

The Analyser's Struggle of Dealing with the Unspeakable and Unsaid when Studying Sexualized Violence

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It could be that there are different styles of research and that the non-directive stance recommended in biographical research and in ethnography for example is a good enough explanation for not asking my interview partners about anything that they have not already brought up as a topic. But what if the methodological cues fit our own needs only too well? How can we know that we are not mainly responding to our own needs of privacy in research situations? That we are not shrinking away from what our interview partners would want to tell us about? During our participatory research on sexualized violence it has been questions like these we discussed several times but especially after conducting interviews with and whilst analysing interviews of those concerned. In our presentation we will go beyond the already raised issues. We will critically discuss the interrelation with silence in interviews. How to deal with silent accounts in the interview encounter – without either risking re-traumatization oder fueling the silencing dynamics? How to make sense of it in the analysis – without over-interpreting these accounts in terms of a deep story of what has not been told? By means of dealing with case documentations on sexualized violence, we also shed light on the implications of the inevitable emotional interaction between the analyser and the data material. Thus, we plead for the necessity of paying attention to our own emotional responses. When studying sexualized violence it can be hard to analyse our data material unbiased. It may easily happen that we repress any hypothesis concerning the narration that burdens or overexerts ourselves, that forces us to deal with our own blind spots. That's why we aim at illustrating our struggles when working with such data against our also existent prejudices.