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Abstracts
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Ethical Fabrication in Educational Ethnography

This paper reconsiders what being an ethical researcher in educational ethnography might signify and involve. Through the concept of ethical fabrication, the authors propose that the practice of ethical educational ethnography may be understood as the interweaving and negotiation of four different planes of being ethical. Building upon A. Markham’s work around ethics, ethnography and fabrication (Markham, 2005, 2006, 2012), we use the term fabrication to denote the creative construction of ethnographic work, that does not necessarily entail a reproduction or delivery of facts and events from the field, but at the same time upholds the truth of the phenomenon in question. In the paper, the authors suggest that being ethical in educational ethnography can be understood as the capability to navigate: 1) ethics in relation to the rules or system (e.g. GDPR, informed consent and data management), 2) ethics in relation to being a researcher (e.g. academic virtues, phronesis, ethical character), 3) ethics in relation to the other (e.g. reciprocity in the relation, care ethics, the ethical demand), 4) ethics in relation to truth, knowledge or world (e.g. performative writing, evocative ethnography, style as theory). The paper presents and describes this through exploring examples taken from the actual in situ longitudinal practice of ethnography in the form of educational ethnography on Student Darkness (Aaen, 2018) and ethnographic research on Gameplay Corporeality (Nørgård, 2012).

The ethnographic contribution of the paper is twofold. Firstly, a conceptual framework for ethical fabrication in educational ethnography through explicating and theoretically grounding the four dimensions of being ethical. Secondly, the description of how this plays out in concrete ethnographic practice by way of employing ethical fabrication as a reflective strategy for being ethical along these dimensions. Taken together, this points towards the configuration of a deeper ethics in educational ethnography where fabrication is used as an critical-creative strategy to loosen the noose that is currently threatening to strangle both educational researcher and ethnographic truth.
An ethnographic study into Lengthening kindergarteners’ attention span through small group individualized instruction.

In Saudi Arabia, the context for this research, there is a concern about children’s attention levels, for example, there is a view that technology distractions such as 24-hour children’s channels and internet, and video games have an undue influence. As a result, capturing and maintaining young learners’ attention within classroom activities has become an issue that has been raised by parents and teachers whom I have met during my employment as a Lecturer in early childhood education. Whilst most early years teachers in Saudi Arabia tend to use whole group instruction, this research sets out to explore the effects of small group individualized instruction on children’s attention span in a classroom in Saudi, especially those performing at the lower level of what is considered a “normal” attention span.

This ethnographic study followed one kindergarten class of 30 children aged 5-6 and three teachers for six months. I observed the class every day. Initially, the whole-class was observed, then after three weeks a sample of four participants three boys and one girl were identified as children who met the criteria of the research in term of their limited attention span. As well as observing and filming the children I made assessments of their attention span, interviewed their parents and teacher, and analysed the children’s portfolio work. From here I set individual learning plans and activities with their teacher to find how individualized instruction might impact children’s attention and learning.

The impact of individualized instruction and small group instruction on the attention span of mainstream students in the regular classroom has had insufficient attention in the literature. Whilst attempts have been made to research and improve attention span in children with ADD and ADHD, there is less research about attention span and instruction for neurotypical children. This study set out to address this gap given the differences between the attention patterns of children who have such challenges compared to neurotypical children. Since attention span is an important predictor of children’s learning and future success, then improving attention span should be to the benefit of the children. As part of this study, I developed a tool (SCALE) to measure the attention span of preschool-age children in Saudi’s culture.

There is little or no research that combines an ethnographic case study with an intervention. In this study my role was not a typical ethnographer role that watches, listens and records information. Instead, working with the class teacher I suggested a new individualized instruction approach and guided the teacher to plan and implement the activities. I then observed and recorded the intervention in practice and discussed the children’s reaction with children and teachers. This paper will introduce some of the data collected, in the form of pictures and film in order to explain how the combination of an ethnographic case study with an intervention enabled me to explore the impact of the intervention on children’s attention span and learning.
Birgit Althans and Hannes Leuschner

Materiality of Gender and Pedagogical Authority – Seating arrangements in classrooms and the staging of “teacher-impersonations”

As part of the joint research project “Materality of Gender and Pedagogical Authority – Interferences “Materality of Gender and Pedagogical Authority – Interferences of Bodys and Things in Educational Institutions” we carry out ethnographic research in primary schools. The project focuses relations inbetween „object-bodies- spaces” (Taylor 2013: 689).

To go into the complex interwovenness of things and bodies, gender and authority in educational institutions, we operate with Karen Barad’s (2003, 2007) and Donna Haraway’s concept of “diffractive methodology” (1988, 1997, 2016) both on the methodological and on the analytical level. We would like to present and discuss are notes from the field, focussing on situations “how the mundane materialities of classrooms do crucial but often unnoticed performative work in enacting gendered power” (Taylor 2013). Here the classroom of a primary school in a rural environment „matters” with its arrangements of active- and ordinary boards, embracing the teachers and the pupils desks and chairs in the middle of the room and its framing and “staging” of the special placement of a male “child with special needs”. The boy, described by the school as aggressive and hyperactive in his behaviour is placed in a central space between the teachers and the pupils desks. The fieldnotes document the performative skills of the exposed male child with its bodily entanglements with furniture, working papers and the rules of the classroom interactions to better his primordial poor position in class– always in opposite position to the chair of the male oberserving researcher. While doing so, just in his usage of the mundane materialities, the pupil is always responding to the female teacher, enacting as as her “impersonation”, as – sometimes her authority undermining – corresponding “little teacher”.

Responding to Carol Taylor’s examples of the performance of a male teacher’s authority (Taylor 2013), we would like to present here a “diffractive” analysis of a performance of students authority in a primary school classroom. What we would like to present and discuss with the protocollled examples from the field, focussing on situations where the border between researcher and field becomes remarkably thin is to question a dichotomy between subjective and objective data, to point out the human and non-human materiality and to the performativity of perception in ethnographical research.


As part of the joint research project "Materality of Gender and Pedagogical Authority – Interferences of Bodys and Things in Educational Institutions" we carry out ethnographic research in primary schools. To go into the complex interwovenness of things and bodies, gender and authority in educational institutions, we operate with Karen Barads concept of Agential Realism both on the methodological and on the analytical level. This concept is an elaborated merger of intense lectures by Judith Butler, Donna Haraway and the Physics-Philosophy of the quantum physicist Niels Bohr. Barad picks up Haraway's optical key metaphor by calling for a ‘diffractive approach’ instead of a ‘reflexive’ one.

On the methodological level this approach denies the possibility of a pure observation and its underlying idea of representativeness as a kind of mirroring. Instead, it highlights the interferences of the observer and the observed. There is no observation without participation, and any ethnography is, at least partly, an autoethnography. By being part of the field observed by the researcher, their own apparent feelings, attitudes and reflections ultimately become their most original access and as such a valuable source of data which has to be considered in the interpretation of any other data collected.

What we would like to present and discuss are protocolled examples from the field, focussing on situations where the border between researcher and field becomes remarkably thin and thus to question a dichotomy between subjective and objective data and to point to the performativity of perception in ethnographical research.
In our paper presentation we would like to discuss ethnographic material from participant observation. Our project is part of a research cooperation between the universities of Braunschweig, Lüneburg and Hildesheim. We analyse gender performances and their interplay with the recognition of power in education at various institutions. The Hildesheim project investigates material aspects of youth socialization in gender roles and power recognition at an integrated comprehensive school. First we would describe a classroom interaction among a student’s group. How are male students playing with a paper cup during a break between lessons at school? Our description focuses on interferences between classroom, student’s bodies and the cup. We would like to show, how these interferences establish a certain socio-material arrangement. In connection to this description and referring to Butler’s concept of performance, we interpret the student’s play as a performance of gender and state. Finally we would reflect and discuss the cup’s performative power at the Oxford conference.

Our notion of performative power includes three perspectives. The notion is centred by the force to achieve symbolic effects as well as social effects at the same time. This central dimension was developed in two different directions. Performative power could be seen either as the potential to subvert discursive norms and to destabilise symbolic orders, or (in contrast to it) as performative magic. Bourdieu’s notion of performative magic explains the reproduction of powerful classifications, which is based in incorporated social experiences, more precisely habitual dispositions. Corresponding to these perspectives, we want to offer an empirically grounded and theoretically reflected approach on the performative power of things, which refers to current discussions about posthuman performativity.
Throughout the last decades, the educational policy discourse has sharpened and the dominant learning discourse has set the agenda. In addition, it points to reforms and factors that optimize learning by focusing on the teacher and on demands for 'high professionalism'. High teacher professionalism promotes learning and is combined with function expressed as ‘learning management’ and ‘digital formation’. Digital formation or technacy is the new raison d’etre (Borgnakke 2017a). Although this hyped political rhetoric is criticized, we need clarification of what ‘high professionalism’ means in terms of teacher practice, teacher role and didactical functions (Borgnakke, Dovemark, Marques da Silva, 2017). Theoretically, the research background is highlighted in a tension between social action theories and critical didactics (Borgnakke, 2017b). Empirically, the background is broad educational field research, which also refer to ethnographic analysis traditions that relate to critical discourse analysis and classroom research (Borgnakke 2013, 2018).

Background for this paper is ethnographic studies conducted as long-term fieldwork and full-scale studies covering compulsory school, upper secondary and university level. I use meta-ethnographic analysis to understand and describe the practical consequences of educational changes focusing on teacher role and functions in change with reference to 1) the interdisciplinary and project-oriented university environment (example from 1980s) 2) School development in elementary school (example from 1990s) and 3) IT-based classes upper secondary school (example from 2000s). Finally I refer to current case studies on teaching in the profession-oriented context. Giving a summary of the spectrum of the changing teacher functions the meta-ethnographic analyses will sketch challenges and dilemmas for current development of teacher professionalism.

Using meta-ethnographic analysis the findings focus on functions in change showing the practical impact of shifting demands during four decades related to the powerful paradigm and shifting political discourse. The cross-case analysis show consequences of the shift from the progressive project pedagogy paradigm (and the trends from 1980s) focusing the interdisciplinary and project-oriented collaborative work and the 'new' teacher role as supervisor, to the current powerful learning paradigm (and the trends from 2000s) focussing on IT-implementation, classroom management and learning outcome directed process control.

In the paper I take precision difficulties with me in the perspective of clarifying what teacher professionalism means in a cross case ethnographic analysis focusing on shifting demands, functions and roles. Giving a summary of the spectrum of the changing teacher functions the meta-ethnographic analyses will sketch challenges and dilemmas for current development of teacher professionalism. Inspired by worked examples given by Beach, Bagley, Eriksson, Player-Koro (2014) Hughes, Noblit (2017) Noblit, Hare (1988) Kakos, Fritzsche (2018) the paper contributes to develop meta-ethnographic analysis sharpening the focus on the relation between the political macro-, the institutional meso-level and the teaching practical micro-level.
What about commonness and commonality?

Current educational debates as well as political and social discourse on ‘increasing heterogeneity of learning groups’ conceptualize learning groups as combining students who differ in multiple (and more and more) ways. Overall, these debates consider heterogeneity differently, oscillating between seeing heterogeneity and multiple differences as a chance, as a challenge, or even as a problem. These different views span from the relation of heterogeneity to educational and learning processes, educational careers, as well as educational institutes and institutional actors (cf. Budde, 2012). Educational research on differences and inequality (cf. Diehm, Kuhn & Machold, 2017) qua design also focuses on a range of differences. Due to their multi-methodical characteristic, research approaches with an ethnographical focus are considered eminently powerful, particularly, for observing the (re-)production of differences in educational fields. An additional strength of ethnological-directed research approaches is the idea of a historical basic figure of ‘the foreign’ or ‘the other’ and the corresponding long tradition of examining the (re-)production of differences itself (cf. Tervooren, Engel, Göhlich et al. 2014, S. 9f.).

Not only in ethnography but also in educational research as a whole, examining the construction of differences and differentiating categories has a long tradition and is marked one of the central focuses of educational research since the 70’s at least, and this is regardless of the applied method in e.g. the ethnographical research process: i.e. whether it is deductive and — in addition — accompanied by reification risk, or inductive and hence focusing on fieldinherent lines of difference, or abortive, and therefore using combined and oscillating variants of the field of research (cf. Budde, 2014; Fritzsche & Tervooren, 2012) Without questioning the importance and relevance of this perspective on the sociocultural (re-)production of differences and inequality we want to stress, that it might be supporting the discourse of increasing heterogeneity and even its interpretation as problematical. Furthermore, it neglects the empirical reconstruction of commons and commonality (cf. Dietrich, 2017; Ricken & Reh, 2014), amongst others as a way of processing difference and inequality. Hence, we want to suggest a way to focus on ‘commons’[‘commonality’ as a fundamental but often uncared-for way of handling differences in social practices. Hence, the current contribution will take an exploratory-ethnographic approach aiming at a stronger focusing on ‘commonness’ and ‘connectedness’ of students considered as more or less different.

One critical part of such a discussion would be the reflection on the question of to what extent perception and observation in ethnographical research essentially operate based on differential settlements. Furthermore, such an approach includes questions about the significance, subjectivity and meaning, which aim to provoke further thinking about the order(ing) of ‘commonness’ and ‘commonality’. Using a sort of disconcertment strategy, we attempt to explore what is ‘seen’ (but also overseen) when the (re-)production of difference is being overlooked, or, at least, when the focus is shifted from differences and inequality to ‘commonness’[‘commonality’. By applying a practice theoretical-driven analysis, we attempt to tentatively, openly, and empirically construct ‘commonness’[‘commonality’, without presupposing what is meant by it.

Iva Capova

Disciplining through Schooling. Children's perspective, experience and engagement with school-based discipline.
The case of the first generation school-goers in rural Bihar, India.

Since 2000s the Indian government has launched the national education program of free and compulsory education for all children aged from 6 to 14 years. This was for the first time that such an education program aimed at the whole country’s population. The state "offer" of education meets since then with rising local aspirations from illiterate and semiliterate parents living in rural areas. Not only they often see school as an opportunity for upward mobility, but they also perceive it as an institution promoting at the local level "development" and "modernity", and able to form future citizens by teaching them "good manners". The school-based discipline is locally seen and valued as an important part of the schooling process and it is believed to have at least double positive effect: On the one hand, once internalized, it is likely to enable children to accede to lucrative jobs, on the other hand it is considered to furnish children with good basis for morality and hence make them "good people".

The contribution is based on a multi-case ethnographic survey situated in two villages in Bihar, the lowest literacy state of India. I conducted 12 months fieldwork study composed of daily classroom participant observations in 4 rural government primary schools in very poor areas, of observations inside few families and interviews with primary schoolteachers, parents and children. Children don't appear only as passives objects of disciplinary inculcation and moulding, but they respond to the school demand of discipline by a large array of strategies, negotiations and judgments. By partial or complete rejecting of schooling or resistance to its disciplinary rules, these poor children are often forced to engage with different type of discipline, especially the labour discipline or household chores discipline. School discipline can therefore be seen and experienced not only as long-term constraint leading to a durable shaping of personal conducts, but also as potential access to some resources of which children can benefit only if they adopt, in a certain extent, school conformed self-discipline. Finally, the inequality in the Indian school system, even among the government primary schools, can be observed on the bases of the degree of severity of discipline applied and required. In fact, these differences are correlated to the social composition (caste and social class) of pupils of each school as well as its emplacement in the village.

Through the lenses of a grassroots approach to primary education in the Indian villages, the paper proposes to place the focus on the children’s perspective and everyday experience of school discipline. It combines the ethnographic material of disciplinary practices of the classroom as well as their repercussions in the households. In particular, we will try to understand how and to what extent children engage themselves, cope with or reject the disciplinary rules demanded by the school. What are the disciplinary practices of teachers in the classroom and the individual attitudes of schoolchildren that children consider effective and profitable to ensure the successful schooling? How, out of these judgments, do they symbolically organize the social order of the Indian school system and the individual chances of education achievement?
Digital Migrating with Women We Love: A Feminist Ethnography

Ethnography and education are both practices in border crossings, in migrating, locating and relocating, metaphorically and physically. In this ethnographic study, we move between deeply personal narrative spaces and broadly digital interactive ones. As both an ethnographic and educational endeavor, our feminist project advances the value of understanding the lives of women we love, and of creating a global space where we and they can connect with, reinforce and learn from one another.

Historically women have collected their stories to build community. Our project, “Women we Love”, emerged in a time when #MeToo and other women’s movements offered new platforms for women to tell their stories, and were building new networks of local and global support. It was conceived by members of the Feminist Research Collective in the School of Education at Indiana University, as a way to honor some of the women in our lives. We draw on ongoing, intergenerational relationships and shared activities in our own personal lives, and have also incorporated 22 hours of recorded conversation and narrative interviews with 10 women we love so far, spanning 8 countries. We use a combination of images, sounds, videos, digital tools, narratives and poems to convey these women’s experiences. The Collective has adopted an online application called Story Map, which enables us to present information through multiple media. Our site will be interactive and there will be literal as well as figurative maps to show how the women’s stories criss-cross the globe and criss-cross time.

We are working towards establishing a global ethnography. Feminist ethnography emphasizes the importance of representing women’s lifeworlds, often in narrative forms. At the same time that each work centers around a woman, the WomenWeLove Project challenges the ways we explore their lives by locating and dislocating their stories simultaneously, by engaging in deeply personal and globally spacious ways, by migrating with them but never taking them over. Each of their lifeworlds is juxtaposed, paralleled, woven together, and echoed with others’, rather than being sealed off in isolation. The stories are dislocated because we create possibilities to shake the center of each narrative. The locations of each story are porous – the women can be seen simultaneously at the centers of their own lives and at the periphery of others’ lives, crossing borders and migrating in a digitalized world.

This method also works toward horizontal rather than hierarchical relationships among and between researchers, participants and readers. Readers can take any story or video or image or song as a starting point, and add their own. The researchers in the Collective themselves span a range of ages, races, nationalities, sexual orientations and academic roles, and although there are links between some of the contributions, these are added piecemeal, in different styles, and in consultation with participants.

WomenWeLove explores new possibilities for research in a digital world– enabling connections across space and time, across media, among the researchers and across the divide between researcher and participant.

We are in the beginning phases of a digitized ethonography. Although we will not discuss the empirical findings in this presentation, we want to indicate how these will emerge from our methodological approach. Recent ethnographic literature has blurred long-held binaries, such as local versus global and familiar versus unfamiliar fieldsites. The
WomenWeLove project affords us further opportunities to blur boundaries; between actual and virtual worlds, between centers and margins, and between visceral, affective, creative and cognitive ways of knowing.

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Abismrita Chakravarty

Learning to be a Monk: Study of the Teaching and Learning Practices at a Hindu Monastery.

This paper is an ethnographic enquiry into the teaching-learning practices at monasteries of the Vaishnavite tradition called satras, that are located in Assam in eastern India, to understand how monks (bhakats) produce, preserve and perform their identities and become legitimate members of a community of practice. Young boys are initiated into monkhood at the satra and are expected to practice lifelong celibacy and a form of devotion that employs the medium of dance and drama to disseminate religious ideas. Learning to ‘be’ a bhakat involves changes in bodily dispositions, speech, consciousness and an embodiment of the art forms that evolved at the satra. Bhakats are not ‘objects of antiquity’ but agential subjects navigating different, overlapping socio-political fields like schools, the professional arena of performance arts and the ritual space, and their learning encompasses all these different encounters, assimilations and exchanges. Through the research I enter and immerse myself in spaces of learning ‘outside’ formal institutions like schools to explore the various modalities and imaginaries of learning. In doing so I examine their implications on identities, the nature of knowledge and its reproduction.

At the satra, bhakats learn about the world and the religious philosophy through a form of apprenticeship. The community of practitioners constitute a living curriculum and an embodiment of the oral tradition. While rituals are learnt through peripheral participation, the arts follow a rigorous ‘formal’ learning process. There is a strong learner centered model where the apprentices take charge of their learning and specialize in areas of their choice with the guru’s encouragement. Their craft and training cannot be understood within a moral-spiritual universe alone since political and economic interventions have opened up the walls of the satra and added new value to the arts. Bhakats are pursuing ‘formal’ education in schools, and performing across different platforms while nurturing careers as artists. Their identities are multiple, negotiated and in a constant process of preservation and reinvention, of testing boundaries between what is and what is not yet, located in the fractures through which possibilities emerge.

The discussions that emerge from this single-site ethnographic study, broaden the purview and semantic field of education, so that it is not just understood in terms of ‘literacy’ and ‘numeracy’ but also in terms of identity formation and knowledge production. It throws light on the complexities and fluidity between binaries like the formal and non-formal domains of education and how they are mediated through webs of significance. Multiple methodological questions are raised about doing ethnography in a gendered space like the monastery as a woman. The study also draws parallels between the situated nature of learning at the satra and the situated nature of ethnographic work and how apprenticeship offers an ethnographic point of entry. Both take the ‘everyday’ rituals and conversations as sites for rich observations. There is a dissolution of the mind-body dualism where bodies actively interact with and experience phenomenon. These can be critical considerations in the field of education.
Miriam K. Damrow

Gender differences in parental engagement on playgrounds - comparing German and Italian parental behaviour.

Children on playgrounds in Italy and Germany mostly refer to their parents when being on a playground. So far, most studies on playgrounds focussed on institutional playgrounds instead of free ones and researched mainly children’s interaction with each other in national contexts. Parental engagement on free and public playgrounds has been understudied up to now. This study tries to fill the gap including and contributing to a comparative perspective in order to answer the following questions: what do parents do on playgrounds in Italy and Germany? Does the parental engagement differ regarding gender, quarter (in which the playground is located) and/or age of the child? How (if at all) do parents influence their children’s behaviour on playgrounds? Videography (as part of the ethnographic framework) is used to answer these questions.

This study is embedded into a larger project on children’s use of playgrounds in Europe. Previous investigations found ethnic separation patterns in 2017 applied by parents in Italy and Germany. In this year’s study part, parental engagement is of interest. Results from observations on playgrounds in Italy and Germany will be presented. All observation took place in early summer of 2019 (partly supported by students). First results from 2017 indicate that firstly, more female than male parents were busy using their smartphones/tablets or similar and thus paying more attention to their mobile devices than to what their children did. Secondly, fathers received a lot more attention from their children (children involved their fathers more often into their play, they went to their fathers more often, they asked more often whether their dad could come along and play with them etc.). The gender divide was particularly true for parental behaviour on German playgrounds in quarters with a low socioeconomic status in 2017.

First, this contribution explores how ethnography might allow for an understanding of the way children’s agency is promoted by their parents through the way they engage in their children’s activities on playgrounds. Secondly, the interwoven and interrelated worlds of parents (as adults) and their offsprings (as children) might reveal possible in-depth understanding of power and creativity. As a conclusion, parental engagement in children’s play might be necessary for the further development of their children. Thirdly, children’s identity construction might be uncovered by using ethnographic methods. Moreover, the interface between the ethnographer, the object of knowing and the known is also of interest.
Marianne Dovemark

Teachers and Migrant Students Adaption to the Temporary Law on Upper Secondary Education

Previous research has shown that a majority of migrant students at the language introductory programme ends outside of further education (Erixon Arreman & Dovemark 2017). Several structural barriers such as high demands on knowledge in Swedish and a maximum age for applying for a national programme at the upper secondary school hinder many migrant students from entering further studies though they have high expectations on higher education and are ambitious (Dovemark & Beach 2016). Accordingly, studies show an increasing achievement gap between migrant and native students (Grönqvist & Niknami 2017) and this gap has increased the last decades (Lundblad and Linblad 2018).

Due to the fact that structural problems faced by many migrant youths within the Swedish education system were recognized by the National Agency for Education (2016b) and to alleviate the consequences of these problems the Parliament of Sweden made a decision regarding new provisions in the so-called law on upper secondary education. The new provisions make it possible for migrant students who have had their applications for asylum rejected, to receive a residence permit to undertake studies at upper secondary level. That means they can finish the upper secondary education and after that they can receive a residence permit. There are though many factors which affect whether a student may be entitled to a residence permit for upper secondary education studies. The rules are different depending on whether the student is an asylum seeker, has a temporary residence, or have had an asylum application rejected. The rules also vary depending on whether it is an unaccompanied minor, what upper secondary course they are attending, and, in some cases, when the first application for asylum was received.

This paper will present substantive findings from a case study done in two middle size cities in Sweden in two ethnically diverse public upper secondary schools with more established as well as newly arrived migrant students. Migrant students, teachers, principals and counsellors within the language introductory programme have been observed and interviewed. The purpose of the study is to provide in-depth knowledge about migrant students’ possible opportunities and problems in the shadow of the law on upper secondary school. How has the law affected the everyday work at school? An ethnographic thematic analysis is done where the intersectionality of ethnic background, SES, and gender will be taken into in the analysis.

The first findings show that teachers and other school staff often find themselves in untenable situations where they are forced to act “as judges” that determine the lives of young people. The results also show some creative solutions to help the young migrants to receive a residence permit. Ethnographic approaches offer rich opportunities to find out how school actors meet and relate to new policies, in this case how teachers, students etc. are forced into a new pattern of actions to meet the requirements when a new temporary law is implemented. Few studies are made in the educational setting of the language introductory programmes within upper secondary education in Sweden.
John Doyle

So much to offer: An exploration of learning and cultural wealth with Roma Slovak post-16 students

Page Hall is an area of the large urban city of Sheffield in the north of England. The Roma Slovak community in Page Hall is from eastern Slovakia and they began to arrive in significant numbers in recent years. The area consists of 350 overcrowded two bedroomed terraced Victorian houses in very poor condition, which are available at a low cost rents, but are not suitable for the large families that have settled there (Payne, 2017). Their lifestyle has been perceived as creating problems for them and the wider community and there is negative media coverage that is often experienced by Roma communities (Okley, 2014). Local public services describe high levels of health and social care needs and they have suffered a history of oppression and exclusion in Slovakia (Payne, 2017; Penfold, 2015). This research sought to understand how a community of Roma Slovak with a myriad of apparent problems yet high aspirations (Brown, 2016) can progress educationally. The focus of the study is post-16 Roma Slovak students learning English in the nearby High Town Centre.

The theoretical framework for the current research is Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Yosso, 2005; Delgado and Stefancic 2012; Gillborn, 2015). CRT provides a positive framework for building on the strengths of communities and students’ capabilities through an appreciation of their cultural wealth. Cultural wealth is the resources an individual brings to the educational context from their home, heritage and individual experience. Students from deprived or excluded communities such as Roma are often problematised, with their culture seen as the root of their educational failure and low attainment effectively their fault (Yosso, 2005; Delgado and Stefancic 2012; Gillborn, 2015; Gonzalez et al, 2005). CRT identifies racism as the main factor in suppressing the life chances of minority communities (Delgado, 2002; Yosso, 2005); though CRT recognises there are multiple factors affecting individuals and more than one factor may affect an individual, for example ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, age and life experiences.

The research methodology was ethnographic with participant observation over two terms capturing in fieldwork notes how cultural wealth was used in this setting including:

- regular classroom sessions of up to sixteen students,
- informal discussions with students and teachers at break times,
- a social event,
- a day trip to the city centre,
- semi-structured interviews with the students, teachers and the centre manager.

Data gathering and analysis applied Carspeckel (1996) critical ethnography and LeCompte and Schensul (2010) thematic analysis. The research developed the use of Yosso’s (2005) cultural wealth framework to explore not just the "what" of classroom learning but the "how" and "who"; capturing the voice of young Roma Slovak students. Their story was in stark contrast to the stereotypes and images that are commonly shared about the community (Okley, 2014; Richardson, 2014; O’Nions, 2014). The research findings suggest a focus on cultural wealth should include relationships that build trust, confidence and agency and also recognise the individuality of students. Emerging findings were shared with some students informally and with the teachers to inform local practice.
Conspicuous children. An ethnography of processes of recognition in the kindergarten.

This substantive paper presents the findings of our research project “Conspicuous Children” which was funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. During two years of ethnographic fieldwork we studied the practice of inclusive schooling in the Swiss kindergarten, focusing on the pedagogical handling of what educators call ‘heterogeneity’. By analysing the kindergarten teachers’ daily practices and routines from the first day of school, we can show how they identify some children as being “different”. Theoretically we focus on processes of un/doing difference (West & Fenstermaker 1995; Hirschauer 2017). We link this interest to the question of recognition (Butler 1997) and the social order of the kindergarten. We assume that recognition is a central structural moment of practices and that subject positions are negotiated on the basis of norms of recognizability.

The idea of inclusive schooling generally aims at the recognition of diversity. But it does not ask how diversity, broadly understood as ‘difference’ between pupils, is enacted in everyday interactions. In our research we precisely focus on such interactions. We show how expectations regarding the children’s performances are interlinked with different orders in the kindergarten: with the interactional order (e.g. bodily control; adjusting own’s volume/voice), the symbolic order (e.g. self- and external categorizing; the proper handling of specific kindergarten artefacts) and the knowledge order (e.g. understanding and speaking German, being able to use scissors). These orders provide a powerful framework for processes of un/doing differences, as well as for processes of recognition and subject positioning. The specific norms, values and demands of these orders are imposed on the children and - last but not least - also on their families. It is within this framework that children become conspicuous or different. The framework is also flexible and is adapted and performed in the teachers’ routines, depending on context and circumstances. We argue that the socio-economic context of the neighbourhood, the family situation and other factors also play a role regarding the specifics of the frameworks and the production of conspicuousness.

We visited the three kindergartens over two years extensively and collected a heterogenous body of data: fieldnotes, field documents, recorded teacher-parent-talks, interviews with teachers and parents, photographs and audio recordings. With this abundance of data, we elucidate the practices and everyday culture of the kindergarten, which has an outstanding position within the Swiss educational system. Although part of mandatory schooling for 10 years, it has a history and identity as being different from school: more child-centered, allowing children to play, but also preparing the children for the transition to school. With our ethnography we take a close look at the inner workings of the kindergarten, at the daily routines of the teachers and at interactional processes which lead to the social positioning of children. Hereby we fill a void in the current educational research about the Swiss school system. Referring to our research question about how the idea of inclusive schooling is practically performed we are able to show the crucial role of the local and organizational context.
Anita Eriksson

“First teachers” in preschool – an ethnographic investigation of the implementation of a new category of preschool teacher assignment

In recent decades, education systems around the world have undergone many changes in order to increase the quality of the educational system and the student’s achievement of goals. In the argumentation about how these changes are to be achieved, the teacher is described as playing a key role and the teachers’ professional skills have been highlighted as a very important factor for student’s performance (Hattie, 2009; McKinsey & Company, 2007; Skolverket, 2014). In a report from OECD (2011), career paths for teachers was highlighted as a successful way to achieve an increased educational quality and in several countries career step reforms has been established lately. In Sweden, a Career Services for Teachers (CST) reform (Prop. 2012/13:136) was implemented 2013, aiming to get particularly skilled teachers to stay in school and continue to teach and to spread their teaching skills to colleagues, as this in turn would increase the quality of teaching in the Swedish education system. With this reform a new category of teachers was created, so-called first teachers. Prior to the reform, it was stated that it would apply to both preschool and compulsory school and that first teachers should be appointed in both contexts. However, when the reform was launched and implemented, the preschool was exempted, and Government grants were only awarded for assignments as first teachers in compulsory and upper secondary schools. Despite this, career paths for particularly skilled preschool teachers, i.e. kinds of first teacher assignments, have been set up in preschools. The research in the present paper deals with questions about the “first teacher” assignment in the preschool context and what kind of tasks that are included in this assignment.

Data production was conducted through ethnographic fieldwork (Walford, 2008; Jeffrey & Troman, 2004), over a period of six months at one preschool. As a researcher I observed planning meetings in which the head of the preschool and three “first teachers” participated, meetings led by first teachers as well as other kinds of relevant workplace meetings. Field conversations and interviews with the head, first teachers and other preschool staff was conducted, and policy documents related to the first teacher assignment was analysed. The analysis of data has been theoretically informed by Bourdieu’s (1993) concepts field and capital.

The findings show that the implementation of first teachers led to a more hierarchical organization in which the preschool teachers that were appointed were positioned between the head and the other preschool staff, both by the head, other preschool teachers and child-care workers. The head expected these preschool teachers to be responsible for developing the quality of the educational activities and the professional development of their colleagues. The assignment as a first teachers comprised a lot of different tasks such as pedagogical-, leadership- and administrative ones. The results of the investigation contributes to the knowledge in the field of educational research and to ethnography by a methodological discussion.

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Sally Campbell Galman

Nicole’s mother is dead: “Playing” with death in preschool ethnography

This is a research piece, but I am considering expanding and perhaps focusing more on methodological issues depending on the feedback I receive. This paper examines what happens when children’s play stories, specifically in the context of Paley’s “dramatime stories” (2004) cease to be cute and charming and instead incorporate themes that many western adults consider “improper” (Jones et al, 2010). In this case, the sudden death of a 4-year old’s mother became the subject of not only her own dramatime story, but also the dramatime and other imaginative play storylines of many other children in the class. From the wrenching moment of its first telling, the story “Nicole’s Mother Is Dead” sparked an interest in death that lasted nearly six months in the preschool fieldsite: Following through the other children’s death-related stories and play, to the inevitable outcry from parents and community members, to the preschool teacher’s attempt to integrate children’s interest in death into the classroom curriculum, this paper returns to the question of what happens when adults seek to truly hear the youngest children, only to recoil? And what sense do children make of these reactions to their stories?

The analyses presented in this paper are part of a larger corpus of data from a multi-year ethnographic study of a diverse, rural preschool in the northeastern United States. The data were collected primarily though participant observation during free play period, and altogether this resulted in around 1000 hours of observation in the preschool classroom. I employ Jones, Holmes, MacRae & MacLure’s (2010) theory of the “improper child” to frame the paper and to being to illuminate why some stories become “strange” and alarming to adults, and others pass unnoticed. They suggest that some children become “improper” because they challenge adults’ conception of how a “proper” child looks and behaves. They are “no longer known subjects within the adults’ gaze [and] constitute a crisis because they are between two categories where they are neither subject nor object . . . they have fallen from what within the scope of the adult is ‘possible,’ ‘tolerable’ or ‘thinkable’” (p. 184). So, the “proper” child becomes “improper” as a function of disrupting an adult’s meaning system. The idea of the ‘clean and proper’ child and his ‘clean and proper’ stories is complicated by a popular adult construction of child as cherub (Jenkins, 1998; Lancy, 2015) in the midst of a culture that frowns on children’s “precocious” knowledge, but still allows real children to live in real poverty, hunger and fear. Eschewing easy romanticizing, reflections on the importance of attending meaningfully to children’s stories conclude the paper.

As I have written elsewhere (Galman, 2018), preschool ethnography is its own country, and the craft of observing small people and their small moments with intention and respect is honed over a lifetime. This project falls within the interpretive tradition of the ethnography of childhood, aligned very much with the “tribes of childhood” (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998) orientation to thinking about children’s culture. To this end I see childhood as “an independent place with its own folklore, rituals, rules and normative constraints . . . within a system that is unfamiliar to [adults] and therefore to be revealed through research” (James et al, 1998, 29). However, in this paper and my confrontation with my own worries about the intersection of cultural ideals of the cherubic and “innocent” child and American contamination rhetoric to the fore larger questions of how an adult ethnographer can begin to see children’s culture in an authentic way.


Anthropological approaches to education cannot leave unquestioned the theories of learning and cognition they endorse, especially when it implies children. While universalistic and ethnocentric assumptions have successfully been criticized in this regard, current approaches tend to bypass a crucial phenomenon: the psychogenetic structuration of cognitive development. I tackle the issue, based on an ethnography of how children from 9 to 11 learn concepts in Steiner schools. Steiner school's pedagogical system is derived from the controversial esoteric doctrine of Anthroposophy and involves the development of specific “spiritual”, cognitive and behavioural traits in children. Every lesson implies learning by doing, direct observation, and artistic creations, while teachers try to facilitate pupils' understandings by using a lot of metaphors to make things vivid and stimulate pupils' imagination. Pupils are expected to participate and debate actively, as well as express out loud their reasoning.

Taking into account current debates in cognitive sciences, my analysis relies on Cultural-Historical Activity Theory. Analysing development within practical social activities, this cross-cultural theory convincingly showed that the ontogenetic development of qualitatively different forms of thought consists in the development of specific structures of generalization. In particular, conceptual thinking implies the capacity to generalize elements of experience and to mentally examine at will these abstracted contents in terms of essential features (forms, functions, structures, etc.).

During a four-year ethnographic fieldwork in two elementary and primary Steiner schools in Belgium, I observed how pupils come to understand, abstract and generalize conceptual meanings. A special attention has been given to audio-recording pupils’ reasoning and analysing in context how they make causal links, generalizations and abstractions with concepts. I also compared and analysed their notebooks, and conducted in-depth semi-directive interviews with teachers.

The diversity of pedagogic means used in Steiner schools help pupils to abstract the conceptual meanings, while the various situations they are used in via multimodal learning help them to generalize them. Also, teachers’ metaphors seem particularly helpful to pupils’ understanding, considering how they appropriate them when explaining the concepts. Thus, teachers contribute to push forward pupils' “zones of proximal development” regarding their capacity to think in higher levels of abstraction and generalization by using concepts. However, a closer analysis of pupil’s reasoning and verbal interactions indicates that if they come to understand and use correctly concepts in various situations, they still struggle to use and define them in abstract and general ways. They would rather mention concrete examples or features when asking to define them. This suggests a developmental transition to the capacity to properly think in concepts.

This paper aims to overcome the current use of ethnography as a means to trace cognitive phenomena back to specific cultural practices. It shows how ethnographic methods can be used to describe and analyse in real situations, over long timescales and in specific socio-cultural contexts how cognitive development occurs, by taking into account its psychogenetic structuration and constraints. Beyond reminding us of socio-cultural diversity, the ethnography of education could then play a critical role in dialogue with cognitive sciences regarding issues of education.
Lina Grudulaitė

The Prospects and Challenges of applying Narrative Ethnography in Education.

This paper presents the results of literature review about the methodology of narrative ethnography and discusses its obscure origins and various conceptualizations. The methodological paper critically discusses the research studies conducted in the field of Education, which use narrative ethnography as their main methodology, and demonstrates its relevance for conducting research studies in educational settings. The primary purpose of this paper is to reveal various prospects and challenges for researchers, who might be employing narrative ethnography as methodology for their research projects.

The literature review reveals that narrative ethnography has various conceptualizations. Two dominant understandings of narrative ethnography are frequently applied in educational research studies. One meaning of narrative ethnography is directly related to the understanding of personal narratives as socially embedded in narrative practice and environment. It is significant not only what is conveyed by stories but also how and where the stories are constructed. Other understanding is connected to representational practices of fieldwork and its results. It emphasizes the importance of a dialectical relationship of ethnographer with research participants and readers of ethnographies and concentrates on writing practices of ethnography. Despite their differences, both views share a lot of in common. They both are interested in personal experiences of people and how they can be narratively constructed. Therefore, they recognize the power of stories in social construction of reality.

The researchers conducting studies about educational topics often prioritize one or other conceptions of narrative ethnography and not consistently clearly indicate, which understanding of methodology they follow. They also frequently manoeuvre on the established border between narrative inquiry and ethnography. The researchers conducting studies in educational settings often face challenges clarifying ontological and epistemological premises of narrative ethnography, justifying their choice of methodology and demonstrating the uniqueness of the approach. The clarification and critical discussion of philosophical premises and linkages with other methodological approaches increase the integrity of research studies and help to choose suitable methods for data collection and analysis. The review also reveals the immense potential of applying narrative ethnography for conducting research in Education as this methodology can make research process more transparent and ethic. The methodology helps to explore educational and learning experiences as constantly changing, dynamic, co-constructed and embedded in specific contexts.

This paper contributes to education and ethnography by discussing an emerging methodology of narrative ethnography, its origins, conceptualizations and its application in research studies conducted in educational settings. The methodology paper reveals various prospects and challenges for educational researchers, who might be employing narrative ethnography as main methodology for their research projects.
Amira Sarra Hiouani And Nor El Houda Khiari

Is Algerian English a ‘Centre’ English in Disguise? An Ethnographic Study of the Case of Algerian Teachers and Students of English.

Based on the findings of an ethnographic study at an Algerian university exploring language teaching and learning ideologies in relation to identities, this substantive paper sets out to explain the concept of Algerian English and how related it seems to be to ‘Centre’ Englishes. It also aims at demonstrating the diverse methods used as part of the entire ethnographic framework and how a combination of fieldwork observations, informal interviews and discussions, overheard conversations, focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and repertory-grid-based interviews, with an emphasis on this latter, contributed to the overall understanding of the themes emerging from the study including the issue of Algerian English.

The findings can be examined at two distinct yet interdependent levels. While the first level is substantively constructed, the second one is based on methodology. As for the practical findings, it appears that the multiplicity of people’s identities and the stereotypes they hold can be regarded as a constituent part of the process of understanding why Algerian English is the way it is. Throughout the collection of data, a certain pattern began to emerge. Identity-wise, the study reveals that no matter how Algerian the English used might appear to be, there always seems to be a British or American side to it. In some cases, the participants’ Berber identity clashes with their user-of-English identity which, to some degree, creates the illusion of appertaining to the English-speaking ‘Centre’. Contrarily, some participants’ rejection of the stereotypes that accompany ‘Centre’ Englishes seems to result in an ‘Algerianised’ version of British and American Englishes. These occurrences led me to question the very essence of Algerian English and whether it even exists at all. At the level of methodology, it is the use of repertory grids that has been particularly appealing. Even though rep grids have been criticized for lacking rigour and for owning qualities that appear to appertain to the positivist paradigm, their use yielded an abundant amount of in-depth data. Not only were they an ethnographic tool that worked in harmony with all other fieldwork-based methods, but they also performed as a lens through which enacted social constructionism was thoroughly experienced.

As far as education is concerned, this paper contributes to the overall understanding of Algerian English, within the ambit of World Englishes, in relation to the social practices which are performed within the educational context. More precisely, the fact that the participants are teachers and students of English whose convictions and identities form a constituent part of their teaching and learning practices adds to the comprehension of how different Englishes operate around the world. In addition, the efficacious use of repertory grids should not go unseen. Although other ethnographic tools have also been successfully used, repertory grids performed as guided narratives, in the sense that the participants answered the questions that they themselves asked based on their own mindsets, identities and backgrounds.
How does early childhood education matter to children? Espousing relationality and materiality in ethnographic research.

Early Childhood Education is often held to be in the best interest of the child, without considering how it matters to children. Within the social studies of childhood, ethnography has been considered a methodology which makes valuable contributions to meet this desideratum by giving voice to children, viewing them as competent actors and acknowledging them as experts of their own lives and empowering them to participate in the research.

Important as they may have been to question prevailing notions about children as lesser human beings and to advocate their capacity to make changes, the concepts of agency, voice and participation are under severe critique to have produced an understanding of childhood as a “decidedly human matter focussed on the needs of individual children” (Osgood & Robinson 2019). Cook (2011) argues that the concept of agency is oriented towards an idealized adult actor, and therefore limits the potential of childhood studies to engage with children’s messy and complex lives. Addressed as experts of their own lives, children are seen to be often involved into the production of knowledge about childhood which favours certain stories over others (Gallagher and Gallacher 2008).

The paper wishes to discuss how ethnography in early childhood education can respond to this critique. As an ethnographer, whose research interests have for many years focussed on understanding how early childhood and primary education matter to children (Huf 2013), I am exploring possibilities of doing ethnographic research which can contest normative expectations on children and their learning without idealizing children’s individuality, independence and autonomy and without relying on their complicity with my knowledge making practices.

In the recent debate in childhood studies, Karen Barad’s theory of agential realism (2007) is considered to produce new knowledges about childhood and offer fresh insights into knowledge making practices with children (Dennis/Huf in review). Barad’s concepts of entanglement, intra-action and diffraction and her interest in boundary making practices are seen to encourage interdependency and relationality. Drawing on Barad, Spyrou claims a shift in childhood studies from focussing on the capacities of children to asking „what capacities emerge out of children’s relational encounters with other entities“ (2018,203).

Drawing on fieldwork in a London Nursery School, which examines how matter matters in early childhood education, the paper will explore how this shift can be practiced as ethnographic research. It will discuss how the concepts of interdependency and relationality guide the ethnographer’s gaze, how they shape her relationship with the children and how they produce a specific understanding of how early childhood education matters to children.

The findings of the analysis will be discussed in relation to the dominant narrative of the importance of quality interaction between practitioner and child. They will show how the knowledge that is produced about quality practice of early childhood education ignores the importance of the materiality of the classroom and the involvement of material into boundary making practices between adults and children, but also between different children. In conclusion, espousing relationality and materiality in ethnographic research will be appreciated as a possibility to engage critically with how we know what matters in early childhood education.


Dennis, B., Huf, C. in review: Participatory Entanglements in Ethnographic Research with children. Ethnography and Education.


This paper explores the author’s ongoing ontological dilemma and navigation process, as an anthropologist who goes back and forth between ‘native’ and ‘other’, or ‘learned’ and ‘novice’ positionings and ways of being. Through reflecting on this process, the paper seeks to find the connections between mindfulness, contemplation and ethnography; to speak to/with scholars who use ethnographic and anthropological knowledge in applied and implicit ways beyond scholarship; and to identify the possible problems that practitioner-ethnographers may encounter. In 2017-2018, I conducted fieldwork in American mindfulness-based educational spaces as a Japanese anthropologist. After returning to Japan in 2018, I have continued to conduct research on the mindfulness movement in the U.S. and in Japan. I am interested in how ‘mindfulness’ is being received, experienced, discussed in the Japanese context and the interaction with Western developments in this field.

More than a year has passed since returning from fieldwork in the U.S., and I am increasingly finding myself as a part of the ‘mindfulness community’ in Japan – my experience of learning about mindfulness and attending many training programs and retreats in the U.S. has placed me in a position with special knowledge. In fact, I myself have been transformed in the process of fieldwork in the U.S., so that my perspective, understanding and ontological commitment in the realm of mindfulness research and contemplative education is very different from my initial 2017 Fulbright research proposal.

As a Japanese anthropologist who is studying the American ‘mindfulness culture’; who is simultaneously bringing ‘other’ (but complexly ‘indigenous’ since mindfulness is rooted in Buddhism and deeply related to Japanese Zen) knowledge gained abroad to the Japanese community while observing/researching this process; my project involves
navigating multiple identities and perspectives of ‘native’ and ‘other’. More importantly, as a ‘mindfulness researcher’ who through the anthropological project has come to know a way of being-in-the-world that is beyond social scientific analysis, rational explanation and categorization – that is about embodied experience ‘beyond’ or ‘before’ language; I find myself navigating between different ontological realms.

As I become involved in holding workshops and teaching mindfulness myself, how do I juggle the role of both endorsing and critiquing? How do I remain mindfully aware of my own socially structured positionings, biases, and intentions? How can I maintain an optimal balance between existing as a social scientist and as a mindfulness practitioner; how might they be connected and integrated? These are the questions that I hope to raise and explore through my experience of ethnographic field research in mindfulness practice.
This paper will present substantive findings from an event ethnographic study of one large Scandinavian educational technology (ed-tech) trade fair, SETT. Educational fairs and events have become important arenas and policy nodes for an increasing global ed-tech market where products and ideas become demonstrated, promoted and sold and where (inter)national networks of public and private policy actors intersect with local school systems, schools and teachers (Ball 2012). As these event have become integral parts of policy interpretation and translation, they also transform crucial aspects of education (Ball 2016; Menashy 2016). The question is therefore what and how educational ideas and visions are framed through the event? Following this, Is it possible to track any coherent vision/politic of education among the various actors at the event? What role do the different actors believe they have? In relation to each other, to education, to teachers? These questions are addressed through an (event) ethnographic study of one ed-tech trade fair in Sweden.

The study is, part of and informed by two larger ethnographic projects, based in two universities. The first project concerns a threeyear ethnographic study of these annual events. This bigger project has analysed and mapped the formation and different aspects of the ed-tech policy networks through the use of networked ethnographic methods (Player-Koro 2014; Player-Koro and Bergviken Rensfeldt 2017). The second project is a three-year ethnographical investigation of historicizing the present, when studying how private ‘edupreneurial’ actors and logics change the conditions for what counts as good education in Sweden. This particular study explores the 2018 SETT show in Malmö.

The paper draws on detailed ethnographic accounts of different actors’ participation in the exhibition hall at the event. The aim, as in most ethnographic studies, is by participating in the event, talking and listening to different actors, to offer a rich means of developing knowledge about the meaning-making processes of actors’ policy enactment (Beach 2010) represented by different schools, businesses, trade unions and government actors.

The main finding is that regardless of the sector the actors represent there are not any in-depth ideas about society, school or education expressed. Instead the driving force and the main messages are local and expressed in terms of: a) Private actors – their own product b) Trade Unions – their own message c) Municipalities – local school government and their own accomplishments d) Governmental structures (The Swedish Institute for Educational Research and The National Agency of Education) - the mission, their reports Our conclusion is that this creates an atomistic educational policy governance space with blurred boundaries and a complex network, driven by business ideas and economical agendas rather than social ideas about what education should be for the individual, society and democracy. Few studies have scrutinized this kind of educational arena where educational policymaking is taking place, as we argue, in the wake of a neoliberal economic reorganization of the public sector. Ethnographic approaches offer rich opportunities for exploring this arena where educational policy is formed, transformed and disseminated.
Anastasia Kalokyri

Overcoming and mitigating methodological difficulties of conducting ethnography about students with ADHD in a Scottish secondary school

Ethnography has become one of the most common approaches for conducting educational research (Pole & Morrison, 2003). There is a number of studies which have used ethnography to explore the social identities of pre-school (Konstantoni, 2012) and primary school children (Kustatcher, 2015; Connolly, 1998) as well as the identities of children with communication disabilities (Wickenden, 2011) and other various disabilities (e.g. MacArthur et al., 2007; Davis & Watson, 2001; 2002). However, ethnographic studies with students with ADHD are rare (Bailey, 2014) and particularly with secondary school students. The purpose of this paper is to address methodological challenges based on an ethnographic study about the school experiences of 10 students with ADHD which took place in a large secondary school in Scotland. Despite the increasing use of ethnographies in schools, scholars overlook the importance of reporting the methodological difficulties of capturing data from a secondary school which can be valuable information for ethnographers to be aware of before entering the fieldwork. The approach that needs to be adopted is different, for example, from primary school, where the ethnographer can observe the students every hour of the school day. Doing ethnography in a secondary school can be very challenging, especially if the students belong to different school years, different classrooms depending on their ability, and attend different facilities within the school (mainstream classes, segregation Units, the Learning Base). Thus, the ethnographer needs to take substantial decisions on the most effective ways to collect the data.

The main methodological challenges identified in the fieldwork of this study include: selection of participant students among a number of students with ADHD and selection of participant teachers of various specialties depending on predefined criteria; establishment of an open and reciprocal channel of communication with the school to utilise its resources; getting the parents’ consent on time; strategic and methodical planning of observations based on each student’s timetable in order to spend as much equal time as possible with each student; creation of relationship of trust with the school staff and students in order to bridge cultural differences. Despite the challenges, it appears to be possible to record data from observations from secondary school students who belong to different years and classes and do complex ethnographies in complex environments. Hence, organisational skills, adaptability, flexibility and planning ahead are required in order to overcome the methodological challenges. The unique contribution of the paper to education and ethnography is to equip scholars with practical knowledge in order to make them more aware of potential challenges they might face before or during their ethnographic fieldwork at secondary schools by drawing on the personal experiences, challenges and their mitigations, which I encountered during my fieldwork. This will potentially assist future researchers who wish to undertake an ethnography in a secondary school and maximise the amount of opportunities for data gathering.


Malene Kjaer

What happened – do you know? Working with inherited ethnographic data

In this paper, I show and discuss how we can work with collected ethnographic data which is encountered by chance (Bishop, 2009; Hammersley, 1997). I will explain how inherited data can be of great scientific value to work carried to work in an educational setting.

The paper takes it’s point of departure from a close case-material. A master’s student wrote her thesis using inherited video ethnographic data from medical (MacLeod m.fl., 2015) learning situations, in which trained nurses dealt with multiple simulated heart-attacks/resuscitation of ‘patients’. The student herself did not collect the data (nor did her supervisor, me), it was inherited from a doctor employed at a larger Danish hospital. They needed help looking into and understanding the communication happening in the learning environment, including how the instructions from the defibrillator were followed. Thus, the scientific work for the student began with understanding ethnographic data that she did not collect, understanding the work of nurses whom she had never met, and making an analytical choice about relevance (both to her thesis research, to the doctor who provided the data, and to the practice she sought to influence).

Following on from this, in the paper I ask and answer these questions:

How can we work with data we haven’t collected ourselves? What are the aims and pitfalls?
Can we get to know the recipients (of a given practice), if we have never met them?
If we do not know how the practitioners regard (the problems and successes of) the practice at hand, how do we decide which part of the available data to analyse in depth?
My article will answer the questions both considering the analytical findings (Zimmerman, 2008), that came from the master student’ thesis looking into how the interaction between the nurses and the defibrillator worked – and also how in a more general sense, working with inherited data can provide both pitfalls and rich findings.

In this paper I aim to describe a meta-layer in the E&E context. I find sharing (video) ethnographic data to be a benefit (Piwowar, Becich, Bilofsky, Crowley, & Workspace, 2008) both for the E&E community and across research traditions and practices, which can gain insights from the different findings. But sharing can have both insights and pitfalls.
(Hammersley, 2010). My aim is for the paper to show try to show how we can reflectively deal with inherited data in such a way that we use it in new research in the best manner.


Chelsea E. Korth


In the 1960’s and 70’s in the US, thousands of independent schools opened as part of the “Free Schools” movement. A subset of these schools were founded with the intention of democratizing the school experience and producing graduates who would act as well-educated and participatory citizens. During the height of this movement, Roc and Barb Bonchek founded Harmony School as a small, democratic secondary school in Indiana. Now a preK-12 school serving approximately 270 students each year, Harmony has long outlasted its founding movement and maintained a commitment to critical democratic education. After a two-year ethnographic study of the Harmony High School, I found that Harmony “does” democratic education through both intentional policies and practices, as well as through inherent cultural practices that create and maintain an environment of humanization, care, and acceptance.

Democratic schooling practices such as Family Meetings, student-dominated committees, majority and consensus-based voting and “training” for democratic participation are the backbone of the democratic curriculum of the school. Participants identified many of these practices with feeling heard and empowered, even in situations where genuine change was not brought about, or in cases where a participant was on the losing side of a vote. I found that rather than privileging the voice of certain participants based on gender or “popularity”, as has been seen in other studies, voices were privileged based on experience/grade level and personality (particularly extroversion versus introversion), though the variety of participation opportunities mitigated this somewhat.

Perhaps most surprisingly, student participants expressed strong opinions on how school affected their mental and emotional health. Many of them transferred to Harmony due to bullying and lack of acceptance, often related to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Having teachers who they felt knew them and their situations/backgrounds well, being part of a small community that is accepting and socially open, and having the freedom to express their identity claims without judgment were the most important factors to them feeling positively about their schooling experience. Identifying a culture of care and humanization as part of a critical democratic agenda is a subtle but important finding in today’s schooling climate.

This study was a two-year ethnography of the secondary program at Harmony School which I completed for my dissertation project. I utilized Carspeckens’s Critical Ethnography in Education Research to design and guide the study. I asked the following research questions:

1. What educational beliefs and intentions underlie Harmony School, according to various community members (i.e. high school teachers, students, administrators and former teachers)?
2. How does the Harmony high school community view and enact “democracy”?
3. How do students and teachers experience the school and view themselves within the larger theories, structures and practices which underlie it?

I spent the first year doing observations and constructing the primary record, and the second year conducting interviews, focus groups and continuing observations. I also completed over 150 hours of observations and collected a lot of archival data. I completed interviews with fifteen participants. This included the school’s founder and current head Roc Bonchek, five teachers, one former teacher, and nine students. This was roughly 20% of the available
participants. Because there was so much data, and because it was so rich, the findings were also fulsome. My initial list of findings came to nine, but with further work it became clear that some of them were better when connected or nested with each other. In the end, I identified three main findings.

Firstly, I found that Harmony’s culture of care and humanization was the single most commonly coded for in the interview data. It was often discussed in direct opposition to experiences in other schools, and was cited as responsible for the large population of students identifying as LGBTQIA+ within the high school. It was related closely to students feeling heard, known and accepted within their school. I was also closely connected with feeling like they had a genuine voice/say/power in their school because they felt listened to and didn’t feel judged if they expressed an unpopular/minority opinion.

Secondly, I found that the school was actively “doing” democracy in three major ways, which I titled “Practice”, “Pedagogy” and “Training”. Practice is the most obvious category as it involves the practices most readily identified and associated with democratic education such as Family Meetings, committee work, voting practices, policy-change events, etc. It is the actual practice of students and teachers making decisions through democratic processes within the school, and the policies which underlie that work. Pedagogy refers to democratic practices being integrated into classrooms by teaching staff. Cases where this was not being done were also attended to. Training refers to situations within the school where students were literally given training in democratic practices such as citizenship, legal rights, civil discourse, civil disobedience, forming political/youth groups, etc. This was primarily done through special event days, student-led events or teacher-initiated extra-curriculars. I also found that part of “doing” democratic education within the high school program was about educating for specific, intended results. For example, educating students with the intention of creating “global citizens”, “responsible, contributing members of a community”, “Decent Humans”, “Adults”, etc.

Finally, I found that voting and decision-making within the school was constantly being negotiated, and how it was done in any given moment affected power, voice and agency. Participation was based on an apprenticeship model with new and younger students learning how to participate from older students and teachers. Outside their classroom role, teachers also acted as gate-keepers, change-agents and mentors within the school, and had their own entire tier of consensus-based participation in staff meetings where students were not present.

There is a great paucity of research on independent/private (i.e. “alternative”) democratic schools, both internationally and in the U.S. context. The few ethnographies of such schools tend to be concentrated in the 1960’s and 70’s, when democratic education had a vogue popularity for a brief time. Despite this lack of research, there are hundreds of democratic schools in operation in the United States today and hundreds more abroad (AERO, 2016) (IDEN, 2016), indicating community and family interest in such schools across the world. There has also been a small but measurable uptick in democratic education literature in the past decade, focusing primarily on democratic charter schools and democratic education programs within traditional public schools, and couched as studying “student voice”, “student engagement” and “student leadership”.

The policy context of education today merits a serious look at such schools for three major reasons. Firstly, many policy makers have been calling for greater innovation in education (U.S. Department of Education, 2012) (U.S. Senate Newsroom, 2015), but research tells us that institutional isomorphism limits the ability of highly regulated and
interconnected organizations, such as public schools, to be heterogeneous (Welch, 2011) and further, that charter schools on the whole have failed at the brief of innovation overall (Lubinski, 2003) (Lake, 2008). Therefore, it logically follows that we should look to private alternative schools, democratic schools among them, which are largely free from regulation and more bound to the needs and desires of individual communities, as possible sites of innovative educational practices and structures.

Secondly, issues of social justice compel educational researchers to examine both the known and tacit inequalities of contemporary global education systems, as well as to examine possible alternatives which may be more just, more equitable, and therefore more ethical. Many have criticized the distinctly neoliberal direction of much education policy in the past few decades, leading to high levels of regulation (e.g. “common core”, NCLB), and many potentially damaging evaluation practices in our publicly funded schools. This is to say nothing of federal mismanagement of the Department of Education under the Trump administration’s jurisdiction. Within U.S. public schools, poor and minority students are largely segregated from middle and upper-class students in failing schools which often lack basic resources (Kozol, 1991). Regardless of the rhetoric of the American dream where anyone can work hard and do well, and the rhetoric of meritocracy where well-behaved students can succeed at a high level, go to college, and be whatever they want to be, decades of educational, social and economic research has laid bare the truth of systemic inequality in the U.S.A.

Thirdly, American democracy is in crisis. The EIU Democracy index for 2017 denotes the U.S. as a “flawed democracy”, ranking 21st in the world. The EIU also wrote that, “The latest edition of The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index records the worst decline in global democracy in years. Not a single region recorded an improvement in its average score since 2016, as countries grapple with increasingly divided electorates. Freedom of expression in particular is facing new challenges from both state and non-state actors...” This trend has continued and arguably gotten worse in 2018, considering recently released documents questioning the free exercise of past U.S. elections, and recent government-sponsored human rights violations, among a myriad of other issues. Discussing democratic schools and education within the current political climate requires admitting that our current state of democracy is flawed and facing many attacks, and that studying and supporting civic education, youth participation, youth voice and similar issues is one form of critical activism. Democratic education can also be a form of youth activism, making it a potentially powerful form of education for promoting the value of, and teaching the skills for protecting, basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I believe that the results of my study are exciting and important in the field of education and ethnography. My findings speak particularly strongly to issues of social justice within schools, particularly as we move forward into many of the new issues of the 21st century, such as changes in racial/ethnic and gender identity claims. The fact that so many students felt attacked, ostracized and unsafe in previous school environments, but felt that Harmony had given them a safe space to heal and begin to develop their passions, indicates to me that we could learn a lot from “unusual” schools which could inform policy change efforts in the future. Taking a critical ethnographic orientation provides an opportunity to explore independent democratic schools through a methodology which itself values democratic engagement. This approach was essential to contextualizing the study in a way that attended to larger systemic processes and issues, and allowed for genuine examinations of power.
Fatma Busra Aksoy Kumru

Young children’s perceptions and practices of democracy in an early-years setting, Scotland

This substantive paper is based on a study conducted at the University of Edinburgh. It investigates young children’s (aged 4-5) understanding of democracy. Considering democracy as a multidimensional concept which is more than form of government, this exploratory project aimed to examine the perceptions and daily democratic practices of young children in a nursery setting. The findings are drawn from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in a nursery setting in large Scottish city. The qualitative data was analysed through the thematic analysis procedures. As a result of this study, three themes are identified: collaboration, respect and participation. The findings highlighted that children’s democratic practices are exercised and perceived dominantly in a collaborative, respective and participatory way in their daily lives.

The intelligibility and applicability of democracy by all sections of society are important. The impact of early ages on the future is remarkable and the knowledge and skills gained in these years are vital. In terms of education of young children in nurseries, this paper reveals the importance of applying democratic activities to sustain children’s inner capacities. This could lead to further curriculum contents and learning processes which emphasises collaboration, respect and participation in terms of enabling democratic practices in early years settings. To this end, the findings of this study could give an insight for early years practitioners to widen children’s spaces for taking part in.

Conducting ethnographic methods with very early ages is starting to be highlighted practice between researchers in childhood studies and education since it enables children as social actors who take an active part in shaping the form that their own childhoods take. Counter to dominant stereotypes about young children being unable to take part in democratic practices, this ethnographic research highlighted children’s views on democracy for further educational and social policies affecting their position in everyday lives. In this way, ethnography as a methodology could grow not only to describe the researched phenomena but also to have a key role in shaping the concepts and practices with direct contribution of its participants. Thus, the key contribution is about stressing ethnography as a method for participation and making young children’s voices heard.

Following principles have enforced within the ethnographic part of this study. The world of children was reached with the help of a gatekeeper. After the forms of consent were collected from families as an obligation, verbal consents were obtained from the children. Many of the children were curious and have already stated that they wanted to have a ‘nick name’ for my notes. Participatory observation was done with children in the nursery every day for 1 month and all activities were attended including forest school sessions. In this way, a rich data about the daily routines/patterns of children in this nursery and the location of democracy in these patterns were reached. During the process, the researcher diary was used to provide reflexivity and the validity and reliability of the data were increased.
Besides the positive aspects of ethnography that research diary provided, the personal challenges that I have experienced were reflected through this. As a researcher from another culture, it took me a long time to get used to the environment and to understand the dynamics within. For instance, language was a barrier at first but then I realized that it has enrichen and deepen my relationship with children every time when I ask about the examples or explanations for a certain thing. Additionally, the ethnographic part of the study constructs different concept and questions related to my current doctoral research about children’s decision-making processes and adult-child power dynamics within these processes. This clearly addresses the power of ethnography for further curiosity of the researcher within its principles and dynamics.
Christine Larroque and Morgane Govoreaunu

The reflexive analysis in the (trans)formation of trainee teachers: at the heart of an apparatus. Ethnography of an apparatus of reflexive analysis in a training of teacher students in the French Catholic private teaching in France.

This substantive paper aims to provide a quantitative and qualitative study about reflexive analysis in training of 73 teacher students in primary and second degree in an institute of French Catholic private teaching, which French acronym is ISFEC. The hybrid methodology combining observant participation -and non-participant observation- of a trainee teacher anthropologist and an instructor of reflexive methods with head teachers, Principal Education Counsellors (PEC) and trainee teachers.

If school is a « slippery ground » (Filiod, 2007 : 581), the training of teacher students is also a major issue in published reports which diagnose and suggest remedies to the problems, almost every year. Paradoxically, the training of teachers students is rarely a research object per se in anthropology or ethnology of education, whereas research in educational studies have tackled this subject for about thirty years (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). Concerning the training of teachers, in anthropological studies (Malet, 1998, 2008), research usually concerns questions of professional identity. In this context, our works aim at understanding through the use of ethnography methodologies an institutional apparatus (Agamben, 2007) for reflexive training, as comprehended through field research. Signs of professional competence (Schön, 1994), are expected for every practitioner of education include skills frameworks and tools for self-assessment (Campanale, 2007). The authors suggest reflexive analysis as equally important for professional development. Realised through a variety of modalities (for example logbooks, groups of analysis of professional practices, reflexive writings), the development of a reflexive posture becomes an important part of training for education employees, particularly trainee teachers. Hence, it would be « the dominant paradigm in education » (Paquay, 1994, Perrenoud, 2003, Zeichner, 1983, cited in Collin, 2013).

We will show that the reflexive practice among student teachers (73 trainees) may encounter difficulties in its implementation: to what extent does this apparatus of training, understood in its technical, discursive and symbolic dimensions, entail contradictory demands and deontological, ethical dilemmas for trainees? In order to answer this question, we will analyse the case of the training in French Catholic private teaching, to which we belong as respectively teacher student and training instructor. In the framework of an observant participation (Soulé, 2007), our position will be analysed as an « external inclusion » (Bonhoure et al., 2015). The comparative approach of anthropology (Laplantine, 2013 : 169) will be recognised in the analysis of analogous situations in professional and training areas. This choice is not only methodological: if the long-term and daily familiarity with this institution provide us opportunities for research and analysis, we postulate that the contradictory demands and dilemmas produced by this apparatus of reflexive analysis entail specific questions to the Catholic teaching due to its educational project (the human being at the centre of the educational system) and the Christian doctrine that drives it. Caring particularly for emancipatory aims of the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (Pirieira, 2018), we wish to analyse the anthropological paradoxes (Kail, Sobel, 2011) and their prescriptive character (Mahmood, 2009 : 289) at stake in the position of reflexive practitioner. Pragmatism and experimentation coming from John Dewey’s pedagogy and today supported by several anthropologists (Ingold, 2018), will be analyzed through narratives of training situations.


Yang Liu and Lin Zhou

Learning Chinese in Chinatown with an Augmented Reality Mobile Game

The aim of our study is to demonstrate that language learning is not simply a transmission of knowledge, rather, it’s a transformative process (Mezirow, 1991). While learning is frequently treated as a cognitive change or development, we depict how learning is embodied in students’ interactional activities within a sociocultural and semiotic ecology (van Lier, 2004). As one of the oldest Chinatowns in the US, the Chinatown in Honolulu not only serves as a significant historical, cultural and political symbol in local communities, but also functions as a diverse gathering place. From the perspective of a language educator, Chinatown can be seen as a learning environment not limited by the four walls of the classroom. Research on language learning “in the wild” (Hutchins, 1995; Wagner, 2015), and especially on place-based learning via mobile technologies (Holden & Sykes, 2011; Hellermann et al, 2015) have offered new perspectives to reconceptualize what language learning truly encompasses. Through designing an Augmented Reality (AR) mobile game for Chinese language learners, we not only recognize the symbolic sociocultural meaning of Chinatown for learners, but also incorporate semiotic resources as affordances for the learners to engage their gaming activities with.

In this study, ethnography is observable on two layers. The first layer is from the perspective of the designers. As designers of the AR game, in order to utilize the resources in the actual place and create the learning space in the AR game for the students, we need to first identify, document and reflect on the social activities and cultural elements in the Chinatown community (for a review of place and space, see Higgins, 2017). The second layer is through the learners’ lense of experiencing and interacting within the environment. As researchers who recorded and played the AR game with the students, we can observe and investigate how learning is unfolded through students’ transformative experiences in this ecology.

Due to the double-layered nature of this study, our findings are focused on these following points:

• There is a misalignment between the language usage and linguistic/semiotic landscape (Scollon and Scollon, 2003; Jaworski and Thurlow, 2011) in the Honolulu Chinatown: while abundant Chinese language and cultural elements are dominantly presented in this environment, most of the activities are mediated through English.

• Chinatown is a prime location for business and community activities for all local residents and outside visitors in Honolulu. The diverse social practices may or may not be connected with China or Chinese language and culture.

• Despite the challenges in creating a language learning mobile game in a place where the target language is mostly treated as an iconic symbol, our game narrative and quests have successfully directed students’ attention to the semiotic resources in the environment and therefore raised students’ awareness of the social, political and cultural aspects in Chinatown.

• We conclude that ecologically language learning can not be treated as acquiring the linguistic knowledge of the language; it is how learners transform their thinking and understanding through different stages of experiencing and exploring in the ecology.
Most ethnographic fieldwork involves producing jottings: brief written notes that are taken during field observations and that later serve as a memory support for constructing detailed fieldnotes. In producing jottings, ethnographers face the challenge of recording as much detail as possible. The literature is replete with advice on what to record, but there is less guidance on how to produce jottings as quickly and efficiently as possible. While many experienced ethnographers have developed their own systems of abbreviations, novice ethnographers may find it difficult to develop their own jotting system in parallel with their first fieldwork. A novice ethnographer myself, I faced this challenge as I prepared for my first ethnographic fieldwork last year. To address the challenge, I decided to learn stenography. In the literature, stenography is sporadically mentioned as one possible way of speeding up the production of jottings. However, there is a lack of concrete and detailed descriptions of how the use of stenography may affect ethnographic research. To address this lack, the aim of this methodological contribution is to describe and evaluate the use of a specific stenographic system, the Melin system, in the context of an ethnographic study in a first-year engineering program in Sweden.

In this study, the use of the Melin system of stenography facilitated the production of jottings by speeding up note taking and reducing wrist pain, thus allowing me to take more notes for longer periods of observation and to often include verbal quotes. However, I experienced difficulties in reading my own stenographic notes, which resulted in slower translation of jottings into detailed fieldnotes. The use of stenography had other important effects on the research: 1) The slower process of producing fieldnotes gave me more time to reflect on my observations while writing fieldnotes, thus facilitating continuous analysis in parallel with on-going fieldwork. 2) Stenography effectively rendered my jottings unreadable to anybody except myself. This allowed me to take notes without restrictions and it allowed participants to more comfortably talk about sensitive topics because “nobody can read it [the notes] anyways”. 3) It elicited interest and appreciation from research participants, thus contributing to initiate conversations and build rapport. 4) It made the research more enjoyable, which helped to mediate stress and anxiety during my first fieldwork experiences.

In this methodological contribution, I describe and evaluate the use of stenography for producing jottings in a concrete ethnographic research project. The results provide insights for ethnographers who find a need to develop the way in which they produce and use jottings. Specifically, the results help researchers to take more informed decisions about whether or not stenography may be a viable alternative. The results may be particularly valuable for novice ethnographers who, maybe for the first time, face the challenge of producing jottings quickly and efficiently.
Critical pedagogy, sexuality/gender and inclusion: ethnography as an alternative representational space

The aim of this paper is to explore British born millennial South Asian men’s development of a critical framework to engage with questions of sexuality and gender within the context of the representation of South Asian men. More specifically, we are seeking to examine what spaces critical pedagogy opens up for discussion of sexuality and gender within diverse South Asian communities. This is occurring at a time when Muslim parents, among others, are protesting about an equality programme, No Outsiders, at a local primary school that is seen as promoting LGBTQ rights.

The research participants were aware that there has been a remarkable shift in the educational representation of South Asian male students. In an earlier period, they were projected as ‘pro-school’ in contrast to ‘anti-school’ African-Caribbean students. However, there were also images of the assumed regressive gender/sexual practices of the patriarchal Asian community and within the gendered politics of the playground, South Asian young men were feminised. Currently, they discuss the pressures of living with dominant educational representations of Muslim male students that assume that they are both highly vulnerable and a major threat to society possessing an anti-British ethnicity. They suggest this has resulted in other aspects of their lives not being addressed pedagogically, including issues of sexuality and gender. For example, they report their experience of the institutional application of religious categories as a form of emasculation.

Drawing upon our own ethnographic research, we set out to enable the research participants, as a millennial generation, to inhabit an alternative representational space that provides insightful narratives about the creative complexity of inhabiting subject positions as they negotiate between the competing discourses of their (traditional) religious beliefs and more (liberal) experiences and social practices around gender and sexuality. A further key element of the ethnographic research project is the young men’s self-authorisation that they see as having been denied them throughout their schooling experience. Interviews are supplemented by a range of other research strategies that include observations, informal conversations and interviews with individuals from the local community. By recognising that ethnographic accounts are mutually constructed, it is possible to identify narratives that serve to unsettle current dominant educational understandings. In so doing, a collective reflexivity and an accompanying conceptual reconfiguration of dominant epistemologies is accomplished. This is particularly significant to ensure that we do not re-inscribe the dominant representations of South Asian/Muslim men.

Key themes have emerged in deploying the ethnographic approach that require further investigation, including, the complexities of dialogue in building critical pedagogical spaces to open up discussion of sexuality and gender within diverse South Asian communities; the appropriateness of western progressive terms to capture sexual and gender identities, behaviours and life styles among South Asians; questions of how to counter dominant representations that assume that they possess a regressive, hyper-patriarchal, traditional (religious) masculinity and the generalisation of the ‘Muslim grooming gang’ with reference to child sexual abuse to all Muslim men; and constructing caring masculinity and inter-personal social relations among a millennial generation.
Making the transition to school: a particular challenge for Roma children

From a cultural-historical perspective, human development is the product of participation in cultural practices that have historically been constructed within the framework of institutions such as the family and the school. Across these practices, there is always some type of discontinuity which must be addressed and overcome (Hedegaard, 2005; Rogoff, 1993, 2003). However, when the cultural framework of the family is far removed from that of the school, as is the case among certain ethnic minorities or immigrant populations, the discontinuities between the two scenarios may be very significant, and hence acceptance of the rationale for school tasks and achievement of a successful transition may be both arduous and protracted (Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Poveda, 2001). Therefore, schools, seeking the inclusion of members of minority groups such as Roma communities, must start from an awareness of the concerns and priorities of this cultural group in order to design interventions that will facilitate their transition between scenarios and to promote dialogue in this respect. A better understanding of this community’s socializing practices and of other forms of behaviour would help teachers and education managers understand the difficulties sometimes encountered in ensuring school attendance. At the same time, schools as institutions have their own values, norms and objectives that should be conveyed and shared among all involved. One aspect of this is the need to foster children’s understanding of and response to the demands of the school environment. In this task, families can play an essential role, as supporters of their children’s transition to a formal education setting. Of course, families must be informed of the school’s concerns and ambitions for the children. Thus, establishing common knowledge of what matters in the two practices of school life and home life (Edwards, 2010, 2012, 2017) regarding the issues facing children is of crucial importance.

This paper presents two experiences, one in Barcelona and the other in Seville, of the Roma community in their children’s transitions to formal education. The authors have been permanently involved in these experiences for 25 (Barcelona) and 10 years (Seville) respectively, were they run Service Learning programs with University students who collaborate as helpers or instructors in educative projects with Roma community children. In both cases, the neighbourhood contains many challenges, with high rates of absenteeism, academic failure and dropout. The authors have simultaneously played the role of social agents, researchers and university teachers, under a community engaged research scheme (Vasquez, 2003, Cole, M; & Distributive Literacy Consortium, 2006; DiGiacomo & Gutierrez, 2015; Lalueza & Crespo, 2009; Macías, Martínez & Vasquez, 2014).

To place these experiences in context, and based on literature and our own long term ethnographic work (Crespo, Pallí & Lalueza, 2002; Crespo, Lalueza, Portell & Sánchez-Busqués, 2005, Padros, 2016), we will first present the main features of Roma culture, knowledge of which is fundamental to understanding how the educational practices described below are constructed. Knowledge of the evident discontinuities and contradictions between educational institutions and the values held by
Roma families is an essential prerequisite for creating a system in which schools and families can work together effectively. These challenges concern the acquisition of new motives by families and children entering the educational system, while retaining their established values and beliefs. A successful response to these challenges requires the mastery of new tools and cultural artefacts, together with the creation of shared practices and narratives in which participants from minority cultures feel represented and respected.

As participants and observants of the processes happening in the two experiences described in Barcelona and Sevilla, we have witnessed how the schools and communities involved in the educative projects described have developed a “third space” (DiGiacomo & Gutierrez, 2015), a set of shared narratives and practices, that facilitate the transition of the Roma children from family to school context and vice versa. Our data consist on field notes and direct observation gathered by ourselves and the sets of students that have participated in the projects along all its life.

Finally, in this presentation, we will illustrate these complex processes of school-community culture bridging by describing two episodes: one taking place in an out-of-school activity, the other within a primary school. We show how education professionals address the different challenges described above and how they work closely with children and families in order to facilitate their transition to the surrounding ‘normative’ culture represented by schooling.
Using the researcher’s managerial knowledge to observe work in a distance learning institution: a method in ethnography of education

I conducted a three years fieldwork in a French distance education institution equivalent to the UK’s Open University. This fieldwork constitutes the bulk of a postdoctoral habilitation, defended in 2017 at the university of Rouen (France), in anthropology of education. I described the middle management dedicated to distance higher education; in charge of designing curricula for three years degree programs in partnership with universities. When studying this management and engineering work, I found it relevant to make use of management sciences that I had previously learnt in a French grande école. At first, I described the acquisition of academic knowledge, and then its use on field by the workers.

Therefore, the descriptions are predetermined by knowledge that I came with and that was partially shared by the education workers observed. I assume these preconceptions since they are encouraged by the very organization studied and presented as an ideal of management.

On the other hand, it appears that some of the managers resist these ideas: defending other political values and perceptions of education and refusing to apply what they call « new public management ».

I present this controversy on knowledge to describe work realities through a contestation about the way to measure the value of a designed curriculum (Marty, 2014b). Whereas some of the managers use the institutional conceptual tools to account for financial and marketing value, others argue that education values cannot be quantified and should not be reduced to management sciences or commodified. There is a deontological controversy within the organization, among its different corporations (direction, managers, teachers), promoting different academic views on realities.

My contribution to ethnography and education is methodological (see also Marty, 2014a). In my work, I show how preconceptions could be used carefully: it is somewhat useful to be educated to the knowledge prevalent on field (here learning management science is the equivalent to learning a few words in the indigenous language); but that should not hide field controversies and debates. Knowledge, even though academically stabilized and taught in curricula, is adapting on field and doesn’t encompass the whole reality. Workers are discussing it and criticizing management sciences. In my point of view, it is of an uppermost importance for the education ethnographer to be able to precise when previous knowledge is relevant on field and where are its limits.


Marty O., 2014b, Monetizing French Distance Education. A Field Enquiry on Higher Education Value(s). *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, Athabasca University Press, vol. 15 (n° 2)
Doing ethnography as materiality

Focusing on observations we would like to direct attention to material conditions/dicourses and social practices in our ethnographic research. We are currently engaged in a project studying the youngest asylum seekers arriving in Norway. Most of them attend kindergartens and nurseries and in our observations, we have become aware of the many interactions between children and artefacts. Culture analytic studies of technology indicates that power and values are linked together with the design and material reality of the object. This means that things as well as people “act” and are a part of a reality where both people and things mutually influence the perception of the world (Bille and Sørensen, 2012; Miller, 2005). Things are powerful because they participate in determining our expectations by setting the scene and ensure normative behaviour. Often without challenge. Our goal has been to explore how things/artefacts in kindergartens become evident and in what ways they physically constrain or enable small children in their kindergarten lives. We wish to give some examples in what ways ethnographic research can take materiality into account, and also some of the challenges doing materiality research gives us.

We have found certain objects to be of greater importance in the kindergarten. Things and objects create hierarchies of materiality because they mediate cultural and normative truths. Cultural patterns are established in the meeting between things (Frykman, 2005, s.29). Objects like woollen clothes, outdoor clothing, lego bricks and lunchboxes are of great importance in a Norwegian cultural setting and these are artefacts we have found to carry implicit, determining (or decisive) expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behaviour (Miller, 2005). As such all things, human and non-human in kindergarten settings, will be part of the discursive practices that take place (Barad 2007).

In an educational context teachers are often unaware of the power of materiality. By investigating which objects and in what way children and employees meet different objects in a kindergarten we hope to unfold practices in a many-relational approach. By emphasizing these perspectives in our ethnographic approach, we hope to enable teachers and children in their work and lives by focusing on a peripheral but still important area of education. Taking the agency of things into account, cultural practices becomes part of the kindergarten settings, and help us understand in what ways and which values we promote and how the whole environment tells what it means to become/be a integrated, well adjusted asylumseeker in a Norwegian cultural context.


Bille, Mikkel & Sørensen, Tim Flohr, Materialitet. En indføring i kultur, identitet og teknologi. København: Samfundslitteratur.
In/sufficiently able. How teachers differentiate between pupils in German inclusive classrooms

The ethnographic study focuses on classes in lower secondary schools in Germany, that are considered by the teachers to be inclusive. Based on practice theory and poststructuralism, a central differentiation of pupils in teachers’ regulations is analyzed. Those that are able to meet the requirements of the guidelines are expected to behave according to them. Those that can’t meet the requirements, are exempted and may legitimately deviate from the expectations. This can be observed in the classroom, for example, when pupils are told to be silent, yet one pupil is not told off for talking, but is instead given the option to leave the classroom for an ‘extra break’ if unable to behave appropriately. Through this performed differentiation teachers determine day-to-day who is able and who lacks the required abilities to comprehensively participate in the inclusive classroom. However, because pupils with ascribed insufficient abilities are not sanctioned in the observed lessons, but instead are repeatedly allowed to deviate from the still existing expectations, the teachers fulfill the right of permanent membership for all pupils in the class.

The study also contextualizes this differentiation with perspectives of the disability studies in education and discourses on dis/ability. It can thereby be shown that even in ‘inclusive’ classes universal expectations of abilities exist and are themselves a cause of the ascription of insufficient abilities. Furthermore, the long-term treatment of pupils as insufficiently able can be understood as the creation of disability. Finally, the study discusses why the observed classes fail to satisfy pedagogical conceptions of inclusion, understood as enabling an equal participation of all pupils, and to what extent this is due to the social-based and school-based consensus on the nature of ability.

The study is one of the few ethnographies in Germany that actually show, what happens in a classroom that is considered to be ‘inclusive’. It analyzes that and how the teachers’ practices in inclusive classrooms can be understood as a way of doing dis/ability. Though it is the teachers’ practices that perform dis/ability, social-based and school-based norms of ability can be understood as the underlying cause for that. By showing how established expectations of abilities restrict inclusion the study is a crucial contribution to a critical perspective on professionalism of teaching.
The aim of this substantive paper is to inquire how education contribute to the making of the middle class and underclass in Hungary, a semi-peripheral country. It is based on an ethnographic study that compares two different schools: one is an average upper secondary and high school with middle-class students in a town near Budapest, the other is a primary, lower secondary school near a ‘ghetto’ of the capital city with Rom/Cigány (underclass) population. Methodologically, the study is a traditional, long-term, comparative ethnography: two years in the two institutions. In this last phase of the field work, the researcher is conducting interviews and focus groups and intensifying the use of other collaborative, interpretive practices such as everyday conversations, sharing my interpretations through Facebook and during regular meetings with teachers, shared field notes with another researcher who is a teacher in the high school. These new data turned the focus of interpretation on the concept of habitus (Bourdieu) as a new interpretive framework in addition to the original Marxist analysis of social reproduction and integrated to a wider philosophical-anthropological approach (education as the shaping of social subjectivities). In the interpretation, priority will be given to the analytical category of social class, but considering the intersections of class, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation. In addition, the framework will be integrated with a reflection on the semi-peripheral characteristics of the shaping of class positions (Wallerstein, Arrighi).

Teachers in both schools are against the actual education policy of the government which reinforces class divisions in the society as part of a larger politics of meritocracy and inequalities of the government in a typical semi-peripheral context characterized by dependence and the need for informal labour. However, in both schools, every day educational interactions have a clear (often hidden) pattern of shaping the habitus of the pupils according to this class division. Examples of micro-processes shaping the habitus will be offered. In the primary school near the ghetto, there is much more reflexivity among the teachers about this pattern and there are efforts to find ways out of this systemic constrains, although it seems almost an impossible endeavour. In the high school, this systemic dimension of schooling and its repercussions on the socialization of pupils remains mostly un-reflected, and the other part of the society is practically invisible. This latter reinforces again the politics of class division.

The theoretical approach offers a complex interpretive framework that combines world system theory, traditional Marxist views and the concept of habitus. The ethnographic study can help understand the micro processes through which habitus is shaped in education and class positions are formed in a semi-peripheral country. The comparison between these two types of school with a different population might shed light on different and similar educational micro-processes in relation to the shaping of class positions and habitus. Methodologically, the above-mentioned collaborative approach of the long-term ethnography might offer some innovative dimensions.
The purpose of our paper is to present work in progress, the first stage of a longer ethnography. Over a 20-month period, August 2017 to March 2019, we were immersed in the field to examine and uncover the learning processes taking place as a result of the implementation of child-centred arts practice. That practice happens in Children’s Theatre and in the practice of Theatre Hullabaloo more specifically. We believe something ‘beyond the ordinary’ is taking place that merits our attention. We looked at practice taking place in a physical space, ‘The Hullabaloo, newly opened in December 2017 cited as a ‘national centre of excellence’. We observed the creative play installations where babies, children, parents, grandparents, teachers and the play ‘hosts’ experienced and facilitated creative practice. We watched theatre plays, and observed theatre audiences, sat in the café and listened to conversations. We talked to people central to running and leading the organisation, programming the venue and making theatre. We also spoke to teachers, parents and funders. We were and continue to be committed to researching the lived experience of our participants, seeking to uncover, understand and portray the learning that is taking place in a space they inhabit. Our paper provides an account of the subjective reality of our participant’s experiences, understanding with depth and complexity the social meaning of their engagement and learning. Our research involved close association with Theatre Hullabaloo and the venue, to get to the heart of practice that is authentically transformative (Hammersley, 1992; Brewer, 2000; Pole & Morrison, 2003; Jeffrey & Troman, 2004; Atkinson et al, 2007).

Considering the ancient Chinese proverb ‘Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness’, our first stage findings indicate that Theatre Hullabaloo’s child led practice offers something ‘beyond the ordinary’ in learning and perceived as beacon of light by our participants. We found this practice has ‘buy in’ from a diverse range of participants and stakeholders, who appear aligned in their belief the practice is excellent and the learning processes significant. Theatre Hullabaloo’s primary audience is the very young (including babies) to 16 years. We found the child-led practice and learning processes encompassed, addressed and embraced the vulnerability and fragility of this audience’s cognitive development and growth. We found that children are placed in the position of experts and creators of meaning. We uncovered practice and a learning pedagogy that maps the creation of artistic material against the developmental needs of children, challenging the performative construction of children as ‘outcomes’ and ‘future beings’. We found that children are seen as active social shapers, running counter to the performative culture of the formal education system. We found that our participants became immersed in a space where they did experience a level of transformation.

As ethnographers, we set out to interrogate social interaction, placing a high status on our participant’s perspectives and understandings of the phenomena under scrutiny, learning that is transformative. We illuminate a particular style of learning that does not appear to be happening in our formal education system. We expose practices taking place that challenge the prohibitive, stifling, performative learning culture embedded in formal educational curricula. We contribute to the discussion that emerging development and implementation of education and cultural policy should take notice of the child-led practice we have exposed and examined.
Kristella Montiegel


In the United States, several educational options exist for children identified as Deaf or Hardof-Hearing (D/HH); however, there is one major consideration centered on the child’s communication modality that dictates their placement into a particular educational setting: Whether or not the D/HH child will communicate through signed or spoken language. Historically, the ideology underlying oral education in the United States frames Deafness or Hard-of-Hearingness as a disability and, as such, is structurally reinforced through institutional and pedagogical efforts that are centered on promoting (primarily English) oral speech as the dominant language.

The initial aim of this ethnomethodological study was to explore how an oral education approach is actualized ‘on the ground,’ or, the ways in which this language ideology operates at the micro-level of sociality. Data from this ethnographic case-study consist of a collection of extensive field notes taken during nine months of volunteering in one D/HH, oral preschool classroom in Los Angeles, California. Using a modified grounded theory framework, I identified the theme of vocalization as a distinct type of social phenomenon in the oral preschool classroom, and developed and modified its dimensions and conditions until I was eventually able to interpret vocalization as valued, regulatory, and constitutive of a larger moral order that functions to organize the interactions of the children and teachers in the oral classroom. Vocalizations are shown to be part of the taken-for-grantedness of the mainstream, hearing world; thus, in the oral classroom, the progression of daily activities are virtually entirely organized to facilitate the children’s development of speech. Yet, as the children do not necessarily know this larger ontological goal, a question arises on how to teach them to habitually use and rely on speech when communicating, or what mechanisms are involved in constructing this oral ideology.

Findings revealed that children are socialized into an oral ideology through the moral order of the classroom, an order constructed in the patterns of behavior of students’ and teachers’ practical activities on a moment-by-moment basis. Specifically, teachers used interactional, strategic routines for eliciting students’ vocalizations in three main situated activities: 1) Responding to students’ requests for their wants/needs; 2) intervening in episodes of children’s bad behaviors, and; 3) determining acceptable classroom participation. By making students’ speech – or, rather, lack of speech – an object of moral concern, the teachers reveal the morality of “using your voice” as a constitutive feature in the everyday lived experiences of the oral classroom. 9. - Contribution to education and ethnography: To my knowledge, this is the first study to ethnographically investigate an American oral preschool classroom for D/HH children.
Saeid Safaei Movahhed

Disciplinary culture and effective teaching: a cultural anthropological study

During the last couple of decades, many researchers have been trying to explicate "effective teaching" in higher education. As a result, when one searches the term, a vast amount of papers and research reports pop up in the literature, involving lists of attributes and competencies of effective teachers. But the impressive point is that "effectiveness" has been viewed mostly from a technical vantage point and disciplinary differences have not received proportionate attention. At the same time, some sociologists of science began to view disciplines as tribes and territories who own their exclusive norms, rituals, and values. Hence, this research aims at investigating effective teaching in higher education within the framework of disciplinary culture.

Methodologically, the research may be deemed as interpretive ethnography as it aims at representing emically how members of disciplinary cultures perceive and interpret effective teaching. Hence, based on Tony Becher classification of disciplines into civil and rural, two postgraduate classes were selected, namely from Pure Mathematics (involving 15 students to represent civil disciplines) and Education Studies (involving 18 students to represent rural disciplines). To collect data, the researcher deployed non-participant observation for a full semester and informal interviews were also conducted at regular intervals. The field notes and interview protocols were analyzed thematically to produce meaningful categories for results representation. As credibility was of great concern in the research, three strategies were used for this purpose namely member check, peer debriefing and prolonged engagement.

Based on the interpretations, members of rural disciplines evaluate teaching as effective when it focuses on classic texts, cares about human and social issues, approaches laymen jargons, emphasizes understanding, appreciates variety of teaching strategies and learning styles, holds a critical stance towards cultural issues, and takes on a lenient approach in marking. On the other side, members of civil disciplines evaluate teaching as effective when it focuses on updated resources, is content-oriented, approaches professional terminology, emphasizes practicality, and takes on a tough stance on marking.

This research focused on how postgraduate students view effective teaching in their disciplinary culture. To illuminate a better image of disciplinary culture, we need to involve other members of the cultures such as undergraduate students and instructors as well. The findings may help universities' officials to devise proportionate and amenable criteria for recruitment and appraisal of instructors, based on disciplinary differences, and refrain from imposing global standards and meta-narratives on various fields of study. People usually hold a unit standard in their mind when they talk about effective instructors. They may become aware how teaching functions are influenced by disciplinary culture and take into account the differences in their judgments.
In order to improve foreign language education, the Japanese government initiated the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme in 1987 by introducing team-teaching by indigenous Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) and young graduates from overseas as assistant language teachers (ALTs) into English language teaching throughout Japanese schools. Previous studies mainly focusing on the classrooms, have shown that, in some cases there has been, a lack of interaction and collaboration between the JTEs and ALTs. However, it would be unfair to end this discussion without taking into consideration the nature of teachers’ professional development community as shaped by the school cultures. Newly-qualified teachers are not finished products; rather they are shaped by the culture of their schools (Bartell, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2003). In order to reveal the range of complex factors within the school cultures, this ethnographic study aims to investigate the ways in which the ALTs are welcomed and accepted into the schools, as well as how the ALTs cope with the contexts of specific school settings and cultures. In accordance with the aims of the study, the ethnographic approach allows investigation into what people do (behaviour), what they say (language), and the tension between what they really do and what they ought to do, as well as what they make and use (artefacts) within their social and cultural contexts (Spradley, 1980). In this way, ethnography enables me to provide valuable insights into team-teaching interactions and collaborations, by exploring how the ALTs and JTEs are faced with specific opportunities and constraints in fulfilling their roles within the cultures of their schools. Data were obtained in three different secondary schools in Japan for six months, employing multiple data collection methods – interviews, observations in and outside the classrooms, fieldnotes, artefacts and documents.

Issues concerning power and control emerged from the findings. This study revealed that the schools assigned the JTEs the role of ALTs’ evaluators, giving them power to train the ALTs by the power of gaze defined by Foucault (1975). This creates a power relationship between the JTEs as watchers and the ALTs as being watched. The power of gaze – surveillance – seems to be the main function of the teachers’ professional communities in receiving the ALTs. Through this top-down process, the ALTs seem to be disciplined in their schools. However, this judgmental and hierarchical environment affects the ALTs’ impact on the schools, which inevitably results in less contribution to the improvement
of the schools.

Conducting ethnographic studies in Japanese schools is challenging since it is not customary to visit schools or even ask to regularly visit classrooms in Japan (Sakui, 2004). However, there may be impediments to effective teaching that lie outside the classroom in the school contexts (Lortie, 1975) – the school cultures. It is expected that this study will open the way for more ethnographic research on the school cultures and team-teaching, as well as on the educational policy in Japan.


Time is at the center of long-running debates in ethnography -- how long does fieldwork need to be (e.g., Emerson, 1981; Jeffrey & Troman, 2004; Marcus, 2007); how should fieldworkers’ schedules and temporal routines map onto those of participants (Smith, 1987), how can we write ethnographies without detemporalizing practice or denying coevalness to those we work with (Bourdieu, 1977; Fabian, 1983; 2006). To an extent such issues reflect the origins of ethnography in contexts of colonization and projects of domestic social control.

The current context of neoliberal capitalism involves a different set of time-centered ethnographic problems, particularly for those studying institutions like schools that are both time-structured and time-structuring. For example, how might we pursue a) ‘the ethnography of imaginaries and imaginary time’ -- various policy frames and accountability systems function as discounting and risk treatment techniques to redefine schooling as a set of “time transactions” in which the meanings of events are projected far into the future (Knorr-Cetina, 2010; Amin, 2013; Ezzamel & Robson, 1995, p. 164), b) ‘the ethnography of skill disintegration’ – as neoliberalism redefines schooling as a competition among individuals to construct oneself as a marketable “bundle of skill,” skill itself, as well knowledge, is under erasure as “flexible” work arrangements are shrinking the half-lives of knowledge forms and destabilizing of the value of the skills schools claim to provide (Knorr-Cetina, 2010; Sennett, 1998, pp. 96, 98), c) ‘the ethnography of school signals’ -- the spatial and temporal ranges of the values of educational credentials are changing, with some collapsing into the local or organizationally-specific (perhaps replaced by temporally circumscribed certificates or “badges”), others becoming ‘global’; d) ‘the ethnography of spatially and temporally disarticulated interaction’ – not entirely a new problem, but one assuming new forms as the use of digital technologies introduces asynchronies into geographically-distributed teaching-learning relations, and e) ‘the ethnography of exhaustion,’ the study of students and teachers’ practice as everyday life is retemporalized though a “generalized inscriptions of human life into duration without breaks, defined by a principle of continuous functioning” (Crary, 2014, p. 8; Brenner, 2003), and “older habits of clock time are . . . eclipsed, the ‘signifier’ of the single day called into question; some new nonchronological and nontemporal pattern of immediacies comes into being” (Jameson, 2003, p. 707).

My aim in this paper is to show how these shifts in neoliberal temporality create problems for educational ethnography, and second to analyze how educational ethnographers are dealing with these problems. For the latter, I will review works published in key journals of the field (e.g., *Ethnography & Education, Anthropology & Education Quarterly, International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, etc.). A third aim is to make some provisional suggestions for ways forward.
Andreas Nuottaniemi

Defining the object in Ethnographic Linguistic Landscape Analysis (ELLA)

This is a methodological paper, exploring different ways of defining the object of analysis in ELLA – Ethnographic Linguistic Landscape Analysis (cf. Maly, 2016; Blommaert, 2013). In my PhD-project I investigate how language ideologies and social relations of power are being (re)produced in the linguistic landscape of a Swedish rural school. I am particularly interested in how the actual language use of immigrant and indigenous minority pupils is being represented and reflected in the linguistic landscape, and how this contributes to the uneven development and production of space (Lefebvre, 1991). My aim using ethnography in this study is to develop a deep understanding of the context, making it possible to go beyond the seemingly monological shape of signs, and expose the ideological as well as relational contents.

Within Linguistic Landscape Studies (LLS) the object of analysis has often been defined by referring to a seminal paper by Landry & Bourhis (1997:25) as “[t]he language of public road signs, advertising billboards, place names, street names, commercial shop signs and public signs on government buildings, of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration”. I believe this definition to be flawed for geographical as well as linguistic reasons, and as the basis for an educational ethnographic study it might not only be inadequate but also misleading.

Notwithstanding the urban bias, language in an educational setting must today include much more than written text, such as images and symbols (Kress, 2010) but perhaps even oral language, sounds and the body as such (Shohamy & Waksman, 2009). Another concern of mine is how to capture the online/offline nexus of contemporary linguistic practices. Both teachers and students do a lot of their daily communication online, and in order to get a fuller understanding of the linguistic landscape I therefore believe also digital environments needs to be considered. These are of course only preliminary findings, and in my paper the thoughts will be further explored and expanded.

Ethnography, like multilingualism, is usually concerned with demarcations of different kinds (cf. Blackledge & Creese, 2010), and defining the object of analysis should therefore be an ongoing ethnographic endeavour. With my paper I want to further the discussion about methodology in LLS, and more specifically in ELLA.

By exploring methodological issues in relation to a planned ethnographic study of so called schoolscapes (i.e. the linguistic landscape within educational environments, cf. Brown [2012]) in a rural school, I furthermore contribute to educational studies by focusing on multilingualism in a rural context, since issues of superdiversity in education has usually been considered almost solely in urban environments (Lindgren et al, 2016).


Jan Gustafsson Nyckel, Eva. M. Johansson and Karin Lager

Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: official policy and local practices. A meta-ethnographic investigation

There are a major policy change based on neoliberal ideas such as effectiveness, quality and school readiness within early childhood education in Europe, Australia and USA (Heydon et al. 2015). OECD points out that quality in early childhood education are a priority policy area and they expressed these troughs trough docu- ment such as Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and care in Sweden (Taguma, Litjens and Makowiecki, 2013) and ‘Starting Strong’ (OECD 2017) (Alasuutari, Markström and Vallberg Roth, 2014). This quality discourse affects ECEC curricula and practice and points out the need for quality indicators and effective methods for the purpose of a successful preschool. Sweden is one example of this policy change where the curriculum states that each local preschool must carry out a systematic quality work (National Agency for Education, 2018).

What impact and consequences this systematic quality work will have for the local preschools; for the teachers, the children and the pedagogical practices are in many ways unknown. In this study we examine these issues through a meta-ethnographic investigation with a focus on both the official policy and the local practice through empirical examples from ethnographic studies from Sweden, Australia, Canada, US, UK and Germany.

It is important to point out that there are very few ethnographic studies on assessment, documentation and quality work in preschool. Our selection of books and articles has been made through the following principles: Step one: we searched for literature through the University of Gothenburg’s search engine: Articles from the e-journals library subscribe and all printed material purchased by the library after 1976. In this process we use following keywords: quality in preschool, documenta- tion and assessment in preschool, ethnography and we identify three Swedish stud- ies (Insulander and Svärdemo Åberg, 2014; Johansson, 2016; Elfström, 2017). In step two we conducted a search through the database Eric using the keywords early childhood education, preschool, ethnography, quality, assessment and documenta- tion with and without the keyword Sweden. In this selection process we identify one study from Australia (Grant, et al. 2018), one from Canada (Heydon et al. 2015), one from US with empirical examples from South Africa (Akpovo, Nganga and Acharya, 2018) one from US with empirical examples from Kenya and Nepal (Cleghorn and Proshner, 2012), two from UK (Bradbury, 2013; 2014) and one from Germany (Schulz, 2015). Taking our departure from a Swedish perspective we acknowledge the differences in curricula between countries as well as the similari- ties in the focus on quality, documentation and assessment. While assessment in the Swedish (and the Nordic countries) ECE tradition is seen as a contradiction, in for example Australia and Canada, it is seen as a necessary part of the ECE tradi- tion Bennett (2005). These differences make a fruitful contribution to our meta- ethnography in searching to understand how official policy works within local prac- tices. In the analysis, we use the ideas about meta-ethnography as lines of argument synthesis (Noblit & Hare, 1988).
A line of argument synthesis is, according to Noblit & Hare, (1988) a question of inference. “What can we say about the whole” (page 62), based on nine studies that we have identified and selected? Through the analysis, it was possible to discern an overall pattern of similarities and dissimilarities in a new interpretive context.

Across different countries, curricula and various education systems, there were a number of similarities between the different ethnographic descriptions of quality, assessment and documentation. We identify four common themes that show similarities in the material and they are Assessment method - template as structuring tool, playing the game, Production of knowledge and numbers and Time for quality. Within the theme Assessment method - template as structuring tool it was made clear that assessment methods - templates can be described or viewed as a kind of a ruling relations and structuring the pedagogical activities, the teachers and children’s work where the templates appear to have their own agency. In the use of these templates, the assessment and documentation receive more fo- cus on the structure and organization of the educational practice than its pedagogi- cal content. This means that the child often becomes invisible in the documenta- tion and their learning identity is shaped or formed as good or bad. The documentation thus becomes part of the design of the preschool’s quality (Jo- hansson, 2016; Schutz, 2015; Bradbury, 2013, 2014; Grant, 2018; Elfström, 2017). Through these structuring methods and templates, a Production of knowledge takes place, which in the next step described the child through numbers and summed up in a quality assessment - Assessment of the child becomes numbers (Bradbury, 2013, 2014; Grant, 2018). The two themes above could be seen in relation to the theme playing the game, which shows that many preschool teachers find it important to display their activities for parents, principals or politicians.

The perceived requirement for performativity means that there is a fabrication of documentation and assessment to give as good a picture of the preschool’s activi- ties as possible (Insulander and Svärdsom Åberg, 2014; , Elfström, 2017; Bradbury, 2013, 2014; Johansson, 2016; Grant, 2018; Heydon, 2015). Through the theme Time for quality, it is made clear that documentation and quality assessments of children and activities are perceived as time-consuming by many pre-school teachers and take time from other important pedagogical activities (Grant, 2018; Heydon, 2015). Although there are great similarities between the nine studies but the analysis also show dissimilarities, which are important to highlight. These dissimilarities are ex- pressed by four themes which are Social background and different assessment practice, Re- sistance against the Euro - Western mode, Resistance through teacher knowledge and Individuali- zation of assessment. In the theme Social background and different assessment practice, Jo- hansson (2016) made an analysis of two different preschools, one in a suburban area and one in a middle class area. The study show two different socializing pat- terns through the way the preschool was organized and how linguistic and social competence were assessed in practice. The preschool located in the suburb are had developed a behavior culture while the preschool in the middle class area had developed a more salient negotiation culture.
This result would we interpret in terms of *different cultural and linguistic habitus* that are both *indicated and reinforced* within these two different preschools and could be seen as a threat against social inequality and equity. The analysis also shows a Resistance against the Euro-Western perspective of quality. Both Cleghorn and Proshner, (2012) and Akpovo, Nganga and Acharya (2018) describe a resistance to Euro-Western perspective of quality with ethnographic examples from South Africa, Kenya and Nepal. In these studies, there are different images of what is good quality in early childhood education. There was a difference in how minority world pre-school’s describe quality compared to how the majority world discourse and policy describe quality in preschool. In the development work in Kenya, Nepal and South Africa described in the articles, there a tension emerged between the Euro Western discourse of quality and the local preschool’s conditions and perspectives in Kenya, Nepal or South Africa.

Through the theme *Resistance through teacher knowledge*, Bradbury (2013, 2014) show in her analysis that preschool teachers exercise a resistance to assessment through their teacher knowledge Bradbury (2013, 2014) expressed that the teacher knowledge was seen as a prerequisite for good documentation and assessment within the ECE. In the analysis, however, the opposite appears where many pre-school teachers use their teaching knowledge to exercise resistance to documenting and assessing children and to train them for tests. Finally, Insulander and Svårdmo Åberg (2014) show that there is an *Individualization of assessment* focusing on the individual child’s learning and readiness for school. Many preschool teachers in the study documented the individual child and not the pedagogical activity itself and they carried out an analysis of the individual child’s learning.

In our time, there is a strong discourse on quality and assessment through documentation within the ECE. This quality discourse works through various assessment practices that structure the pre-school’s pedagogical activities and position teachers and children in a way that does not have support in curricula and policy documents. Our meta-ethnographic analysis shows a number of "unintended consequences" (Giddens, 1984) for the pre-schools, their teachers and children. The analysis shows that these empirical patterns regarding quality and assessment can be found in both Europe, Australia, the US and Kenya, Nepal and South Africa, which can be linked to a strong and global policy discourse with strong links to, among others, OECD. Our knowledge of quality in preschool as official policy and local practice is in many ways inadequate and the importance of meta-ethnographic analysis and comparisons between different countries is therefore important. It is also important for ethnography to carry out meta analysis that can clarify differences and similarities between different countries and education systems. Meta ethnography as approach and method can be developed and our study is a contribution in that developments work. Our study also shows a growing shortage of social inequality and equity in terms of assessment and quality within the ECE. Therefore, it is important to develop a meta-ethnographic analysis that can make a difference in an increasingly neoliberal-influenced preschool policy and practice.


Heydon, R., Moffatt, L., & Iannacci, L. (2015) ‘Every day he has a dream to tell’: classroom literacy curriculum in a full-day kindergarten. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 47*(2), 171-202, DOI: 10.1080/00220272.2014.1000381


Rosario Palacios

Searching for their spot: special educational needs students place making and struggle for inclusion in non-inclusive materialities.

Starting up from the concept of place as related to a site which has been lived in and means something for its inhabitants, in this case, for special educational needs students (SEN students), I describe and analyse their school experiences from a spatial perspective. Arguing that places are never 'finished' but always 'becoming' (Pred 1984, Thrift 1997, De Certeau 1984) my exploration of students’ experiences at school aims to unpack the process of place making by SEN students and its relations with their peers, teachers and school staff who embody different understandings of inclusion and special educational needs. The article includes the material observation of physical characteristics of classrooms, schoolyards and other spots used by students. I analyze spaces as scripts (O'Toole and Were, 2008; O'Halloran 2013) for defining difference and order which allow (or not) SEN’s students to be in place and how they are subverted (or not) in practice and converted into places of belonging for SEN students. By doing so, I show how the process of place making in school is deeply connected with their interactions with others. Following authors who propose materiality both shape social interaction and at the same time is shaped by it, and that just as we can search for meaning in social practices we can also do so in places (Molotch 2003, Tschumi 1998, Casey 1993: 29), I show how ways of understanding and constructing difference are enacted in the process of place making.

I conducted participant observation in four schools in Santiago-Chile for a period of a year and a half. I had informal conversations with students, teachers and school staff, and observed classes and recess time. Drawings of classrooms and schoolyards were made in order to avoid photography or video which are more invasive forms of registering data. I worked with them as a means for both registering images and reflecting through the practice of making images (Bateson and Mead quoted in Banks and Morphy 1997). Acknowledging the importance of visual methodologies, I used them not only as an illustration of what I am explaining verbally, but also as a way of reinforcing my arguments.

The uncanny anxiety of being out of place moves some special needs students to develop their imagination and make places for belonging in school corners which are not planned for them. Teachers, other students and staff negotiate with them along this process, allowing or not the use and appropriation of space. The materiality of the observed schools appears as not inclusive, but SEN students interact with it in a very familiar way, challenging barriers and opening their possibilities. As if they were used to be in non-inclusive places (their city, sometimes their homes), they develop a talent for place making based on social interactions and materiality.

An analysis of place in relation to SEN students’ experiences in school reveals possibilities for school design, curriculum and school community engagement. The inclusion or exclusion some SEN students experience opens up possibilities to try out new alternatives for learning, friendship and political participation. Conducting observations including visual data and taking an ethnographic approach allows us to reflect in a very practical way about the consequences of materiality in students’ everyday life.


Can Basque be protected in multi-ethnic environments? Ethical dilemmas in Basque school ethnography

This is paper addresses ethical dilemmas in ethnographic research focusing on the methodological challenge of researching in the ethnographer’s home country. Ethnographic fieldwork necessitates a long-term commitment to a research setting and its participants, involving both time and energy invested in the field and professional and personal responsibilities that the ethnographer acquires during the research process. I write from the Basque Country, my home, and where most of my fieldwork is conducted. The logistics of researching the community I am part of are simple, however, my ethnographic experience involves constant re-positioning at a professional and personal level.

This paper addresses ethical dilemmas I faced when researching interactions between Basque educators and non-autochthonous students in a Basque public school. The data I refer to was collected in a secondary education public center, which I will designate as Udabia, over nine months of participant observation, interviews, and focus groups.

Basque public education actively promotes Basque as a minority language and speaking Basque marks community-belonging, hence, ethnic identity. However, Udabia had an uncommon characteristic: a high percentage of its studentship were from immigrant families. This particularity made working in Udabia a burden for many teachers and a challenge for others. Those for whom Udabia represented a burden found classroom interaction acrimonious and complained that immigrant students refused to speak Basque. By contrast, educators who viewed the diverse studentship of Udabia as a challenge believed that teaching immigrant students involved different educational practices from those used when teaching autochthonous students. For these teachers, instructing immigrant students in Basque was not their priority.

This research context enabled me to further understand the reasons and justification of both groups of teachers. The challenge as an ethnographer and a member of the Basque community, was to explore both discourses, as they represented the intersection between two markedly differentiated elements in Basque education: the protection of Basque as a minority language and identity, and the promotion of inclusive education. Methodologically, this research focus obliged me to re-position myself as an observer during fieldwork, particularly in response to teachers engaged in acrimonious discourse. I conclude that the process of professional and personal re-positioning encouraged by ethnographic research in a familiar setting is fundamental to developing a well-grounded set of guidelines to improve educational interaction in local contexts.
Catarina Player-Koro and Marianne Dovemark

Quality assured teacher skills for sale - a solution to school’s challenges within the Swedish education system?

The global restructuring of the state has led to changes in how to organise and deliver public policies. This governance, referred to as network governance, describes how new actors joined up in complex and evolving social networks are active in the formation of state policy and the delivery of public services in general and public education in specifically. Networked governance is a complex and multi-faced process of privatisation that are taking place “… ‘of’, ‘in’ and ‘through’ public education and education policy making, ‘in’ and ‘through’ the work of educational business and the actions of the state” (Ball, 2008, p 83). Accordingly, new kinds of policy actors from the private sector and interest groups are increasingly participating in contemporary thinking about public education and education reforms.

This paper will present substantive findings from a network ethnography (Howard 2002). The aim has been to become involved in and explore processes involving forms of networking (Juneman, Ball & Santori, 2018) by studying how private ‘edupreneural’ actors develops qualification programmes and other services where teachers’ skills are defined. In this paper we have special focus on company Arete Academy Ltd.

Examples of the company's services and products are observation assessment protocols. The observations give the principles, according to the company: ‘a good basis for discussing teaching’ and teachers’ skills with their employed teachers. The observations assessment protocols can, according to the company’s website, be helpful ‘in advanced for salary discussions with various teachers.’ The observations are built upon a scale from one to five based on a number of different statements. For example: ‘The teacher challenges and inspires the students (on a scale from one to five); based on the students’ interests and prior knowledge (on a scale from one to five); gives students inspiring tasks that can be solved with different complexities’ (on a scale from one to five). Arete Academy Ltd. also offers lesson observations that are conducted by their owned trained observers. Arete Academy Ltd.’s observers have, according to their website a ‘solid teaching experience’ and have undergone their own ‘observer training’ and are ‘accustomed to conducting lesson observations’.

Private actors together with governmental actors and actors from the public sector are participating in the formation and thinking about public education and education reforms. In this special case, we discover among other things that (i) the private company Arete Academy Ltd. has a preference for what a skilled teacher needs to know, (ii) teacher training is displaced from the main provider (the state/municipality) to private companies, (iii) the competence of the state teacher education is in a way rejected. Private companies can be created, as e.g. merit companies for qualification of teachers, in response to political, economic and social pressures (Beach 2010). Arete Academy Ltd. is an example of an organisations that has been formed in response to policy.

It is of great importance to explore and disseminate knowledge about how private companies deal with certain educational projects but not others. When examining projects undertaken by Arete Academy Ltd. we can conclude that they are geographically concentrated to metropolitan areas and to richer municipalities in the southern and
central of Sweden. Municipalities and schools that already have high standard schools. The question is if activities like Arete Academy Ltd.’s decreases or maybe actually increases the difference between municipalities and schools?


Auliya Ridwan

Pedagogy, Leadership, and Cultural Reproduction in Contemporary Indonesian Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools)

This paper aims to show how the pedagogies employed in pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) – particularly the pedagogies of the kiai (head teacher as well as pesantren leader) – reproduce culture over generations in Indonesia. With the boarding school system, santri (students) go through scheduled activities inside and outside the classroom 24/7 for several years, interacting with the kiai inside and outside classrooms.

Pedagogies in pesantren involve the primary field (schooling) and the secondary field (community, interaction, and activities outside classroom). In the context of pesantren, kiai leadership is a significant element appearing in the primary field as well as in the secondary field. A kiai is not only a senior teacher in a pesantren but also a role model for santri in every interaction. As the primary and secondary element of pedagogies, kiai initiate new habitus into santri and strengthening it through pesantren pedagogies. This paper describes the learning activities in pesantren, both in the classroom and outside, and how the figure of the kiai contributes to the development of santri’s habitus.

This paper is based upon 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork in three pesantren in Indonesia in 2018. The first pesantren is located in Madura; it was established in the middle of the 19th century, and has kept using the learning materials and pedagogies from its period of establishment with only very slow and minor modification. The pesantren aims to cultivate Islamic virtues through its students learning classic Islamic texts and religious exercises. The second and the third pesantren were established in the middle of the 20th century and are located respectively in East Java and Lombok. Both pesantren still make use classic Islamic resources and accept Western education materials and pedagogies and allocate much portion of experiential learning in their education systems. The Java Pesantren trains santri to manifest religious virtues in social actions, Islamic education, and environmental concerns. The Lombok Pesantren trains santri to independently plan and run programs of activities outside the classroom, with focus on environmental issues, women’s empowerment, and interfaith dialogue.

Kiai are the most important pedagogic element in pesantren. They appear as intellectual and ideal models for their santri. They are actively involved in the santri’s tasks and show greater effort than anyone else in the pesantren. Therefore, santri tend to adopt their kiai’s intellectual and work ethics. In Madura Pesantren, santri become religious leaders and trusted figures in their community after finishing their pesantren education. In the Java and Lombok Pesantren, santri are able to become examples, pioneers, as well as leaders for their community to solve social and environmental issues. Alumni of the last two pesantren understand that Islamic virtues should underlie utilitarian actions and science must underlie action for effective results.

This paper demonstrats how pesantren pedagogies and the presence of kiai leadership inside and outside classroom constructed santri’s culture, which is aligned with their kiai’s culture. Through long exposure of pesantren education in Indonesia, santri reproduce their kiai’s intellectual, work ethics, as well as worldview about living in wider society. This explains why the ‘brand’ of a pesantren in Indonesia always correlates with its kiai leadership, pedagogical attributes, and alumni profile.
Hanne Riese

**Ethnography of the present and self-consciousness as the intersection of observation and interviewing.**

The paper intends to investigate the relationship between observation and interview in ethnographic research in education, and discuss the role of self-consciousness of behalf of the researcher. In particular self-consciousness will be discussed with reference to the challenges posed by increasingly diverse educational contexts in combination with standardized curriculums.

Qualitative inquiry has been characterised as a reformist movement encompassing a variety of epistemological, methodological, political and ethical critiques towards social scientific research favouring experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational and survey research. Participant observation and interviews have been dominating ways of collecting data, and are discussed as separate techniques. Ethnography implies the use of both approaches, however the relationship between the two techniques are scarcely discussed, and reaching an agreement as to how to define ethnography seems problematic (Hammersley, 2006, 2018). Coming from highly diverging epistemological roots, but at the same time intimately integrated in practice, observation and interview constitute ethnography. However, the knowledge produced through this is not only a matter of productive triangulation, but also represents challenges. The researcher’s mediation between different forms of data consciously as well as sub-consciously implies positioning with regard to the field and the data, thus has consequences with regard to power. The paper will investigate the relationship between the two forms of knowledge in ethnographic inquiry, and the researchers work on her own self-consciousness. Accounts from two different ethnographic fieldworks in educational settings characterised by diversity will support the arguments.

The paper will contribute to the discussion on what ethnography is, as well as its role in investigating the present-day situation in education. Furthermore, it will identify and discuss the challenges facing an ethnographic researcher in educational situations characterized with diversity in student populations as well as in medial representations.


An innovative video recording approach in ethnographic research: to exploring pupils’ low voiced conversations while scaffolding peers at a Swedish lower secondary school

Little is known about pupils’ informal low-voiced conversations with peers during lessons. The purpose of this paper/presentation is to account for an explorative research design, in applying multiple methods, and particularly video recordings, to generating data that gains access to pupils’ informal communication in the classroom without much disrupting of the natural flow of activities between peers in the classroom. Ethnographic studies can describe a classroom culture, where the research later on needs to report in a text, in order to restrict multiple meanings and also to tell a story with claims based on evidence (Walford, 2009). When research focuses on pupils’ interaction with peers, a group of pupils is often recorded in another room outside the classroom or tie-clip Microphones are used attached to a few pupils inside the classroom. This facilitates recording one topic at a time (e.g. Melander & Sahlström, 2010), but interferes with the roles in the class and might hinder the pupils’ spontaneous talk with peers. It is of importance to questioning what counts as knowing, doing and being in a group, and who has access to the practices, social constructions and processes (Baker, Green, & Skukauskaitė, 2008). This study aimed at approaching the pupils’ flow of interaction and their perspective: who do they turn to, what do they ask peers (instead of asking the teacher), and how do they provide help to peers in the classroom context?

Participant observations of a class in 8th grade (14 year-olds) at a municipal school, was followed by an innovative staging of three camcorders and several Dictaphones. This was later followed up by interviews with the pupils in the class – aiming at prioritise the pupils’ perspectives and experiences of collaboration with peers while doing lesson-related assignments. Heath, Hindmarsh and Luff (2010) emphasize the importance of exploring, adjusting the rigging of the gear at a site. This was done in the current study, seeking to obtain a way of recording in the classroom making all the pupils’ voices heard in their informal conversations with peers.

The staging of the recording devices had two main objectives. Firstly, by focusing on a more quiet part of the classroom where all pupils occasionally went, instead of focusing on particularly selected individuals, all pupils in the class were covered. Secondly, elaborated discreet placing of the recording devices rendered it possible for the pupils to be oblivious of the recordings, which facilitated to explore a natural flow of interaction between peers. The recorded files were later synchronized and transcribed in multiple transcript. However, an inconvenience was that some fragments of the pupils’ low voiced conversations were inaudible while transcribing, due to background sounds in the classroom.

The innovative design and passive staging of the cameras created a closeness to the pupil perspective of interacting with peers, allowing recording the pupils’ more spontaneous and authentic conversations while scaffolding peers. This displayed that what teachers might overhear in the classroom differs from the pupils’ lesson related low-voiced conversations with peers.

An increased understanding on the natural flow of pupils’ interaction in the classroom practice seen from a pupils’ perspectives might lead to better adapted teaching to meet all the pupils’ needs and prerequisites. The study is of
interest from a methodological point of view and could be adapted to other ethnographic research contexts than the classroom.


Shari Sabeti

Speaking in ‘Pacific Tongues’: using spoken word poetry to explore experiences of displacement amongst Marshallese school children

This is a substantive paper that is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out during visits to the Marshall Islands and Hawai‘i between April 2017 and May 2018 as part of an ESRC/AHRC funded project on Forced Displacement. The project involved a series of participatory arts education workshops in collaboration with artists in order to explore children’s experiences of displacement, identity and belonging. The paper proposed here focuses in detail on poetry workshops conducted by Marshallese poet, Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner across three schools attended by children with quite different experiences of migration. Drawing on detailed field notes, an in-depth interview with Jetnil-Kijiner, teacher interviews in each school, as well as the children’s poetry, the paper explores the way in which Jetnil-Kijiner conceptualized her work as a poet and activist, the methods she used to encourage the children to share their stories, and her reflections on the project as a whole. It places this in the context of literature on the theory and practice of spoken word poetry (Yanofsky, van Driel and Kass 1999) as a particularly effective way of reaching out to, and giving voice to, young people, as well as work on the consciousness-raising potentials of urban youth poetry (Jocson 2006).

Grant Kester has argued that dialogues set up between artists and communities can foster ‘empathetic identification’ (2014) and have the potential to lead to a renewed sense of cultural identity. This paper considers each site in detail, arguing that the workshop with which the artist most identified was not the one where the children most identified with her.

The paper’s primary contribution is to our theoretical understanding of educating through the arts, in particular through activist poetry, by taking a fine-grained ethnographic approach to the practice of one poet as she conducts a series of poetry workshops with children. It considers the value of bringing artists into school settings and focuses in particular on the potential effects of Western consciousness raising methodologies employed in a non-Western context.
Zones of in-Between as Creative Spaces exemplified by pupils’ interactions at school

Zones of in-between (Saltofte 2013, 2018) are organizational, social and physical spaces within institutional settings (such as schools) where there is the potential for doing something else than you are supposed to. The case here focus on in-between zones in schools. Different types of presence, interactions and expressions show themselves when pupils take a break from formal instruction and interact as part of a peer community, sharing and exploring interest.

Interactions and social recognition processes in these liminal zones; zones of in-between will be exemplified by ethnographic descriptions and anthropological analysis of their everyday creativity (Sawyer 2006). The data is based on two periods of fieldwork (2007/08 and 2014) among 7th, 8th, and 9th grade pupils at a Danish free school. The ethnography describes creative improvisations and social and community-building interactions as expressions and meanings of a specific type of in-between zone creativity.

Pupils form the zone, or at least its content and expressions, by themselves. They do so by being present and acting differently and in a more experimental manner than during the ordinary teacher-structured teaching. The forms of expression revealed during my fieldwork included parodies of teachers and cultural expressive forms from beyond the school context. The improvisations and creative expressions are inspired by and taking their form from both experiences in the school setting and from the exploration and expressions of shared interests. This kind of creativity appears specific temporal and spatial settings, generally on the margins or peripheries of the school site. The interactions, knowledge and improvisations in these communities differ from those observed in the teaching setting or in teacher-pupil interactions. The way spaces and relations are practiced is based on skills and knowledge of the peer community.

Zones of in-between moments and situations can lead to or open up the potential for social interactions, improvisations, and creative expressions. The expressions are formed and performed, and they rely on the character of the peer communities. The ‘quality’ of in-between zones depends on the possibility of having unrestricted time together and on having places to be - or at least meet – that can allow pupils to experiment with skills and expressions that they can share with fellow ‘in-between peers’. Zones of in-between are sites for experimenting with social and expressive improvisations, developing a shared repertoire of the group in creating and showing their interest and skills, and differentiating these from school subjects and from other groups of pupils. In sum, zones of in-between are sites of an alternative, pupil-managed creativity.
Avihu Shoshana

Ethnographies of Alternative Education and Play Pedagogy in Israel: What is “Alternative” in Alternative Schools?

An in-depth analysis of the anthropological research literature shows that despite the growth in the number of alternative schools in the world, it is very difficult to locate thick ethnographies in alternative schools. This research lacuna is disappointing in light of the interesting link these schools offer regarding between culture, education and subjectivity or the cultural production of the subject and the alternative educational organization. Moreover, in view of the fact that alternative pedagogies (such as “democratic” and “Waldorf”) have been developed in a specific cultural context and have migrated to other cultures, their ethnographic research can teach us about cultural import, cultural translation and hybrid educational inventions (or what is also called glocality).

This article is based on an ethnography of a unique alternative elementary school called "Educational Experimentation in a Play Space" and operates a "play pedagogy." This pedagogy does not refer to "play" as a state of remission that is contrary to learning or as a didactic teaching tool. This is play-based pedagogy as an educational concept. The study's findings reveal how arithmetic lessons are conducted through "picking" arithmetic exercises hanging from trees in the forest or gathering oysters on the beach near the school. How learning English is done by "fishing words" (throwing a rod into a large tub and trying to catch words and make sentences), or by baking cakes in the form of letters, and how history is learned via the "feast of the gods" in ancient Greece. The ethnographies further teach how alternative education requires teachers and school administrators to develop new language and categories to create an "alternative" reality ("play school," "game teacher," "game student," "play learning") that opposes the “traditional” one (or "mainstream education."). Finally, the findings show the constant movement (and tension) between structure and anti-structure, release and boundaries, freedom and discipline that characterizes alternative education. The discussion section seeks to offer answers to the question, "what is alternative in alternative education," to explore the implications of the constant movement between structure and anti-structure (or the desire to deviate from mainstream education), and to initiate a discussion about the urgent need for comparative cultural ethnographies of everyday educational activity in alternative schools.
**Vandana Singh**

**Ethnography through Camera: investigating the gendered experiences of female and male pupils’ in Northern India primary school.**

UNESCO (2015) has applauded India’s contribution and commitment towards Universal Primary Education; however, gender parity in institutions has long been problematic. This is mainly because inequalities are deep-rooted in the customs, religions, and culture of Indian society. As a result, girls and women have unequal control over resources and decision-making in comparison to men and boys. Although schools aim to equalise these gender disparities (SDG Goal 5.1.1. 2016), in reality, the finding suggests differently.

This ethnographic case study explores gender inequalities in two fifth grade primary schools (aged 11-13 years old) through participant observations, focus groups, and photo-elicitation interviews. The methodological challenges, like, obtaining equitable voices and not privileging male pupils whereas muting voices of female pupils in focus group interviews led to using photo-elicitation interviews (PEI). PEIs helped in unpacking gendered experiences and gender shaping of the primary school female and male pupils’. Their experiences were recorded through the images that they produced and through the verbal accounts generated by elicitation interviews. Whereas, focus groups provided understandings about gender dynamics, visibility of male or invisibilities of female pupils within a group. Field notes captured the distribution of spaces benefiting some students whilst limiting others and insights into teachers’ pedagogic practices in the classroom and overall school environment.

The study found that the photo-elicitation interviews evoked participants’ voices regarding their discriminatory gendered identities and gender shaping. The discriminatory experiences of female pupils are the result of certain places, the time within the school and classroom, which hinder their progress. The findings also demonstrate the presence of clear boundaries around gendered roles and gender stereotyping connected to those places and times. The paper concludes, in spite of several limitations for female pupils to build their gendered capabilities, they have negotiated the boundaries through their agency. The agency can be seen, for example, by bringing the social and cultural practices from the outside world to the learning environment to negotiate the physical spaces and time within the four walls of the schools.


Characterized as an addition, complement, or alternative to formal education (UNESCO, 2019), non-formal education includes learning opportunities valuable for social, cultural, and self-development (p. 24). Focused on human rights, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child considered the aim of education is “to empower the child by developing his or her skills, learning and other capacities, human dignity, self-esteem and self-confidence” (CRC, 2001, para. 1). Despite widespread support for child empowerment and development, unequal access to out-of-school learning opportunities persists in the United States. Drawing on data from a thirteen-month ethnographic study at an inner city neighborhood bike shop in the US “deep south,” this study explored the nature and consequences of access to “concerted cultivation” (Lareau, 2003) opportunities constructed over time by urban youth and mentors who participated in a community-supported bike shop by and for youngsters ages 6 to 18.

Using an interactional ethnographic approach (Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2003), we investigated how learning opportunities were constructed, adopted, and adapted through group members’ interactions in the moment and over time. Data analysis was recursive in nature, as we examined data on an ongoing basis throughout the study. Collected through participant observation, data sources included fieldnotes, audiotapes, interviews, and written artifacts. Multiple levels of analysis were conducted, including: transcription of the audio records (Green, Skukauskaite, Dixon, & Cordova, 2007); construction of event maps (Spradley, 1980); and identification and analysis of a telling case (Mitchell, 1984).

Our analyses focused on the discourse and discursive interactions across time of Front Yard Bike participants, as well as the negotiation of events by members through these interactions. While analysis is ongoing, initial findings show evidence of change in the discourse, the discursive interactions, and the learning outcomes of impoverished youth when provided intentional access to opportunities designed to build their cultural capital. Over time, older youth developed dispositions and attitudes reflective of expectations of bike shop mentors and community, for example, through choice of self-directed activities, negotiation of tasks, and expression of “parental-like” concern for development of younger children.

Building on previous ethnographic work in educational settings (e.g., Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005; Walford, 2008) and ethnographic work focused on marginalized youth and learning (e.g., Jeffrey, 2014; Jeffrey & Woods, 2009; Russell, 2011), this study makes visible the nature and consequences of young people’s engagement in practices and processes of work development in a community bike shop. By focusing on the learning opportunities constructed, adopted, and adapted in this community, this study revealed the developing and shifting nature of learning, including how youth changed their understanding of self and others in their local social worlds.


Amanda R. Smith

Participant Integrated Imagework: Materializing the Invisible in Ethnography

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the potential of participant art-making, specifically participant integrated imagework (PII), as an ethnographic method for making visible affective, subconscious, ephemeral, or the otherwise hidden in the everyday lives of people. To describe this methodology, I share examples from a two year project with a group of teenagers who conducted photoethnographic self-studies on their engagement with texts in their everyday lives. Participants used PII through mixed-media art-making as an analytic method to study their photographs by using transparency film to create literal layers of annotation that could be placed over a focal photograph for a variety of viewings.

PII offered a way to make the familiar strange which is often at the heart of ethnographic studies. It achieves this in two ways. First, approaching the analytical task to make sense in/with/through the photographs as an artistic, creative process rather than relying solely on traditional coding offered the opportunity to slow down the relations. This slowing created space for things-bodies-objects and different sets of relations to surface for/with the artist. When invited into an act of creation rather than just an act of observation, the young researchers were able to see and feel differently with the photographs. Second, art has a different relationship with thinking, action, feeling, and perceiving than other analytical methods such as talk, writing, or traditional coding. While those other methods were also used in the study, employing art was a way to gain access to more multisensory and embodied ways of thinking with the data. As a result, in every art piece the student researcher was able to surface, through color, line drawing, and annotation, something that would have remained invisible otherwise: affective intensity, sensory experience, and mercurial or ephemeral relations.

This method may be of great use to educational ethnographers. As the theoretical basis for ethnographic work has expanded to include Rhizoanalysis, Actor-Network Theory, Affect Theory, Nonrepresentational Theory, and Feminist New Materialisms researchers have been seeking tools that will provide access to affect and complicated or hidden relations. This method is one such tool that offers a rather simple but deeply nuanced way to materialize the otherwise invisible. This method is also useful for those that work with young people of all ages in and out of schools. Unbound by language, students can demonstrate and create complex and evocative art that offers a window into their complicated ways of being and learning that they may otherwise be unable to communicate in all their fullness.
Courtney Stafford-Walter

Separation and Sociality: Boarding schools and Indigenous youth in Southern Guyana.

Throughout lowland South America, state-run educational projects implemented in indigenous communities bring about a lot of complex social processes and impact various aspects of indigenous life. Classroom education is changing the ways communities live together and modifying traditional social relationships, particularly intergenerational relationships, in various ways. The time that young people spend in classrooms vastly diminishes the time they would spend with elders and parents. This is not something to be taken lightly since intimate kinship networks are considered crucial to the dynamics of mutual care central to Amerindian lives. Building on these foundational ideas, this paper will explore the ways in which an ethnographic approach allows the researcher to draw conclusions about the wider impact of particular forms of schooling on indigenous youth and their communities in Southern Guyana. Based on 13 months of fieldwork with Wapishana people, this ethnographically grounded paper demonstrates how participant observation within and outwith the school enable the drawing of deeper conclusions about the relationship between state-run boarding schools and social change.

As I spoke with Amerindian elders in Guyana, they insisted that, despite the fear that their children would leave for boarding school and never return to their home village, attending secondary school was an important and valuable opportunity for Amerindian youth, and it would give the next generation a chance at a ‘better’ life. On one hand, indigenous people understand that engaging with formal education can be a primary way of renegotiating their relationship with outsiders in order to protect themselves and their communities. On the other hand, schooling interrupts the youth’s relationship to traditional knowledge, but does not provide assurance for another way of life. Educated indigenous youth can become professionals, but the number of jobs available to them are limited in their communities. In order to secure many jobs that the secondary school equips them for they will have to leave their homes, presenting them with a difficult choice between working and honoring their commitments to their families and their communities. In this paper I will explore the tension between the value Amerindians place on formal schooling, which seems to be ever increasing, and its costs, such as separation from kin and community and spiritual and physical wellness.

Using an ethnographic approach to understanding the impact of formal schooling in indigenous communities is essential. In this piece I will illustrate how long term participant observation allowed me to analyze the relationship between boarding school education and Amerindian youth. Beyond that, I will demonstrate how this approach supported more profound conclusions about how this particular form of schooling impacts these young people’s families and their communities in Southern Guyana and fosters and encourages rapid social change throughout the region.
Sandy Stewart and Maropeng Modiba

School culture and literacy development: Reading support volunteers’ views.

Debates about how educational ethnography should be conducted and reported upon (Walford 2008) to develop understanding of the cultural material that shapes interactions and activities in education have emphasised the need for researchers to allow the participants in the research to contribute to the process of meaning construction (Gilbert, 2008). This paper reports on a process of individual consciousness raising of the cultural context and material that shaped how reading support volunteers (RSVs) opened up and connected both historically and politically with the world of the children they were helping to learn to read English texts with comprehension. From the richness of the volunteers’ reflections and insights we construct vignettes to explore in greater depth 1) the everyday experiences that RSVs have in the field and 2) their beliefs, attitudes, values and perceptions on the assistance they provided to the teachers, 3) how their presence in the school seems to have affected the reading culture at the school and 4) learners and teachers’ interactions with them. The vignettes are based on focus groups discussions and lesson observations that were used in the first phase of the study to capture the RSVs’ lived experiences of helping teach reading at the school. Therefore, this is a paper that is based on a study in progress.

The paper argues that situating the RSVs in an inquiry in which they had to reflect on their involvement in teaching reading, resulted in promoting a critical consciousness of the cultural development they were helping to cultivate. Examining the interactions and activities they used highlighted the sense making of the experienced school culture and enhanced reflections on the worthiness of their contribution. It situated the RSVs in an inquiry in which they could confront what they were actually doing and explain the implications thereof; namely, aspects that facilitated and constrained the children’s literacy development.

The findings in this study are likely to add to and enhance an understanding of curriculum as culture. In addition, the study may add to emerging research on the use of vignettes in the developing world (Gourlay et al., 2014) and their evaluation as a research tool (Stravouka & Lozgka, 2018).


"Your accent is annoying... you should talk more like us": the challenges of developing relationships and defining roles in ethnographic fieldwork

For my research into the self-identities of young people on a course for those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) I conducted an ethnography at a ‘life skills’ centre in the Midlands. This paper explores the challenges that arose over how I defined myself and developed relationships with my participants. Access to the organisation had been gained on the agreement that I would work as a classroom assistant alongside my observation of young people at the centre. Before entering the centre I was aware that my characteristics and how I presented myself could have an impact on my research, and while I could control some aspects of my personal front, others were non-negotiable. While I acknowledged that my gender and age would be of significance to participants, I was not aware that my accent would cause a reaction.

Constructing a role as a participant observer was not a one sided process; “in every case the fieldworker is fitted into a plausible role by the population he [sic] is studying” (Vidich, 1955: 356). I played a number of roles in my relationships with the young people and the staff at the centre. I was viewed in different ways; as a friend, as the person from Leeds and as a member of staff. I struggled in my dual roles as a researcher and volunteer. Although the staff knew I was there to do research, the pressures on them meant that they valued me more as a volunteer. They expected me to help out when needed and I was treated as a teaching resource.

This paper highlights the challenges of conducting ethnographic research where observers can feel obliged to help members in exchange for access. Participants and the researcher can be faced with various expectations and demands, and adopt strategies to pursue their own interests (Wang, 2013). Power relations within these relationships therefore need to be acknowledged. The paper demonstrates the importance of being reflexive about the interactions and relationships between researcher and researched, focusing on an education setting.
Jonathan Tummons

Ethnographies of higher education and modes of existence: using Latour’s philosophical anthropology to construct faithful accounts of higher education practice

Actor-network theory is relatively uncommon in educational research but has been used by ethnographers in a variety of contexts (Larsson, 2006; Nespor, 1994; Plum, 2018; Tummons, 2010). Actor-network theory has now been enfolded by one of its progenitors into a larger project, An Inquiry Into Modes of Existence - AIME (Latour, 2013). Framed as an anthropological inquiry into the ontological and epistemological conditions of modernity, Latour argues in AIME for a radical shift in how we construct understandings of ‘objective’ truth and ‘scientific’ fact, and of the ways by which we establish ‘meaning’ in the world, all to be initiated nad then reinforced by empirical inquiry. Elements of AIME have begun to be employed through explorations of legal theory (McGee, 2014), politics and postpolitics (Tsouvalis, 2016), and contemporary academic practice (Decuypere and Simons, 2016).

In this paper, I will draw on my own ongoing theoretical inquiry into AIME in order to explore data that is emerging from ongoing empirical research into the provision of distributed medical education in Canada, and the ways in which constructions of professionalism are formed within such programmes (Tummons, 2019; Tummons et al., 2018). The contributions that this paper will make are theoretical/methodological and empirical. The theoretical/methodological contribution comes through a critical application of AIME to ethnography of education: Latour’s work has over time been conflated – erroneously – with postmodernist and sociocmaterialist perspectives, and the anthropological and sociological foundations of his work have been lost sight of. This paper seeks to correct this. The empirical contribution comes through the presentation of findings from an ongoing three-year medical education ethnography.


Assembling teacher professionalism – an ethnographic study.

In attempting to define teacher professionalism in terms of the professional behaviours and beliefs of teachers, there have emerged a myriad of definitions in both policy and academic theory. Ethnographic research adds to this discourse by inviting us to view professional behaviours and beliefs as relationally formed within the cultures, societies and physical worlds of different collectives (Crang & Cook 2007; Nespor 1994; Latour & Woolgar 1986). Examinations of the influence of knowledge embodied within the material world of the teacher offer insights into the role of physical ‘signals’ (Plum 2017), professional spaces (Clandinin & Connelly 1996), documents (Mulcahy 2011; Tummons 2014; Barton 2017), and the dramaturgical creation of global tests (Gorur 2011) in shaping professional actions and beliefs. Yet, in order to fully understand teacher professionalism, we must gain an in-depth view of how it has been assembled. If we can ‘unblackbox’ (Law 1994) a situated iteration of professionalism and view its constituent actors and the interplay between them, we can understand its creation and influence its future.

As part of the initial findings of an ongoing PhD study, this paper offers such a view of teacher professionalism. Taking an actor-network theory informed approach to educational ethnography, which foregrounds the interplay of human and non-human actors in ‘performing into being’ actions and beliefs, the data on which this paper is based on reports the professional lives of teachers, leaders and visiting trainers within one school, constructed over a period of 4 months. Ethnographic ‘deep hanging out’ (Geertz 1998), augmented through semi-structured interviews and document analysis, enables the tracing of actor-networks involved in the relational and discursive creation of this iteration of teacher professionalism. Drawing on the work of Latour in actor-network theory and the relational understanding of actions and beliefs of Bourdieu and Foucault, this paper highlights the work of the actors within teacher professionalism and how the knowledge they embody translates, mobilises and stabilises teachers’ collective understanding of professionalism. If we can see the relational and discursive creation of a situated iteration of professionalism and understand its constituent actors and the interplay between them, we can comprehend its creation and influence its future. As a relatively underused approach to ethnographic understandings of teachers’ actions and values, the actor-network theory approach taken over an alternative, ‘flat’ view of ethnographic fieldwork, in which the human and non-human hold equal importance.


Nespor, J., 1994. *Knowledge in motion - Space, time and curriculum in undergraduate physics and management*


Globalization of Waldorf education Waldorf education, as a conscious alternative to mainstream education, partly because of its outspoken ideas on personal development, recently started to globalize. This raises questions about how its educational principles and practices are adapted locally. This paper addresses the complexity and friction of this process on the basis of ethnographic fieldwork in the Philippines. Waldorf education as ‘development oriented education’ Early 20th century Waldorf education was founded in Germany by the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner. Waldorf’s pedagogy focuses on broad personal development, in which importance is given to specific stages in life (see i.a. Lievegoed, 2005 or the extensive oeuvre of Steiner). Development is conceptualized according to the principal that “ontogenesis recapitulates phylogenesis” (Stehlik, 2018: 219), meaning that personal development follows the history of mankind. In the curriculum this principle is expressed in historical stories and images, in which students could recognize the struggles of their age. A Waldorf School in the Philippines The Philippines offers a good example of a country where Waldorf education recently has obtained a foothold. The school that is central in this study opened in 2003. One of the dilemmas for the school is whether to copy a pre-existing Eurocentric curriculum or to develop a new, local version. Reformulating curricular aspects is considered difficult since it could affect the school’s core identity. History classes in grade 7: ‘Being a discoverer or being discovered’ In the Philippines, as elsewhere in Waldorf schools, 7th graders are typed ‘discoverers’. At the age of 12 they are about to enter puberty, question the authority of parents and teachers, and start to think and judge for themselves. In history classes this developmental stage is mirrored in historical stories about 15th and 16th century Europe, about the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery. But could Filipino students identify with Columbus and Magellan the way European students do? Are they the discoverers or the discovered in these stories? This is a precarious question in the hybrid cultural context of the Philippines. Teachers find it a problem difficult to cope with adequately, also because so far none of the local equivalents seems to be a satisfactory alternative (Local alternatives include stories about Malay migration to the Philippine Archipelago, the ‘Asian’ discoverer Zheng He, the Galleon trade between Acapulco and Manila or the 19th century Filipino Ilustrados’ Renaissance.) This study links to the exhortations by educational ethnographers to not take underlying structures, assumptions, and values for granted in education (Delamont 2014). By studying alternative education in an unusual setting, this study provides a ‘mirror’ to things we tend to qualify as ‘normal’. Furthermore it contributes to an academic debate about whether or not trends in education globalize and, if so, how (see Spring, 2015 or Anderson-Levitt, 2003). More specifically it provides a contribution to the yet limited, but growing body of research on the globalization of alternative approaches in education, especially the globalization of Waldorf education (other examples: Boland, 2015 and Hoffmann, 2016).


Begoña Vigo Arrazola

Comparing particular ethnographic case studies in a global context.

This paper aims to contribute to the debate in ethnography research to influence the knowledge beyond the particular ethnographic cases studied. The aim is to be able to identify critical points of suture within currently hegemonic structures in rural education experiences so they can be both understood, undermined, challenged and overcome.

During the last three decades different countries have experienced profound changes in schools through the pressures of the market. According to Ball, an understanding of such processes should ‘address the processes of re-contextualization to realize the policy in specific national and local settings. Ethnography allows to impact on possible reforms on participation teaching practices in rural schools. However, very few comparative research on policy across different countries tends to consider the influence of space on the ‘policy as practice’ considering the analysis of data collected from those teachers on whose work practices such policies impact. Our more specific objective is to identify how different ethnographic studies influence the educational knowledge regarding the subject of participation in rural schools in a global context. The question we will consider most is, what gives the comparative research for the ethnographic research on rural schools?

This paper has concentrated on comparative research about the participation in rural schools from different countries, considering the opportunities that ethnographic research could give to explain researched situations. The comparison has been centred on the research productions from the ethnographies on the participation in rural schools in Spain and Sweden during the period 2008-2017, based on cross case analyses. The paper also considers the review and analysis of four initial ethnographic research projects into education, carried out in rural locations, private and public schools at different times, that emphasize participation in teaching practices. This analysis is based on showing factors that may emerge at the roots level in different rural schools and classrooms from the everyday practices of parents, teachers and pupils. It could penetrate the policy-practice interface and this is especially important in the evaluation of educational innovations.

The results so far show an innovative glocalised response on the participation in rural schools derived not only from different cultural mediations at each country but also from the similar social material needs that some schools have experienced in both countries. The comparison illustrates how different political, cultural and educational contexts of the two countries have promoted very inclusive experiences in some rural schools from a material perspective. The practical implications are related to research validity. Ethnographic educational research in global and local contexts could contribute to generalize and to form a general case narrative in a globalizing world.
Geoffrey Walford

What is good autoethnography? Writing in the age of the selfie.

This is a methodological paper that seeks to encourage thought about the nature of autoethnography and which types of autoethnography might be most worthwhile. The paper starts with the assumption that the purpose of any academic writing is to make a contribution to knowledge. This contribution to knowledge may be to theory, method, data, or critique.

The paper will review the various types of autoethnographic writing within education, focusing initially on the accounts of the process of doing educational research which started to be published in the 1970s and 1980s. Most of the early articles and book chapters of this type were written by established academics who had already published research that was acknowledged to have been of high quality. They made a contribution to knowledge in discussing the practicalities, compromises, and difficulties involved in conducting research, and acted as a partial challenge and complement to the research methods textbooks then available. The paper will discuss the merits and potential problems of such accounts, drawing upon examples of such work.

During the 1980s and 1990s other forms of autoethnography started to be published that focused more on a contribution to knowledge through providing new data related to education. Here the author wrote about his or her experience as one example of being, for example, a teacher, student, or university academic. The paper will discuss the merits and potential problems of this type of account, again drawing on various published examples.

The paper will argue that worthwhile autoethnography, of whatever type, should meet the criteria set for worthwhile ethnography as such. Emphasis will be given to the importance of multiple methods, long-term engagement, and the acknowledgment of the limitations of any study.
Dana Walker, Carolayn Marín, Deborah Romero, and Elisabeth VanBeek

Studying Imagination and Culture in Translocal Youth Radio: Methodological Considerations

This paper examines the methodological implications of integrating ethnography with sociocultural approaches to studying imagination and culture (Zittoun & Glăveanu, 2018), in the education of immigrant and other historically marginalized student groups.¹ We ground our analysis in a year-long study of a school-based Translocal Youth Radio project that connected 13 to 14-year-old immigrant and Roma students in Catalonia and Colorado, who were investigating issues of concern to youth locally, and engaging in dialogue and sharing their work virtually across national borders. A guiding concern of the study was to understand how a learning design that draws on imagination and Funds of Identity (Esteban-Guitart, 2016), can help move us toward a more contextualized, culturally responsive, and transformative education for students from social groups whose languages, cultural practices, and religions have been devalued, often for generations, in the wider society.

For this paper we focus on the project in Catalonia. Students went out to the streets, to the civic center and the mall, to conduct interviews and engage in activities related to their interests and school-required radio productions. They shared their videos via Instagram with school, family, the public, and students in Colorado. We map these movements of youth participants through urban and virtual spaces over time, to learn how spatial imagination contributed to shaping their sense of possible selves and spaces of potential action (Leander & Rowe, 2006; Nespor, 1997). We looked for evidence of students using their imagination to connect to worlds and selves outside of school, and how they introduce their interests, identities, and spheres of experience to group activities and radio productions (Walker, 2018). The authors engaged in participant observation in the two sites. Our data sources include identity artifacts (Esteban-Guitart, 2012) such as geomaps, circles of significant activities, and narratives about cultural objects brought from home. We analyse student Instagram videos, interviews, and video recordings of group interactions in project-related activities.

This paper contributes to education and ethnography by examining the usefulness of ethnographic theory-method for the study of the difficult-to-observe, yet significant phenomena of imagination in educational settings. For youth to integrate experiences with school, they must carry into their here and now something from elsewhere, turning “absence” into “presence.” Adolescents must use their imagination to expand their social and semiotic horizons as they travel within and between institutional spaces and create meanings and experiences that cross boundaries. We argue that an ethnography theory-method is needed to more

¹ Imagination is a dynamic by which a person or a group temporarily leave the here and now of proximal experience to explore a distal experience, in the past, future, or in an alternative world, then bring their explorations back to bear upon, and move forward, the here and now.
accurately describe the cultural and collective - as well as personal - nature of imagination, and the important role it plays in education.


Anna Winlund

Learning for school and for life – instruction of recently immigrated adolescents with limited previous formal schooling experiences in a Swedish introductory school.

This paper presents findings from an ethnographic study conducted in a group of recently immigrated adolescents (16-19 years old) with limited previous formal education who are developing basic literacy in a Swedish introductory school. Literacy development is not only about developing print literacy, learning linguistic expressions, school subjects and genres of the main-stream society (cf. Janks 2008), but also about understanding and developing social behaviors and relations (Gee 2015). So, besides learning to read and write in an additional language, these students have to adapt to formal schooling practices and navigate their ways into a new society. The purpose of this study is to investigate how contextual specific practices, in or out of school, materialize discursively in the interactions between a teacher and a group of students who are developing basic literacy. The empirical data consists of field notes and recorded interactions during a school year as well as translated interviews with some of the students in the group.

The analysis shows examples of a pedagogy that can make the contextual specific practices in and out of school explicit to the students and thereby give them room to develop agency and at the same time develop school practices. This paper might contribute to the conference through a perspective that is understudied: migrant adolescents who are developing literacy and who go to school for the first time in their lives in a new society. This ethnographic study focuses on the nature of these students’ education as well as the culture in the classroom and seeks to take an emic perspective through interviews and field conversations. In that way, I investigate everyday practices in school in relation to students’ agency and to social reproduction. A challenge worth discussing is my role as a researcher collecting data from adolescents with whom I have no language in common and who have limited abilities to read and write in any language.


Yang Zhao

Participation of Scottish Country Dancing in Lyon and Edinburgh

This study aims to explore how people partake in Scottish country dancing in Edinburgh, as an example in a native community and in Lyon, as an example in a non-native community. The participants were dancers with experience in Scottish dancing and who gained pleasure from Scottish dancing. I collected and considered my positionality and the dialogue in the field my post-fieldwork was not fixed in time and forever stagnant and from an ethnographic point of view that I utilised dance in its culture which is embodied in the my movements. This ethnographic research considers participation in Scottish country dancing: beginners to masters, younger and older generations, Scottish and non-Scottish people. It includes dozens of interviews including casual chats and dozens of observations and/or participation for each field (Lyon and Edinburgh), questionnaires, as well as ethnographic descriptions in order to interpret the similarities and differences of Scottish dance participation of general populations between Edinburgh (Easter 2017, summer 2017, early May 2018 and winter 2019) and Lyon (spring 2017 term), focused on three aspects – the teaching and learning process, dances and teaching content, and people’s social interactions. Field notes were transcribed from memory after a casual conversation was held.

According to observations and interviews it seems that smaller International groups/branches have a more-friendly attitude to newcomers maybe because of different dances and teaching content in balls and classes in Lyon and Edinburgh. The findings from this research demonstrate that the performative and social aspects of dance, as perpetuated by the French community in Lyon is not just for fun but the dancers have taken it seriously, and in Edinburgh, more than half of Scottish country dancers in dance societies are British. For these dancers in a native circumstance there are differences from the dancers who do Scottish country dancing in Lyon. However, there is no difference between the same dance in Lyon and Edinburgh since RSCDS has formalised the dances and every branch/group does exactly the same movements as the cribs require.

Through the completion of this project, I aim to demonstrate, to dancers in Lyon and Edinburgh in particular, that research into social dance can develop our understanding of the use of the arts as an interface between people from different cultural backgrounds. The caller(s) or teacher(s), and dancers could help build a motivational climate by being friendly and nice and the atmosphere in dance societies is likely to be related to the intensity of teaching content and complexity of dances, however, the group leaders and teachers/callers may adjust their teaching process. It recommends that future research could pay attention to how to teach social dancing within institutions and to encourage people to engage in dancing.

Membership and networking might be related to the goals and membership/staffing of the societies. The similarities and differences in the two cities show a more generalised perspective of Scottish dance groups and demonstrate a highly organised institutional dance form. So, this multi-sited field work may provide other ethnographic studies with strategies to keep Royal Scottish country dance and/or other institutionalised dance members and expand the societies in both native and non-native settings.
A reflexive account of managing roles and relationships in the process of conducting ethnographic fieldwork in a rural primary boarding school in China.

This is a methodological paper. This paper is developed from my ethnographic study (five months) about Chinese children’s understandings and experiences of friendships with peers in the context of rural primary boarding school. It firstly aims to discuss the advantages of combining participant observations and interviews in the fieldwork, in terms of exploring complex issues in children’s everyday lives. Then, it seeks to discuss my experiences in the process of negotiating my roles in relationships with children, teachers and school authorities in my ethnographic fieldwork. In the end, it reflects the ethical dilemmas that ethnographers might experience in Chinese educational institutions.

There were four findings: 1. A combination of participant observation and interviews can support researchers to target some meaningful ‘contradictory’ information to deepen the understandings of the complexity of some key terms (e.g., friend and friendship) in children’s world. 2. The ways (‘private’ way through the personal network or ‘official’ way through higher authorities) of gaining research permission and accessing the field can shape locals’ assumptions of the researcher’s social identity and network. 3. Relationships always have audiences. When managing relationships with teachers and children, a balanced ‘closeness’ and ‘distance’ does matter. 4. In Chinese educational setting, the embedded Confucian and collectivist values need to be seriously considered in the process of reflecting the practice of ethics in the field.

This research contributes to the methodological call to develop a deeper understanding of childhood via ethnography, as expressed in the “new” paradigm of the sociology of childhood. In this research, ethnography was shown to be a useful method for studying children’s relationships, particularly in drawing a vivid picture of children’s experiences of practicing interpersonal relationships via daily interaction. It also offers a perspective to reflect the practices of ethics in the ethnographic study about children’s world in Chinese educational institutions.