (“**street culture**”-mainly affects children and adolescents).

RESEARCH PROCES AND FIRST CONCLUSIONS...

- ❖ One of the conclusions from observations and interviews with streetworkers was that street children have great difficulty going to school regularly and if they do go to school-they have a lot of troubles;
- ❖ These problems are related to: **aggressive and criminal behaviors, to be outside the education system, adjustment, educational difficulties and problems with the law.** At the same time, **contact between teachers and child's mothers is greatly impaired and communication is disrupted.** However, **mothers' behavior toward their children outside of school is full of care and commitment despite difficult living conditions.**

WHAT DO THESE MOTHERS HAVE IN COMMON?

- ❖ Living in a exclusion urban spaces, reproduction of activity practices on the street, inheritance of lifestyles and living in a culture of fissures;
- ❖ Stigmatization by the outside world, including those representing the system, including education;
- ❖ Devastating, exclusionary and de-legitimizing language of the mainstream and representatives of the system, e.g.: “These mothers are “pathology” with them there is nothing to talk, it's better with their probation officer”, “from their children there will be nothing”;

WHAT DO THESE MOTHERS HAVE IN COMMON?

- ❖ Entanglement in domestic violence and other types of violence, moral and material poverty, low standard of living, upbringing, education, culture;
- ❖ Invisibility-invisible mothers analogous to their invisible children;
- ❖ Vulnerable group, doubly (3,4 ?) excluded (single mother - resident of excluded places);
- ❖ Do not trust teachers as representatives of the education system;
- ❖ They are ashamed of their position in life;
- ❖ They feel inferior.

• WHAT DO THESE MOTHERS HAVE IN COMMON?

❖ However, they have **resources**:

- *Motivation to change* (working with street educators and streetworkers)
- **Concern or desire to care for the child**

!!!My thesis is:

- Resources in empowerment contex can be the basis of work with mothers both in the street and at school.

PROPOSAL-POSTULATE

- ❖ I asked myself: What is common in communication between teachers and parents? What can be the chief value?
- My answer is: **CHILD' S WELFARE**

The thesis is based on the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** and the argument can convince mothers and teachers to set in motion processes of communication and inclusion.

CHILD'S WELFARE



- ❖ The primary interest of the child;
- ❖ In law, ethics and pedagogy, a set of interests, values and standards involving the holistic and harmonious development of the child in all areas: physical, emotional, social and cognitive;
- ❖ The well-being of the child is often associated with certain rights of the child-the convention on the rights of the child-and is to be implemented by parents and public institutions (M. Arczewska).

WHEN AND WHERE IS A CHILD'S WELFARE AT RISK? (FROM RESEARCH)

❖(INVISIBLE) CHILD WELFARE IS VERY OFTEN AT RISK IN EDUCATIONAL SPACES:

- Degrading and labeling language directed at parents, mainly mothers;
- Labeling and segregation of children from excluded areas at school, exclusion tactics, including white gloves (M. Michel, A. Gulczynska);
- Worse, unequal treatment of mothers from excluded areas.
- Stereotyping of parental roles, behaviors and lifestyles of mothers from excluded areas;

WHEN AND WHERE IS A CHILD'S WELFARE AT RISK? (FROM RESEARCH)

- Labeling of mothers whose husbands/partners are in penitentiary isolation;
- Blaming mothers for the living situation (system) of children;
- Lack of kindness, support, assistance in formal issues concerning the child;
- Resignation messages (e.g., “it's not worth it because nothing will come of it anyway”);
- Violence in communication, prescriptive style, objectification.



QUESTIONS DURING THE RESEARCH PROCESS..

- ❖ What is the role of mothers from vulnerable groups and the risk system in school inclusion?
 - ❖ What do teachers and mothers need in order for children to go to school regularly and not experience exclusion and other difficulties?
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WHAT DO MOTHERS AND TEACHERS NEED?

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Support 😊
- ❖ Confidence that human relationships have power and can be positive;
- ❖ Professional support: social skills training and interpersonal communication training;
- ❖ Teachers need knowledge about the specifics of the lives of children from excluded places in family and community contexts;
- ❖ Safe learning spaces to establish relationships, build trust;
- ❖ Sense of security;
- ❖ Recognition of the common-principal value of the **WELFARE OF THE CHILD**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION AND CARE 😊



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