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Ideologically Involved Co-Research: The Ideologically Confrontational Method

Torben Bechmann Jensen[1]
Oliver Sander[2]
Gustav Egede[3]

[1] *University of Copenhagen, Department of Psychology, Oester Farimagsgade 2A, Cph. C 1353*
[2] *Aarhus University, Department of Psychology and Behavioral Science, Bartholins Allé 11, 8000 Aarhus C*
[3] *University of Copenhagen, Department of Psychology, Oester Farimagsgade 2A, Cph. C 1353*

Critical psychologists have discussed collaboration with co-researchers extensively in the context of long-term practice research. In this article, we present an interviewing method that follows the epistemological and ethical goals of critical psychology for working with co-researchers: to identify a given researched subject matter as rooted in social practice and to conduct research in collaboration with co-researchers who have a genuine interest in participating in the research in order to improve a practice. We call this method the ideologically confrontative method and show how it can be viewed as a form of ideologically involved co-research. By naming it "ideologically involved," the goal is to clarify certain ideas, everyday-thinking and formal ideologies in use when specific actions are explained. The goal of the method is performing an ideological deconstruction in which the symbolic background concerning the research object at hand is challenged for both the researcher and the co-researcher. The symbolic background may be understood as the way ideology manifests itself in the layman's interpretation of their understanding and participation in practice. Through this process, the co-researcher may arrive at novel ways of understanding herself and the practice she participates in, expanding her agency. This new knowledge is generalised by the researcher to types of possibilities that appear in dialogue with the co-researcher.

Keywords: co-research, interview, ideology, intersubjectivity, critical psychological methodology

Introduction

The German-Nordic tradition of critical psychology has worked extensively with how to conduct research in collaboration with co-researchers (Bechmann Jensen, 2005; Mørck & Nissen 2005; Holzkamp 2005). Like many other forms of critical social psychology,

critical psychologists operate from the assumption that research has consequences for those involved and for how collectives and societies develop more generally, and we therefore seek to improve everyday life and increase the agency of the people with whom we work while simultaneously generating knowledge (Holzkamp, 1987; Marx, 1972). Epistemologically, the aim is to identify a given researched subject matter (examples could be the conception of youth, smoking, or use of drugs) as something rooted in social practice, as opposed to something that exists independently and in a free-floating manner (cf. Dreier, 1999). Conducting research with and not on co-researchers is essential for understanding a phenomenon in practice, and co-research is thus both an ethical imperative and an epistemological necessity in critical psychology. Amongst other things, what separates critical psychology from similar co-research-based approaches is that the researcher generates data through a participatory critique of ideology - neither taking on the role of the expert nor simply relaying the interpretation of co-researchers uncritically, but rather involving oneself in exploring possible subjective understandings of the reality (cf. Mørck & Nissen, 2005).

Critical psychological methodology consists of a myriad of concrete ways of generating empirical data and many heralded examples of critical psychology research, often known as practice research (cf. Kousholt et al, 2026), are close cooperations that span over longer timeframes (cf. e.g. Mørck, 2015; Mørck et al., 2025; Nissen, 2023; Dreier, 2008). In addition to establishing contact with the field and the subjects involved, practice research requires that a collaboration is developed with the co-researchers to find common goals within the field investigated. Therefore, a longer contact is often established that goes beyond just meeting once or a few times where interviews or observations are conducted. A well-described method for collecting data in practice research is the practice portrait: a theory-based and systematized tool for collecting data, which is then reflected on, analysed and/or followed up by further data collection using other methodological approaches such as qualitative interviews, observations etc. (Markard et.al 2004, Bechmann Jensen 2005). The practice portrait is designed as a kind of extended catalogue of questions organized in different parts, and so-called aspects/themes, with the aim of arriving at a thorough understanding of a given practice. Data is collected in writing so that the co-researchers have time and peace for reflection in their answers (e.g. 14 days of response time). The practice portrait makes it possible to

obtain qualitative and yet structured empirical data, which gives the co-researcher the opportunity to write exactly what is important to the co-researcher and turn his or her answer into a document that the co-researcher and/or others can relate to. However, the practice portrait also requires that the co-researcher is skilled at writing and independence to unfold her reflections based on headings and open questions. It can thus be very time consuming for both co-researchers and researchers. We have worked with the practice portrait ourselves and experienced how cumbersome and time-consuming this work can be. From a practical standpoint, it is not always possible for or desired by the co-researcher to conduct such in-depth research. Simultaneously, the critical psychological literature on interviewing, both as integrated in long-term practice research and as a standalone methodology, is relatively sparse. There is therefore a need to develop an interview form that prioritizes some of the epistemological ideals inherent in critical psychological practice research so that an epistemologically and ethically coherent alternative exists to long term cooperation. Such an interview form should condense or concentrate the effort so that the principles of the practice portrait as a form of critical psychological methodology are taken into account.

In this article, we will present what we call *the ideologically confrontative interview* as an example of *ideologically involved co-research*. We argue that this approach enables critical psychological researchers to conduct research as a participatory ideological critique in shorter time frames while maintaining the core principles of critical psychology and that this work can have important consequences in future social work and research alike (cf. Højlund, 2006; Haug, 1981). In a broader sense, ideologically involved co-research as a methodology and the interviewing techniques of the ideologically confrontative interview also provides a framework for conducting qualitative interviews more generally.

We will first present some general critical psychological methodological points on the co-researcher and discuss which consequences these have for developing a methodology of interviewing in critical psychology. We then present the ideologically confrontational method and how it is linked to critical psychological methodology. Lastly, we offer two examples of how the method can be employed in empirical research.

The co-researcher in critical psychology

The methodological goal of critical psychology is to grasp and change social practices, concomitantly improving theory, methodology and - importantly - the lives of co-researchers. Here, we may mention the often-referred 11th Thesis of Feuerbach and point to the fact that the aim of critical psychology is indeed not (just) to interpret the world, but to change it (Marx, 1973; Holzkamp, 1983)[1]. As we must understand the practice given through the participants' first-person perspectives (Holzkamp, 1998), co-researchers offer valuable insight into lived participation in practice. The first-person perspective is based on the idea that co-researchers are concrete subjects situated in concrete situations with concrete things at stake - even (and sometimes especially) in research contexts (Holzkamp, 1998; Dreier, 1999; Roald et al., 2021). Researchers cannot position themselves as detached professionals who (alone) can reduce these conditions of participation to a generalized conclusion. It is, however, also important not to be reduced to a "tape recorder" (Mørck & Nissen, 2005), who is merely present to convey the views of co-researchers. It is not enough to give co-researchers a "voice" in the research. It is also crucial to recognise oneself as a research subject; as an individual who, by participating in a given practice, cannot and should not remain passive or uncritical (Mørck & Nissen, 2005; Bechmann Jensen, 1992a). Such a participatory critique, which also seeks to understand the first-person perspective of the co-researcher, is thus an epistemological process whereby co-researchers and researchers alike can come to develop new understandings, just as research itself influences practice in a dialectical relationship (Mørck & Nissen, 2005).

Co-researcher

From a critical psychology perspective, what makes a person who participates in research a "co-researcher" is that this person has a genuine interest in participating, meaning that they also have an interest in developing the field in question and that they recognise this interest and act upon it. The co-researcher's interest in the research must be understood in terms of the desire to improve her quality of life or life conditions[2] within the field in which the research is conducted. This focus on improving and understanding one's life

[1] We do not mean to say that interpretations cannot change the world, but that critical psychology explicitly aims to change the world for the better through research.
[2] In more recent critical psychological publications, this is simply named "agency"

conditions is the critical psychological conceptualisation of agency as a specific element of human activity (Forchhammer & Nissen, 1995). As an agentic subject, the co-researcher is a source of access to and change of her own conditions of life, while this agency also develops based on the participatory possibilities the co-researcher has. It is a crucial methodological prerequisite for critical psychological research that the starting point is the common interests of those affected, i.e. both the researcher and the co-researchers concerned. In short, the research must appear to be useful and worthwhile to the individuals who participate.

This process can be called *qualification* (Vandreier, 2011) and must be carried out before the research begins. Because the goals of research, theories and methods are generally not known to those concerned, co-researchers need time to take a position and assess any interest they may have in the research, which is commonly done by introducing the research project to potential co-researchers, allowing them to ask questions and to give inputs on the project. The intention is to avoid misleading co-researchers and thus to ensure a common understanding and goal of conducting the research.

One could imagine that the researcher and co-researchers carry out the research based on an increasingly greater understanding of both the underlying theory that the researcher provides and the (practical) theories that those affected contribute in relation to the field of study studied. However, research is always dependent on the time and conditions imposed on the research work. A qualification of a co-researcher cannot for many practical and other reasons mean that co-researchers must acquire the researcher's theory or know it to its full extent. On the other hand, it must be possible to present the researcher's methods, theoretical perspectives and concepts. These should be "translated" and explained, so that the co-researcher can take a position on his or her participation on a reasonable basis.

As an ideal, there must be a certain overlap of understanding and interest between the co-researchers and the researcher. This is not to say that the co-researcher should simply ‘get in line’ or that the critical psychological researcher should accept any goal of their co-researchers. Rather, it is a crucial (and sometimes demanding) task to find common ground as opposed to the researcher simply “helping” the co-researcher or, conversely, by imposing our research agenda on them. We work together to clarify and explore the subject area based on a common interest in a given practice. The clarification

of the interests of researchers and co-researchers is neither simple nor easy to set out clear procedures for, but we maintain that the co-researcher must perceive her participation in the research project as meaningful in her everyday life. For example, in our work with U-turn, a rehabilitation centre for young people, it has proven meaningful to work closely with a young man, Emil, who had an explicit interest in informing the public and professionals of how addiction may be experienced. For instance, Emil wrote opinion pieces to a large Danish newspaper, wanting to nuance public opinion about everyday life with addiction (From, 2025). While our research goal was rather understanding and politically situating the experience of aesthetic creation in a rehabilitation setting, we were able to find a common goal with Emil, namely exploring and challenging our understandings together. Throughout this research period, Emil had the chance to interview a counsellor at U-turn about the aesthetic workshops that he participated in. Facilitating Emil's participation in this practice not only served to meet Emil's interest for sharing his experience with relevant professionals but also helped us develop a more nuanced and situated understanding of participation in aesthetic initiatives may make a difference to young people experiencing issues with addiction. As the above example may illustrate, the research process in itself may be facilitated in such a way that a common ground of interest can be found (for an extensive elaboration of this work, see Sander, 2025; Sander et al., 2026). This change of positionality also had a positive effect on Emil's self-understanding and agency. The research thus serves to improve practice both locally for participants and ideally, upon its future application by relevant researchers or professionals in the field, practice beyond Emil and U-turn.

Researchers and co-researchers alike are subjects who have their own interests, understandings and interpretations in and of the practices they participate in - their own rationality (Mørck & Nissen, 2005; Roald et.al. 2021). Through mutual involvement between researcher and co-researcher, it becomes possible to understand the individual's reasons for action as intersubjectively communicable and accessible. Reasons, as well as possibilities, for action are entangled in societal conditions, and the realisation of these possibilities can be understood through the intersubjective relationship that is created between researcher and co-researcher. Here, intersubjectivity refers to the relationship between individuals as subjects who know that both themselves and others possess these possibilities.

Psychological research that claims to conduct its research with co-researchers cannot alone set conditions for the people being studied, as this does not fully grasp the object of the research. If the purpose is to reach a generalised understanding of people as they experience and act upon practices in everyday life, we believe that one forgoes validity by forcing them into pre-determined structures of data generation that are in themselves disconnected from the very life one seeks to gain knowledge on (Holzkamp, 1983). In such approaches, one can say that one denies the individuality of the human being as being a consciously acting and influencing subject in research. This necessitates another conceptualisation of objectivity and generalisation than one created from a nomothetic or natural science-based standpoint when researching people in their everyday lives.

Objectivity and generalisation

Objectivity is not absolute, but rather an ongoing process of development in which the hypotheses of the analyses are constantly tested, challenged and changed in practice (Dreier, 1979; Holzkamp, 1983). The researcher and co-researchers seek to objectify not the affected themselves as people, but rather the possibilities of those affected[3]. Closely linked to the relationship between theory and practice, the objectivity of the results of the research is determined by the consequences of action that the research points to and by the usefulness of the consequences of action for those affected to carry out real changes in their lives or work.

Special requirements are set for the generalisation of critical psychological research results. Research can in principle be generalised based on a single case, even though every human being is unique in principle and must be understood in terms of her specific, contextual location (Roald et al., 2021). The emphasis is not on generalising what is most prevalent, but rather on the future: generalising what is new and what points in an expanding direction in a given practice (see also Bloch, 1995; Sander et al., 2026; Egede et al., in prep). In other words, the aim of generalisation is *types of possibilities* that may exist in a given practice, where types are understood as specific societal situations, not as people (Holzkamp, 1983, 2005; Mørch, 1989; Nissen, 1986).

[3] The "space" of options an individual has in each position and situation.

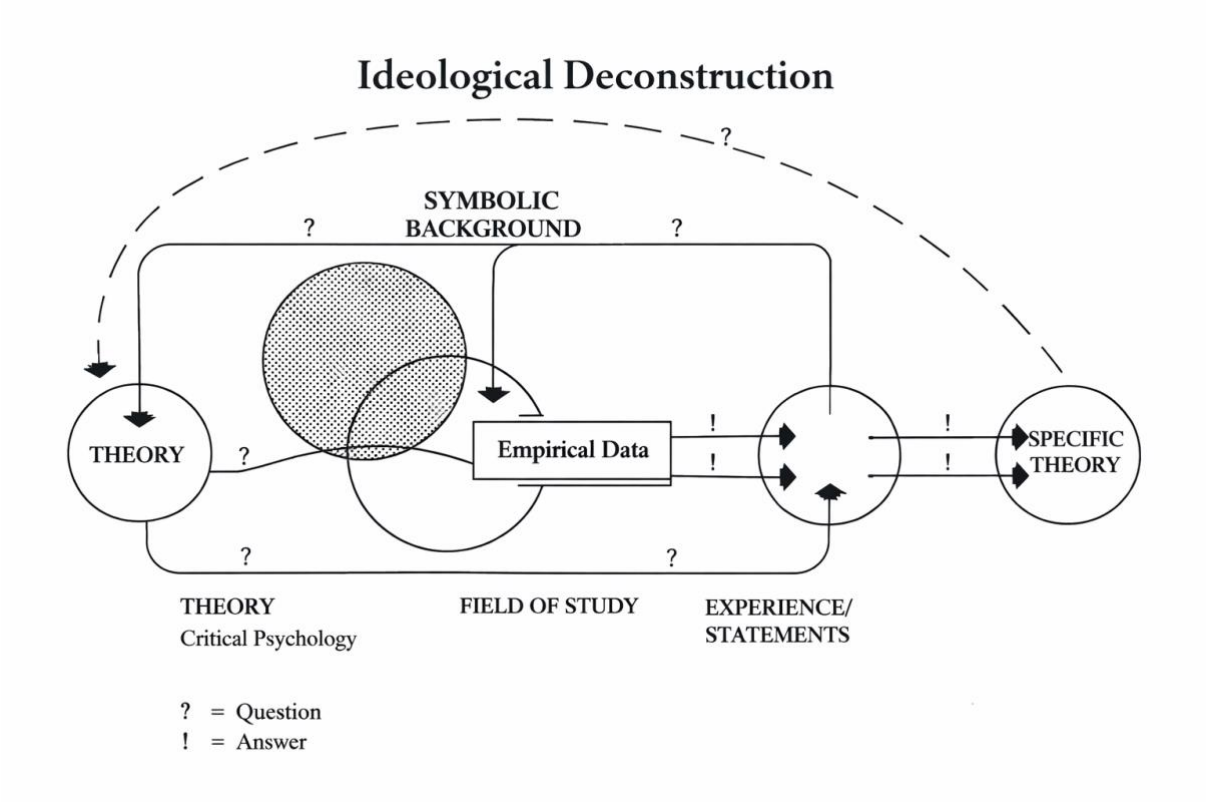
These types of possibilities cannot be determined in advance or generalised in the study itself. Generalisation ultimately happens when the results of a given study are thoroughly situated in understanding of other practices than the one being researched (Bechmann Jensen, 2005; Nissen & Mørck, 2019; Valsiner, 2015).

Ideological deconstruction

Ideologically involved co-research draws on what we refer to as the symbolic background, a distinction between ideological reconstruction and ideological deconstruction, and a specific view of the relationship between knowledge, attitudes, and action. The interview method which we present, the ideologically confrontational method, involves challenging the symbolic background through ideological deconstruction with the aim of arriving at new understandings of a given practice for both researcher and co-researcher. It focuses on obtaining answers beyond typical automated responses and on inciting concrete reflection on the relationship between action and thought. As we see with the aforementioned example of Emil, the aim is to challenge and qualify the knowledge that is produced in qualitative research interviews in order to obtain as complete descriptions of the field as possible and to contribute to change, improving practice. Through this, we can create more valid knowledge and foster practical development by not simply acting as an interviewer, but as an exploratory interlocutor.

The symbolic background may be understood as the way ideology manifests itself in the layman's interpretation of their understanding and participation in practice. It describes the jumble of concepts and theoretical notions that are taken from daily life in the form of folk knowledge, assumptions from television and social and other media, i.e. something that most subjects, including fellow researchers, draw on in both thinking, action and thus also in explanations and narratives (Bechmann Jensen 1992a). It includes theoretical fragments or formal theory insofar as co-researchers carry these theories with them and fragments of knowledge that we are not even aware that we have collected from friends, acquaintances or experienced in one context or another. We spontaneously experience this knowledge as true, explanatory or clarifying for this or that, be it in dreams, emotional experiences etc. (cf. Bechmann Jensen, 1992a). Science such as

psychological theorisation is thus closely intertwined with the colloquial understandings of how we act, think and perceive.



Model a. The ideological deconstruction

The above model illustrates how questions are asked into the research field of interest – creating empirical data. In an interview setting, we understand given answers as influenced by the symbolic background, which means that new questions need to be asked to challenge this. This should not be understood as single process where a challenging question is asked about a specific statement and a conclusion free from ideology is reached. It is rather a dialectical process where both the researcher and the co-researcher may explore and challenge how the symbolic background plays a role in the subjective views/explanations.

Having received answers from the co-researcher the theory might adopt new insight which creates new questions to the field. The outcome of the interview will then be a specific theory (named "single-theory" in Critical Psychology) developed on a specific field of research (this may be a theory on youth counselling or a specific theory about conceptions of youth/generation). And these specific theories might then pose questions to the overarching general theory (Critical Psychology as a grand theory)

(Dreier, 1979). The distinction between ideological reconstruction (reproducing either common or more formal theoretical assumptions) and ideological deconstruction refers to how research, including interviews, engages with the symbolic background of the co-researcher. Ideologically involved co-research seeks to not merely affirm the symbolic background of either the researcher or the co-researcher. Reconstruction both hinders the creation of new knowledge on a given subject matter, hinders the agency of co-researchers, and limits the possibility of generalising new possibilities of a given practice. Yet it is not the case that ideological deconstruction "… enables one to arrive at *the* truth. What ideological deconstruction points to is a well-founded hope of actually achieving an intersubjective process and mutual understanding between the parties involved." (Bechmann Jensen, 1992a, p. 38). In contrast to any outcome of the aforementioned reconstruction, the interview method we will present ultimately aims at creating a collective understanding of possibilities in a practice.

The Ideologically Confrontational Method[4]

The core of the ideologically confrontational method is the subject's actions and the thoughts, knowledge and attitudes on which the actions are made. Thoughts, knowledge and attitude do not come before practice, but exist dialectically *in* practice (see Holzkamp, 1983; Dreier, 1999). However, this does not mean that the logic through which we justify or understand our actions is "true" or "pure". It is perhaps well known that as an interviewer, you must ask explicitly about knowledge, attitudes, and actions to learn more about whether there is cohesion or rather what cohesion there is between them. That is that one's actions are roughly in line with what one says that one thinks, feels and knows. A standard rule of thumb is that if it is not clarified what you are asking, most interviewees/co-researchers will tend to answer based on opinions that are usually politically correct, well-known or accepted in certain circles. The researcher needs to ask the co-researcher to describe their actions in concrete contexts – to be able to compare the reasons the co-researcher presents for acting like this (Bechmann Jensen, 2000). Of course, when enquiring about this relationship, it is often beneficial to include concrete observations from practice. This is not always possible, but through asking the co-

[4] The conceptualization of the ideologically deconstructive method has recently been discussed. In order not to confuse the deconstruction with Derrida's Deconstruction it is, for this English volume, translated to "Ideologically Confrontational", see also Tobias-Renstrøm in this volume.

researcher about concrete actions, the ideologically confrontative method can also be used on its own.

The aim is through negotiation to "force" the co-researcher to present a direct connection between his or her own thinking and the practice in which such a thing exists. This way, the co-researcher is encouraged to think and explain beyond their symbolic background, leaving practice and everyday explanations as apparent. This may enable discussion and qualification. The researcher asks the co-researcher directly about connections between general thoughts and explanations and her concrete practices. To avoid general superficial answers, the co-researcher is encouraged to explain how these overall thoughts are related to concrete actions and activities.

As an interviewer, you are not satisfied with quick answers: the ones that both social workers, experts and laymen are used to giving when someone asks about something professional or personal. The quick or immediate answers from the co-researcher are met with curiosity and with questions such as: How can it be connected in this way? Why do you think so? Can it be justified? Could you put it upside down and think the opposite? You just said xyz; how does it all fit together? Contradictions or opposing explanations are challenged. The purpose is to offer an opportunity to reconsider whether understandings that the co-researcher draws on in relevant contexts are the most obvious or appropriate for the individual and her agency.

We will offer two examples of interviews that illustrate how the ideologically confrontational method can be employed. The first interview is included to demonstrate how the ideologically confrontational method can allow for new ways of understanding a phenomenon for researcher and co-researcher alike through ideological deconstruction. The second interview is included to show how the co-researcher should also be able to challenge or reject the interpretations of the researcher. These two examples illustrate both how to use the ideologically confrontative method and what can be gained from using it.

Example 1

The first interview comes from a study on social work with youth. The study was about the content of social work and what young people aged 18-30 were offered in a local counselling office. However, this interview and other interviews done in the same research project turned out to include a discussion of how the institutional division of people into young people vs adults can be understood and what the significance of this division is concerning the way young people are treated. The study led to a new theory of youth (see Bechmann Jensen, 1992b, 2010).

The interview was conducted with a co-researcher (I) who worked full-time as a youth counsellor, and the excerpts are about how the co-researcher understands "youth" in her work as counsellor. Prior to the interview, the co-researcher completed a practice portrait and had ongoing conversations with the researcher (TBJ). We begin by TBJ asking the co-researcher about why she prefers to work with young people in counselling:

> I: The way I feel right now, I'd rather work with young people in a broad sense than with old people, for example – kind of spontaneously. I can try to answer spontaneously and then correct it a bit. Firstly (because of) the energy – which is often not there – but the opportunities then… Ehm yes, there may well be apathy or resignation, but there is a long life ahead and there are more opportunities to start something when you are young than very old. That's a tough question, why do I like it?
>
> TBJ: To recap, what you have said is: It [young people's lives] takes longer, so it does not matter that much if your work is wrong.
>
> I: There is often more mobility and not so much stiffness in young people, it is a difficult and provocative question, do you need an answer to it? Well, I want to work with people under 30, for example. I wonder if there are psychological reasons for it in me… is it for example my own young kids? I don't think so because I started [working] here at a time when my own were not very old, I liked it too. I have the feeling, as with so many other things, that my preferences will shift, but I must start from how it is right now. For example, I like to teach adults, but I also like to teach young people. Academically, I get more out of it with

adults, if they are otherwise a little active. They often ask more difficult questions and have greater demands.

TBJ: But does the same apply in treatment and is that the reason: that it is easier because young people do not make such great demands?

I: How mean! It may well be. That's not what I immediately think of, but maybe they don't question my work so much. But I also have adults [in therapy] and I can feel a bit nervous in the beginning, and I more often ask myself if I'm good enough, but I can't figure out if it's because they're adults or if it's because I'm more familiar with youths. That is an interesting question. So, there is something about the polishedness [of adults]. Youths have more audacity and spontaneity and rawness than adults, but you know… sometimes I have the feeling that in adults there are layers upon layers of phrases and clichés. Young people also allow themselves to ask some questions to you that "nice" adults do not.

(…)

TBJ: The perception of young and non-young, what's the difference?

I: (Laughing) Have you asked everyone this? There is a difference in the amount of experience – whether it is education or other kinds of life experiences. However, you cannot determine whether a person is young or old based on their experience, and it is not just a question of putting bricks on top of each other.

TBJ: But is it the number of experiences or different experiences?

I: There are some who have been adults ever since they were children – with responsibilities and obligations and an overview. In other words, some of the things that we normally exempt children from, right? There are others who take care of this for them, adults or others.

TBJ: Will they thus become adults?

I: On certain levels, at least, they function as adults, but they are not emotionally. Yes, it's, oh, no, how hard this is. Now it's time for me to try to answer – I can't use the clichés, but there IS a difference between being a child and an adult.

TBJ: Are you sure about that?

I: Yes, I am, well I know all the clichés. There is one I am sure is true: When you are a child, there are some adults who must take care of you because

otherwise life is too dangerous. And you can't figure things out on your own – you lack skills and insight.

TBJ: You changed your answer to include kids to make it easier?

I: Yes, but young people lack the same thing, and they are in the process of acquiring it – they are in general, adults do it too. Adults are expected to be able to live up to their commitment, set a budget and so on.

TBJ: But can they do that?

I: Well, in terms of age, they are adults, but they fall outside

TBJ: Let's concentrate on children.

I: Children are dependent on adults or other people. But that goes for all people, I think it's part of our nature – it's at least hell if you're alone. Emotionally, adults also depend on others.

TBJ: What about children?

I: Children have to learn, but so do adults – What was your question? Well, in the end, it may well be that people are in different life contexts and that is crucial for what to do.

TBJ: If someone comes through the door here at the counselling, can you determine whether it is a young person or an adult?

I: I've had a hard time with that lately, but I have no doubt that my own children – they are young. (Laughing) Because they are 18 and 20 years old, I call them young because children, that's the kind of person you can have on your lap. Children can be decided over!

TBJ: But surely that cannot be a criterion – whether you can decide over them/control them?

I: No, and I have also had problems when I have sat and worked with the theoretical things, then I get doubtful if the concept of youth is relevant at all. However, I don't ask a 16-year-old how he feels about his children. But it is more about what life situation they are in, it also does for adults, but there are some problems that occur more frequently for one group than for the other.

TBJ: But don't you then get beyond a distinction between young and adult?

I: Yes, and that's also what I get doubts about. I can't use that co-educational qualification – because Hans, who works, is not an adult when he works in Netto and young when he starts university or high school.

TBJ: Your children, they are young?

I: Yes, I would say that you are young from the age of 15 up to 30 years old or something like that (laughing) – that's our current target group. But I don't agree. For example, you are an adult, but you are also young or is it young compared to me or what is it?[5]

I also think that I am an adult, but also young – in that way it messes up like hell. I think that you should abolish that category completely and talk about life context instead and development tasks that you are in as well as the next ones – the perspective in it. If you do that, it doesn't matter to talk about children. It could be life contexts and resources – children, for example, do not have insight into, for example, or physical strength for certain tasks, etc.

The excerpt demonstrates how the discussion on the concept of youth plays a significant role in the way that counselling is done or at least shows how the concept of youth colours the way of thinking by the co-researcher. The interview gives rise to both confusion and surprises with the co-researcher saying "I have not been as confused as now" in her understanding of what youth is. Nevertheless, the interviewer, through ideological deconstruction makes room for changing the way of thinking and why and how counselling is done and maybe how it could be done.

Example 2

The second study is about how young drug users' use of creative or artistic expressions can affect their handling of everyday life. The setting is once again a counselling institution (U-Turn) for young drug users that facilitates "aesthetic workshops" of poetry and music with the hope that this may allow for alternative subject positions and increased agency of participants. The following dialogue between Oliver (OS) and Mads[6] (M) is a

[5] The interviewer is 29 years old and a university student. The interviewee is a 45-year-old professional psychologist.

[6] Pseudonymised

methodological example in which the researcher tries to offer an explanation to summarise the statements of the interviewee who subsequently dares to contradict the proposed interpretation. We include this example to show that the point of the ideologically confrontational method is not that the researcher has the sole right to challenge the co-researchers, but that it is of equal importance that co-researchers are encouraged to not just accept the researcher's interpretations of their statements and feelings. In the interview, Mads has just told us that he has performed his product from the Aesthetic Workshop at U-turn at a musical event outside the framework of U-turn:

> OS: So then you perform it (...) Do you then introduce it like 'this is something I wrote at the Aesthetic Workshop'?
>
> M: (You would) break character by saying that "I made this in my rehabilitation institution". That would, of course, somewhat break the concentration of the spectators.

From the qualification through the interview, a conscious attempt is made to position Mads in such a way that he feels safe to disagree with the researcher. Mads makes it clear that Oliver's question is based on a misinterpretation of his affiliation with U-turn, because, outside the framework of U-turn, he does not want to show that he frequents a rehabilitation institution. It is necessary to establish cooperation in which both the researcher and co-researcher dare to challenge each other. This not only serves to help the researcher understand the co-researcher better, it also allows for the development of agency for the co-researchers as they are interpellated as active co-creators of knowledge (cf. Nissen, 2004; Sander et al., 2025). In other words, the process of generating empirical data within the ideologically confrontational method has central theoretical and practical implications for what generation of empirical data should be able to do and for whom (Holzkamp, 1987).

Conclusion

In ideologically involved co-research, the researcher does not meet critical psychological epistemological principles by simply communicating his or her conclusions back to co-researchers with the aim of achieving consensus on what they have said and what they

meant. We consider such an approach an ideological reconstruction, in which co-researchers are not given sufficient opportunity to make their own interpretations and thus possibly create new knowledge. Through the ideologically confrontational method, the researcher instead seeks to generate knowledge through inquiring about justifications and challenging the co-researchers' considerations about themselves and their situation. This is done to navigate around the ideological and theoretical influences, the symbolic background, that co-researchers (as well as researchers) have. Co-researchers must be positioned in such a way that they may exert the same amount of power over the interview situation as the researcher. This means that the co-researchers must also be able to "retaliate" and respond confrontationally/discursively to the suggestions made by the researcher (Bechmann Jensen, 1992a; Sander, 2025).

One advantage is that the subjectivity of the co-researchers is taken seriously, but a challenge may be that the co-researchers should preferably be well-formulated or at least able to discuss and reflect on their own ideas, putting them in relation to their actions, etc. This is a typical critique of critical psychology - that it places greater demands on the co-researcher than much other research. This applies both to ideologically involved co-research and in longer cooperations, in which the co-researcher must to some extent possess the ability to participate in the process for a longer period of time.

We may conversely claim that marginalised people possess these abilities to a much larger degree than what is accepted academically and colloquially and that such assumptions more accurately reflect societal power dynamics that ostracise marginalised people rather than reflect their abilities (cf. Spivak et al., 2011). Departing from this critique, the interview in this form contains some of the same basic problems that can be seen in the practice portrait. This is reminiscent of what is sometimes discussed in terms of problems in connection with "expert interviews", "elite interviews" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015) or interviews with analytical interviewees. Ideologically involved co-research and the ideologically confrontative interview is meant to shortcut long involvement by improving the conditions subjects have for meaningfully taking a stand on the practices they participate in.

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About the authors

Torben Bechmann Jensen Torben Bechmann Jensen is an associate Professor at the Department of Psychology, University of Copenhagen. He is working within a critical psychological methodological framework of practice research. His Research concentrates on Youth theory, Marginalisation, Smoking, Prostitution and transition from education to work.

Oliver Sander Oliver Sander is a PhD student at the Department of Psychology and Behavioural Sciences, University of Aarhus. Working within a critical psychological methodological framework of practice research, his empirical research focuses on transformative processes for marginalised groups through social work.

Gustav Egede holds a master's degree in psychology and currently teaches social psychology at the Department of Psychology, University of Copenhagen. His research interests include aesthetics, hope, and utopianism approached from phenomenological and critical psychology perspectives.