

An Online Seminar

Ethnographic Research Methods in Childhood Studies

Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University, Finland

October 29th, 2020

10:00-15:45 (GMT+2)

Zoom: Meeting ID: 634 2366 1770 Passcode: 599438

<https://tuni.zoom.us/j/63423661770?pwd=RHZZVUFSNkM0MlpaM09WekxmeFZSdz09>

Questions regarding the seminar and/or the program can be sent to

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Paper Summaries

Working ethnographically with children in transnational families: experimenting with visual, artwork and participatory methodologies.

Laura Assmuth, Professor of Social and Public Policy, University of Eastern Finland

The presentation is based on long-term collaborative work of an international research team whose members come from the backgrounds of social and cultural anthropology, ethnology, folkloristics, human geography, sociology and social and public policy. The researchers worked ethnographically for several years with children in translocal families in three consecutive and partly overlapping research projects led by Prof. Laura Assmuth. The joint work culminated in the book *Translocal childhoods and family mobility in East and North Europe*, Palgrave 2018.

In the projects we have tried to work against a self-evident and unquestioned adult perspective in conducting studies on childhood and have therefore reached out to methodologies that would be meaningful, accessible and engaging also to the children participating in our research. The paper will present the teams' methodologies and working modes of story crafting, drawing, artwork preparation and performance, and documentary film making, all done together with the research participants, in our case transnationally mobile families with children. Our work revealed that research work alongside with artists provides rich possibilities for new epistemologies of

multidisciplinary knowledge production. The paper suggests that creative, experimental and participatory methodologies that aim to reach out to the lived experience of children on the move can be successfully applied to other research contexts and other kinds of research participants as well, adults and children alike.

"Then we decided not to tell adults." Ethnographic Fieldwork among Expatriate Children in an International School.

Mari Korpela, academy research fellow, Tampere University

Increasing numbers of skilled professionals work abroad during their careers. Often, they are accompanied by their families. My ongoing study investigates children's experiences of such transnationally mobile lifestyles and their everyday lives in Finland. So far, I have conducted ethnographic fieldwork among 9-10-year-olds in an international school for nine months. In this presentation, I elaborate on the joys and challenges of the fieldwork, arguing that long-term commitment and constant flexibility and improvisation have been necessary for the success of the study. I also discuss my contradictory positions during the fieldwork; I was an adult, yet not a teacher. Finally, I describe the photo projects that I conducted with some of the children. I argue that lending the children digital cameras and discussing the pictures with them provided me with an excellent tool for getting glimpses of various aspects of their lives that might otherwise have remained hidden from me. At the same time, the photo projects reveal that the children exercised power in the research process; they chose which pictures to take (and which to delete) and what to tell me about them. The paper suggests that ethnographic fieldwork, combined with visual methodologies, provides rich insights into children's lives, and the knowledge gained does not only tell about children but also about societies at large.

"I can draw better than this": Using 'draw-and-talk' activities with children to understand their family leisure experiences.

Utsa Mukherjee; Researcher, University of Southampton

Unpacking family members' experiences of cross-generational family leisure activities offers a window into understanding generational relationships and power within families. However, family leisure is one aspect of family life which has historically received little scholarly attention. Moreover, whatever we do know about family leisure is largely based on adult family members' accounts. In

addressing these gaps, in this paper I draw upon my study with 8-to-12-year-old Indian diasporic children living in and around London. In this study I used a participatory draw-and-talk activity with children to capture their narratives of family leisure. I invited children to draw about joint leisure activities undertaken with family members on blank sheets of paper. They then narrated their drawings to me which was audiorecorded. Here I reflect on the ways in which this activity enabled me to gather rich data about children's understanding of family leisure and generational relationships. At the same time, I also reflect on how the activity created anxieties in children about producing 'good' drawings and how the asymmetrical power relation between the child and the adult researcher played out in this context.

Children's sensory aesthetic experiences in nature through digital storytelling.

Renlund, J., Kumpulainen, K., Byman, J. & Wong, C. C.; University of Helsinki

In this study, we investigate how children's digital storytelling creates opportunities for their sensory aesthetic experiences in nature, and how digital material interlaces with children's aesthetic experiences with the more-than-human world. Our study is based on two digital storytelling workshops conducted as part of a four-month long cross-curricular ethnographic research project in a primary school. A novel augmented reality application called 'MyARJulle' was used to invite children (N=62, aged 7-9) to 'capture' the forest elf Julle by photographing in local nature and to imagine stories about the elf. Further, the children's pictures and stories were shared and discussed in small groups consisting of children and adults. When analysed with a relational materialist approach the children's photographing and digital storytelling emerged as events of entangled becoming with nature, which encompassed myriad varying aesthetic sensations. Our study contributes to empirical knowledge of how embodied multisensory experiences emerge in assemblages of digital devices, augmented reality characters, children and nature. Such findings offer educational practitioners with relevant resources for using digital storytelling as an artsbased method for promoting aesthetic experience and reflection in environmental education.

Under school aged co-researchers.

Riikka Era; PhD Student, Tampere University

This introduction has two points. First, I'll raise up questions about the possibilities and ways to involve under school aged children in the process of knowledge production during ethnographic fieldwork. I'm reflecting my experiences in a Finnish kindergarten and thinking through the lessons I learned there in the light of my upcoming fieldwork in reception center with asylum seeker children. The second point is about the ethics of fieldwork. What are the possibilities of children to understand, agree or reject about being part of research project, especially in the context of institutions and when working with vulnerable or marginalized groups? And where goes the line when to intervene and when not in situations that are against one's own perceptions of proper way of treating children, touching each other (for example hitting, crushing, kissing against one's will) or speaking to others? I hope to create a good atmosphere where the participants can share also the uncertainties related to fieldwork with children.

Classroom-based research on intercultural learning as autoethnography.

Oona Piipponen; PhD Student, University of Eastern Finland

A teacher who does ethnographic research with her class is also engaging in autoethnography by researching her own practices and thought processes. In this presentation, I will lay out how working in the dual role of teacher-researcher in an intercultural storytelling exchange project has simultaneously produced processes that work in many directions: the researcher-self helping the teacher-self reflect more deeply on her positionality, the teacher-self guiding the researcher-self in transforming theoretical ideas into practice, and the participating children teaching the teacher-researcher more responsive ways of being in the classroom. I will analyse the data production and analysis processes over the course of the research study, covering both primary ethnographic data produced in the classroom, as well as the secondary texts (research articles). The initial findings indicate that the research process has shifted from a researcher-centric focus to a more participatory focus centering on the children's perspectives, knowledge and initiatives. The study highlights how reflexivity is needed to identify when we claim to do participatory research with children, but in reality, the researcher's interests may dominate the fieldwork practices.

Research Proposal: Children's development of rank reasoning skills - a comparative study.

Maija-Eliina Sequeira; PhD student, University of Helsinki

In my doctoral research project, I will explore and compare how children in Finland and Colombia learn and enact social hierarchies. I am interested in how the particular values and norms found in these two highly distinct sociocultural environments shape children's universal, early-emerging cognitive ability to reason about social status, and their reasoning about dominance and prestige processes. In this multi-disciplinary project I will use both ethnographic and experimental methods in primary schools in Helsinki and Santa Marta to identify the different models of hierarchy that children learn in each setting, both through active teaching of social values (eg. values of equality and cooperation) and through their exposure to societal norms. I will also explore how children navigate and enact these models in their own inter-personal relationships, for example by identifying the strategies they use to resolve conflicts or cooperate on a task. Finally, I will explore the expectations that children in each setting have of their leaders, and discuss how their preferences for dominance and prestige are shaped by their socio-cultural environment.

Zoom Meeting:

Topic: Online Seminar: Ethnographic Research Methods in Childhood Studies

Time: Oct 29, 2020 10:00 AM Helsinki

Join Zoom Meeting

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