

Chapter 14

Art and Action: What Participatory Action Research With Adult Survivors Must Address

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Abstract

Through research on child sexual abuse (CSA) and adult survivors, knowledge is gained. This knowledge might support decisions – whether political, professional or otherwise – that affect the lives of children who are victims of CSA and adult survivors. Additionally, this knowledge influences what the public knows about CSA and adult survivors and as a consequence, how child victims of CSA and adult survivors are treated in everyday life. Given the huge impact research can have on survivors’ lives, this chapter raises the question of what aspects of CSA and survivorship are relevant for survivors from survivors’ perspective and whether these aspects can be addressed by Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a research paradigm. To identify relevant aspects, survivors’ artwork is analysed because art is a way to contribute to public discourses with very little regulation. For analysis, the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse is used. In this chapter, we introduce basic theories of knowledge from a constructivist perspective in a short background section and explain the aim and method of analysis. Afterwards, we present some key aspects of survivors’ art on CSA and survivorship: The invasiveness of CSA, speech, the symbolic violence behind physical abuse and issues of injustice and responsibility are discussed. Additionally, the discursive relation between artists and audience is of interest to finally answer whether – and, if so, why – PAR is an appropriate research paradigm to address these aspects.

Participatory Research on Child Maltreatment with Children and Adult Survivors, 229–245



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Introduction

Through research on child sexual abuse (CSA) and adult survivors, knowledge is gained. This knowledge might support decisions – whether political, professional or otherwise – that affect the lives of children who are victims of CSA and adult survivors. Additionally, this knowledge influences what the public knows about CSA and adult survivors and as a consequence, how child victims of CSA and adult survivors are treated in everyday life. Given the huge impact research can have on survivors' lives, this chapter raises the question of what aspects of CSA and survivorship are relevant for survivors from survivors' perspective and whether these aspects can be addressed by Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a research paradigm. To identify relevant aspects, survivors' artwork is analysed because art is a way to contribute to public discourses with very little regulation.

Theoretical Background: What Is Knowledge and Why to Look at Art

From a constructivist perspective, all social life and perceptions of (social) reality is based on and structured by shared knowledge – e.g. roles and social norms – and the division between everyday knowledge and special knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 2013). Special knowledge is not available to everybody. Instead, it is developed, evolved and provided by specialists, who have the appropriate legitimation (e.g. official plumber's training to fix bathroom installations or an academic degree to give a methods lecture). Specialists of one area have to prove to laypersons (anyone who is not the same type of specialist) that their specific area contains enough abstract knowledge and that it is important enough to require specialists. By dividing knowledge into special and everyday knowledge, through (de)legitimation and reproduction of knowledge, social actors (e.g. people or organisations) negotiate constantly about which knowledge is broadly accepted as 'reality' and who knows this area best (Berger & Luckmann, 2013). If this negotiation includes complexes of statements on the same or adjacent subjects and takes place with formalised (and formalising) claims to validity, it is a discourse (Keller, 2011).

Knowledge and its relevance or legitimacy is not only gathered, reproduced or negotiated on a verbal level. As Bourdieu (1998) has shown using gender as an example, knowledge about social norms and practices is not always verbalised or able to be verbalised: As it is incorporated, it affects people on a physical level of existence. Incorporated knowledge as part of a person's habitus (a system of categories of perceptions, thoughts, actions and appreciations; Bourdieu, 1979) is usually based in social norms and the person's role. Furthermore, it reflects the person's position in the web and intersections of social dimensions of power

(e.g. if caring for guests in private spaces is only required from women, they may do so without thinking about it). The less this broadly shared and incorporated knowledge is verbalised, the more the physical practices associated with it are considered to be ‘natural’ on a biologic level (e.g. the motivation to care for guests is considered as linked to female sex over time). Thus, as social norms are inscribed in a person’s physical existence and practices and become invisible as something social, the dynamics of power, oppression and violence linked to those norms become invisible. At the same time, these dynamics – labelled symbolic violence by Bourdieu – are reproduced each time social actors refer (automatically) to them in everyday performances and decisions, and they continue to shape the common idea of reality. Altogether, symbolic violence is a type of violence that is woven into everyday life’s structure, common performances, actions and spaces, thus dividing dominating and dominated groups often in a subtle way (though it does not exclude physical domination; Bourdieu, 1998).

From a constructivist position, by sharing and negotiating knowledge, people negotiate what is real and which aspects of reality are important. Additionally, there is nonverbalised, incorporated knowledge that is easily naturalised and stabilises as one part of symbolic violence the dominant social position of one social group. As knowledge – and the shape of social reality – is negotiated, conflicts between different positions arise. In that case, role (specialist or layperson), social power and symbolic violence will determine whose contribution to the specific discourse is taken more seriously. More specifically, epistemic injustice reflects whether someone can engage in shaping our reality. Epistemic injustice includes the marginalisation of people (e.g. women) as knowers and the marginalisation of knowledge as irrelevant, not abstract enough, or not presented in an appropriate style (Fricker, 2007).

In conventional research, participants usually neither decide what portion of their experiential knowledge about themselves or their perspectives is valued as important enough to be transferred into propositional (‘officially accepted’) knowing, nor participate in this transfer, have access to the full results or benefit directly from the process of knowledge transfer (Coleman, 2015). Epistemic injustice explains why the knowledge of marginalised groups, who are typically objects of research, is taken less seriously regarding the shared definition of reality than the knowledge of academics (who are official specialists in generating knowledge). Epistemic injustice leads to the loss of knowledge and is dehumanising and thus, ethically wrong (Fricker, 2007).

PAR tries to solve this injustice in the context of research. PAR can be done in all scientific disciplines that include (refer to or rely on) human action (in relation to other people or the environment) and includes a broad range of methods, outcomes and possible participants. However, there are clear definitions and well-established characteristics of PAR: It is research that ‘is emergent and developmental. It concerns practical issues and human flourishing. Its modality is primarily participative and democratic, working with participants and towards knowledge in action’ (Bradbury, 2015, p. 7). PAR is subject to a strong ethical framework as formulated, for example, in the [International Collaboration for Participatory Health Research \(2013\)](#) guidelines. Given this, PAR is not a

research method; instead, it is a research paradigm. PAR is always research with rather than on participants.

In discourses, participants with higher social capital can control single discourse patterns and the whole discourse (Bourdieu, 1998; Keller, 2011). Regarding adult survivors of sexual abuse, the aspect of epistemic injustice is especially critical in context of the long social and legal history to degrade survivors' credibility and frame disclosures as hysteric, for example, in academic milieus (Bourdieu, 1998; Sanyal, 2016). Following these characteristics of PAR, PAR with adult survivors of CSA should reflect, abstract and evolve knowledge into action that is important to adult survivors (and not only to academic researchers). Thus, it is crucial to ask which aspects of CSA and survivorship are marked as relevant from survivors' perspectives. Afterwards, it can be discussed whether PAR could be an appropriate research paradigm to address these aspects.

Method

To analyse what knowledge and which aspects in the broad discourse on CSA and adult survivors are marked as relevant from survivors' perspectives, an analysis following the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD) was performed (Keller, 2011). Discourses are composed of the different elements they convey, such as structures of meaning, patterns of interpretation or systems of categories. In a discourse, certain relations between the individual elements are established, transported and changed in the discourse process (Keller, 2011). Discursive patterns and especially the underlying structures of meaning can provide rich information on the knowledge negotiated in the discourse. Focusing on epistemic injustice, where not only knowledge but also the knower's social position are important to discuss, SKAD is of special usefulness: Among the various discourse-analytic approaches, SKAD belongs to the context- and content-including approaches (in opposition to narrative approaches focusing mainly on content; Telles Ribeiro, 2006). SKAD combines the classical hermeneutic sociology of knowledge with aspects of symbolic interactionism, thus enabling analysis of the discourse's content and the discursive practice (Keller, 2011).

As data material, the artwork of two professional artists who survived CSA was chosen for in-depth analysis. Using art as data to identify relevant discursive elements for a group to which the artists belong might be unconventional. However, in the case of CSA survivors as a group whose knowledge is marginalised, art is the domain least prestructured and interpreted by members of other, more privileged groups. Thus, the authors chose artwork because art typically involves no or minimal external requirements from nonsurvivors regarding and regulating its type and content. This enables results that are less influenced by external discursive conditions, as it would be the case, for example, with interviews or articles that have undergone external editing and have to meet media expectation. Nevertheless, artwork by professional artists is – as are research results – generated to be shown and seen, although usually as a contribution to a

public discourse and not a special one as among academic researchers (Keller, 2011). Thus, artists who perform as survivors and artists refer and contribute to collective knowledge, including that of survivors as a social group. The two artists were chosen because they are self-described survivors of CSA and provide open access to a large amount of their work as required to gain enough material. Both artists gave informed permission to use their art as examples and had the opportunity to read this chapter.

Results

Because a full SKAD analysis is extensive, the following subsections only highlight the main results relevant for the aim of this chapter. Altogether, the analysed art covered the areas of violence, mental health and social, political and legal failures and demands regarding responsibility and justice. The highlighted aspects presented after a brief overview of the artists include three discourse patterns, one aspect of narratives and one special aspect on survivor-artists' discursive practice.

Survivors' Art as Data: The Artists

As examples of survivors' art, two samples were chosen whose creators gave open access to full or parts of their art catalogues and statements about their work and who are survivors of CSA. Renate Bühn (2022) is an artist, activist and social worker. Nozibele Meindl (2022a) is an artist, activist and digital multimedia visual artist. Although both artists currently live in Germany, where Bühn grew up, Meindl grew up in South Africa during apartheid. Both artists engage in a survivors' council from Bremen for better implementation of the Istanbul Convention. Meindl describes herself as a 'social commentator, critiquing violence, loss, death and the strength of community in the face of disaster' (Meindl, 2022a, p. 1), inspired, among others, by psychoanalysis and Xhosa culture. Apart from raising awareness overall, through her work, Bühn is 'looking closely at hidden realities' (Koch, 2017), targeting the protection of perpetrators by individuals, organisations and society as well as bystanders' indifference.

Pattern 1: CSA as Invasive Violence

Through her work, Meindl acknowledges her childhood trauma and causes powerful awry and unhealed emotions (e.g. see 'Memento' in Fig. 14.1):

I live in a perpetual jumble of fear, anger, confusion, hopelessness, despair, depression, shame, guilt and helplessness. I experience severe anxiety and flashbacks, causing me to dissociate from my world. In an attempt to refute assumptions and myths, I am compelled to visually articulate and document my experiences of prolonged grief by unmasking the trauma that has imprisoned me for many years.

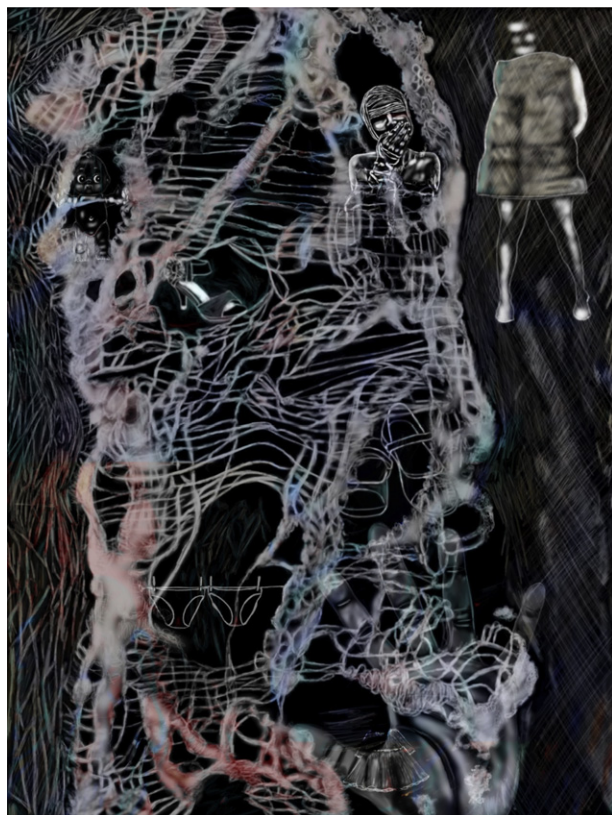


Fig. 14.1. Nozibele Meindl: Memento.

It is childhood sexual abuse.

... During my twenties, I experienced trauma which caused depression and insomnia. I suddenly recalled my childhood sexual violation (which took place in broad daylight) as a flashback.

(Meindl, 2022b, pp. 7, 11)

Meindl's oeuvre, titled *Workbook* is 'a collage that represents my fragmented self ... images to express the effects of trauma on the body and mind, most importantly my self' (Meindl, 2022c, Image 3). In *Workbook*, the viewer is compelled to discern various concepts from a collage of writings, followed by Meindl's statement: 'Notes: the self is the essence and core of who we are. This is formed during the early years of childhood' (Meindl, 2022c, Image 2).

Her elaborations concerning the function of her art and its relation to childhood trauma are inscribed in another collage of handwritten notes:

Psychological Trauma

Thoughts: The image is my own response to sexual traumatic memories – childhood sexual trauma. When I envision the weight of the traumas, I see it as a gigantic tumor that has invaded my body and has taken up residence in my head. It has tentacles that have hooked deep in my brain, all the way to my heart. The tumor is increasing, needs to be eliminated NOW!!

(Meindl, 2022c, Image 4)

This invasive component of sexual abuse and its long-lasting, sometimes fatal consequences are visual in Bühn's work very directly, too: Her light installation 'In Memoriam' (started in 1997) presents 10 (as of 2022, because the installation is not static and grows from time to time) light boxes with red glass screens showing the names, lifespan dates and causes of death of 10 people. Apart from one murder and one unspecific cause referring to the lack of help for persons fleeing ritual abuse, the boxes name causes of death as heart failure, drugs or medication. At the same time, the additional biographic information given to the audience unmarks that the underlying cause of death was instead sexual violence and 'the ignorance of their families and society in general' (Bühn, 2017).

In several examples of both artists' work, different aspects of the consequences of CSA are visible: First, CSA is not only invasive on a physical but also a psychological level (the 'tumour' Meindl describes in her work), and second, that this can reinvade people's physical health (as shown in 'In Memoriam'). Both artists' work demonstrates the artificiality of the division between physical and psychic levels. As a third aspect, both artists include the dimension of time (e.g. in recollecting on flashbacks, dates of birth and death – or rather, shortened lifetimes) as one dimension of a person's existence influenced by the experience of CSA. The last main component of the discursive pattern of CSA as invasive violence is obvious, for instance, in Meindl's description of the scene where the violence took place ('broad daylight') or several explanatory texts of 'In Memoriam'. It is the social dimension, where bystanders do or do not react, where people are ignored in their struggle to survive the violence and its consequences, and finally, where death leaves others to grief.

Pattern 2: Symbolic Violence

Children's struggle with ongoing abuse is shown, for example, in Bühn's (1999) 'Breakfast with Daddy', where two slices of breads with honey are prepared at an empty table as for breakfast (see Fig. 14.2). Only, the honey is covered with dead flies, making visible the daily struggle that children face through everyday contact with their abusers and who have to survive the contradictoriness of the sexualised violence and the perfect façade (Bühn, 2017).

The subtle symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1998) under the layers of obvious physical violence is another pattern that occurs frequently in both artists' work. One might state that CSA is everything but subtle. However, taking into account,



Fig. 14.2. Renate Buehn: Breakfast With Daddy.

for example, the power of adults over children and shared ideas of blaming the victim, downplaying other practices of adult violence against children or sexist stereotyping of children regarding their assigned gender, CSA is one social practice inlaid in age- and gender-based symbolic structures. For instance, one might imagine Bühn's 'Breakfast with Daddy' as the very situation in which a child has to conquer or dissociate from all disgust and eat their breakfast, regardless of whether their rapist is sitting in front of them, because traditional roles demand children to eat their breakfast at the time their parents have set.

Following Bourdieu (1998), one main aspect of symbolic violence is the opposition in which dominating and dominated persons live. Both refer to the same structure – where one is dominating the other. One crucial result is that both parties in the shared structure will usually not recognise the structure behind its outcomes once it is incorporated. Thus, both the dominant and dominated will reproduce the structure and re-establish their position within it (Bourdieu, 1998).

In this context, Meindl's (2022b) testimony sheds light concerning the incorporated structures of domination exerted towards her (through the complicity of the other, her mother):

I remember my mother, the epitome of a good submissive Christian matriarch, was prohibited from expressing any emotional response to her daughter's sexual assault. I recall her calm demeanour as she rushed my twin sister and I to the hospital, where our violation was confirmed. The look of devastation and grief on her face was unmistakable.

In our patriarchal society, any form of abuse is regarded as a private matter – concealed and ‘contained’ within the family. A girl child was expected to discourage attention from boys and men. The child is blamed, and the assault is seldom reported to the authorities. This silence endorses the belief that child abuse is justifiable, countering any investigation into the consequences (Riggs 2010).

The ‘incident’ was never discussed again. (p. 11)

The dominating party can define what is going on. This power of perpetrators who profit from dominant positions (e.g. being male in a patriarchy, an adult in opposition to a child) is shown in both artists’ work as linked to the dimensions of the pattern first presented – e.g. visible in the aspect of the physically hurt and examined child, who is held responsible for what has happened.

Narratives: Reclaiming Words

On the discursive level of content, speech, speechlessness, silencing and the perpetrators’ language appear frequently. This is especially the case when symbolic violence is addressed. The dominated can only speak (or keep silent) about their situation in the dominating one’s language. When Meindl refers to these structures described, she shows the extent to which this can grow when CSA is downplayed as an ‘incident’ or when children’s ability to speak out is taken, as in ‘I want to tell you a secret’ (Fig. 14.3), where the children’s mouths are wiped out.

As does Meindl, Bühn integrates the language of the dominant – the perpetrator – in her artwork without using it the way supposed by dominant perpetrators or accomplices. In the *Lavabo* series (2014; see Fig. 14.4), Bühn cites the sentence ‘Lavabo inter innocentes manus meas’ (‘I will wash my hands in innocence’) from the extraordinary version of the Roman rite performed by a priest during Mass. The sentence is formed by about 4,000 metal pins stuck into a lavabo towel, making visible the large number of victims of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church.

Every case of sexual assault and likewise every instance of someone turning a blind eye to the issue, of looking the other way, of denying, covering up or downplaying it, tears holes in the flesh of victims-survivors, tears holes in family life, the church and society.

(Bühn, 2017)

The language used by perpetrators of the Catholic Church as an organisation is not only uncovered as the dominants’ voice embedded into the structures of abuse but also destroys.

Both artists show how children are silenced, adults are unwilling to listen and the only language available to discuss CSA has been that of symbolic violence



Fig. 14.3. Nozibele Meindl: *I Want to Tell You a Secret*.

that protects the perpetrators. The narrative of speech(lessness) is used in direct (children without mouths), subtle (mother adopting silencing) or cynical (Catholic quotes) ways. On a nonnarrative, meta level, the artwork is a way to reclaim the opportunity to speak – as Bühn states: ‘art as a form of resistance, as a means of finding language’ (Koch, 2017).

Pattern 3: (In)justice and Responsibility

Injustice, justice and responsibility form another discursive pattern essential in both artists’ work. Although both patterns use the narrative described, making symbolic violence visible (as in Pattern 2) is one focus, and asking questions of (in) justice is another. Meindl’s work goes beyond mere description of symbolic



Fig. 14.4. Renate Buehn: *Lavabo*.

violence, adding an ethical component to the art – the children who ‘want to tell you a secret’ but are silenced and stare at someone, as well as the ‘internal witness’ (Meindl, 2022b) or the other children pictured. Wounds shown in Meindl’s work are not cared for; instead, tumorous tissue can grow untreated (Meindl, 2022b). As Meindl describes in her artwork, responsibility is shifted to victimised children, who have to deal with the sequelae of CSA alone.

Bühn, too, encourages her audience to empathise with the unjust situation of children who have to survive ongoing abuse, the social and legal situations survivors might face, and their anger and fights against injustice. For example, ‘In Memoriam’ describes – as partially detailed – how those remembered tried to protect themselves and others from their perpetrators and how the legal system acted nonsupportive and where social support was missing. The *Lavabo* series includes not only cynical quotes regarding the perpetrators but also the lack of responsibility the Roman Catholic Church as an organisation has shown until today. Other works address the few perpetrators convicted for CSA and the

public disinterest. Bühn demands ‘of this society, from a feminist standpoint, that it listen, open its eyes, and overcome its willful ignorance’ (Koch, 2017).

Discursive Practice: The Artist and the Audience

On the level of discursive practice (how the artists contribute to public discourses on CSA and survivorship), the relationship between the artist and the audience requires a closer look. The discursive elements discussed here affect the audience in other ways than, for example, a city major’s public speech at a newly opened shelter.

Regarding the three discursive patterns previously mentioned, one aspect is the emotion-inclusive way the artists describe CSA and its (invasive) consequences for an individual’s life and society. For instance, Meindl creates an inversion at the level of the viewer, such that the exposure to the artist’s internal pain provokes an abhorrent feeling as part of CSA sequelae, which leaves the viewer speechless. She explains that:

The purpose of the first video artwork is twofold: to document the transformative force of grief over time, where the victim is unaware of the subtle changes in personality and behaviour and further, is powerless against them. I draw the viewer’s attention to my silent pain and simultaneously critique their role as spectators, voyeurs, or passive witnesses.

(Meindl, 2022b, p. 17)

In other artwork, Meindl and Bühn seek to make their audience feel disgust, silent terror or anger. By this (and by the integrated or accompanying verbalisation), the artists give people without any experience of CSA the chance to empathise on more than only an intellectual level. By this, they turn the audience into witnesses of CSA (Emcke, 2013). Both continue with this mediation also outside the creation of art. Both Bühn and Meindl engage in, alongside the creation of artwork, (activist) education and empowerment of younger people for a more understanding, empathic and diversity-aware world (Blaxmag, 2022).

To transfer the experience of CSA and its consequences for children and adult survivors into artwork not only enables nonsurvivors to empathise but also empowers and enables other survivors to speak about their experiences because the artwork provides them with a language to adopt. Through their art, survivor-artists develop (readable, visible or audible) expressions for violence – including the symbolic violence in and underneath CSA.

This is crucial also on the societal level: The structures of symbolic violence (who dominates whom, and how) in a society are usually stable, but neither static nor unchangeable. Here, Bourdieu (1998) introduced the idea of symbolic transformation to change those structures. Before any changes on the level of social structures can occur, the transformation needs to take place at the level of the individual. As mentioned, the structures of symbolic violence are incorporated

and not recognised easily. That said, one needs to be aware of the role of domination in everyday life, in one's mindset and physical self-expression (Bourdieu, 1998). Regarding CSA and survivorship, survivors' art, such as Meindl's and Bühn's work, makes these structures visible to the audience.

Survivors-artists' actions and oeuvres aim to expand the sphere of empowerment by proposing that private family matters become public agenda, expressing socially disturbing raw emotional responses, and breaking social cycles of shame and blame. They demand their audience to pay attention to creepy oeuvres, which distribute responsibilities in communities by making room for the victim's or survivor's perspective. Thus, they act by speaking about the unheard conversations in communities and pushing the survivors' discourse forward into the public arena.

These acts of symbolic transformation can be taken literally, such as when Bühn engages her audience or other survivors to participate in her artwork. For example, during the German Catholic Congress in 2016, Bühn and other survivors carried posters highlighting the *Lavabo* series (2016), printed with excerpts and survivors' quotes from the investigation into child abuse in the Catholic Church, through the streets where the gathering took place. Later that year, survivors who attended the MitSprache Congress in Berlin, Germany, joined her in carrying either those posters or pictures of child victims of the Catholic Church provided by Barbara Blaine, an American activist, for a spontaneous commemoration in front of one of Berlin's most tourist-frequented churches (Bühn, 2017). It has to be mentioned that survivors' art, as with other artists' work, does not need to be directly connected to the context of the abuse the artist experienced, and activists' work is often performed in collectives. Not every person joining her has to have survived sexual abuse by priests or nuns as perpetrators. Nevertheless, Bühn and her accompanying survivors decided to confront the public sphere together as a collective.

Discussion: Is PAR the Right Research Paradigm?

Focusing knowledge on CSA and survivorship and the discourses where both are negotiated, the public discourse (for everyone) and the special discourse (among scientists and professionals as specialists) are visible (Keller, 2011). Both are relevant regarding the actual situation of children, adult survivors and their allies. Political decision-making and press contributions to the public discourse usually draw on special knowledge provided by professionals and far more often, researchers. Thus, researchers of CSA and survivorship are in a powerful position regarding public education and political decision-making on sexual abuse and survivorship. Their special knowledge can support decision-making that changes children's and survivors' lives.

Survivors' knowledge by experience is classically marginalised knowledge because survivors are marginalised as unreliable knowers, often framed as hysterical and irrational (Fricker, 2007; Sanyal, 2016). However, the analysed art shows that survivors:

- define very different aspects of CSA and survivorship as relevant (e.g. [in]justice or the mentioned invasiveness);
- reclaim or develop unique wordings and expressions regarding CSA and survivorship that are not part of (violent) pre-existing structures (anymore);
- gather, abstract and transfer knowledge and
- engage in all of this with the motivation to change social structures.

Some of those aspects are illegitimate from the perspective of classic research: Nonacademic survivors lack the formal competence to determine relevance – for example, regarding a research question (Coleman, 2015). Either their knowledge is illegitimate if it is based on experience rather than academic study or they are supposedly too subjective and emotionalised to be accepted as knowers (Ahmed, 2012; Fricker, 2007). PAR tackles all of these issues because it is a fundamental aspect of this research paradigm that academic researchers share their power to define what is relevant and accept participants' knowledge as legitimate and of the same worth as their knowledge (Coleman, 2015). This includes nonacademic (e.g. survivors) and academic researchers developing appropriate wordings and definitions and gathering and evolving knowledge together (Coleman, 2015; Wright, 2021).

Survivors' art highlights the invasiveness of CSA and its impact on various aspects of survivors' lives. This includes the social and emotional dimensions. To consider both in research without degrading emotions or the complex social context of human existence as nonabstract or irrational, research methods and types of outcomes have to be chosen or developed together between survivors and academic researchers. This can result in creative, art-based methods to gather data, as performed by researchers and Mayan women during a research project (Lykes & Scheib, 2015), that enable the respectful inclusion of emotions. Considering the social dimension of CSA sequelae, PAR usually relies on groups of nonacademic participants. This works either with pre-existent communities, such as in the development of cultural healing programmes for Aboriginal survivors of institutional CSA (Black et al., 2019), or by establishing a group for a research project, as in Lykes and Scheib (2015).

Symbolic violence is another main pattern negotiated in survivors' art. In PAR, reflection and prevention of symbolic violence towards nonacademic participants is one key feature. Ensuring that violent structures are not reproduced in the research project requires preventive measures, such as in the cultural healing programme development, where all decision processes were formalised in balance among survivors or academic researchers or in favour of survivors (Black et al., 2019). PAR usually reflects dimensions of symbolic violence not only between academic and nonacademic participants but also and especially on other axes of social marginalisation – e.g. racism or gender (Black et al., 2019; Lykes & Scheib, 2015). These intersections of various dimensions of marginalisation and symbolic violence are reflected in the artists' work, too. Making them visible is an achievement that art and PAR share.

Following this, symbolic transformation – the change in structure towards more social justice – is the focus of both artists' work and inherent to PAR (Bradbury, 2015). In PAR and art, the extent of the action taken might vary. In PAR, it might vary among the mere co-researching of survivors and academics, changes to the public or community sphere or larger collective action like an international court case (Lykes & Scheib, 2015; Martin, 2015). Both PAR and survivors' art negotiate responsibility: the latter as something required by society and more direct, by the witnesses of CSA, including the audience. PAR reflects the responsibility that comes with discursive power and academic privilege in an epistemically unjust world by sharing this power with nonacademic participants (Coleman, 2015; Fricker, 2007). PAR also uses the power of scientific contributions in discourses, thus combining the empowerment of the nonacademic participants and the specific aims with the (discursive) 'top-down' outcome.

Altogether, we conclude that PAR is an appropriate research paradigm for research on CSA and survivorship from a constructivist and ethic-focused perspective. From this perspective, PAR should be preferred over classical research, if possible. However, given the number of dimensions in which symbolic violence can lead to complications, in several settings, the level of survivor-led research as one step further might be required – e.g. after colonial abuse of the survivors' group by the academics' culture (Black et al., 2019).

Conclusion

PAR holds great promise to gather and improve knowledge on CSA and survivorship by ethical and nonviolent ways of research. PAR can take up, include and (maybe) evolve all highlighted discursive aspects from survivors' art. Action can generate knowledge, and knowledge can generate action – and because lasting social changes can only be done by communities and never by single individuals (Bourdieu, 1998), it is only natural to gain the knowledge collaboratively, too. Survivors' art makes the audience become witnesses of the violence and thus, they become responsible to react. Researchers as powerful contributors to survivors' discourse can show this responsibility by sharing their discursive power with survivors, whose whole lives are affected by the society's discourse about survivorship. Engaging in participatory research, academic researchers and survivors can identify and analyse relevant areas together and develop theories and strategies to target, for example, mental health aspects defined as relevant by survivors, but also underrated social, political or legal issues. Adult survivors have experienced and survived domination by others. On the level of discourse and indirectly, its effects on survivors' lives, it is up to researchers to show awareness of privilege and marginalisation and engage in research practices that not only promise results with high relevance for survivors but also contribute to social justice.

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