MEDIA IN EVERYDAY LIFE

HETA MULARI (ED.)

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FINNISH YOUTH RESEARCH SOCIETY
FINNISH YOUTH RESEARCH NETWORK

Contents

Preface

In this selection of articles we examine the media cultures of children and young people and their mediatised daily lives. The texts were published in Finnish in 2016 in a collection of articles called *Solmukohtia: Näkökulmia lasten mediakulttuurien tutkimusmenetelmiin ja mediakasvatukseen* [Turning points: Perspectives on methodologies of researching children's media cultures and on media education, ed. Mulari] and on an *Opinion* essay (2017) on the mediatised leisure time of children and young people written by Heta Mulari, Fanny Vilmilä and Jani Merikivi. This essay was originally published on the website of the Finnish Youth Research Network[1] and is based on the study *Media hanskassa: Lasten ja nuorten vapaa-aikatutkimus 2016 mediasta ja liikunnasta* [Grip on Media – A study of children's and young people's leisure activities in 2016, ed. Merikivi, Myllyniemi, and Salasuo].The texts have a common methodological perspective: how are media images and devices interwoven into children's daily lives at the daycare centre and at home? What types of questions and methods can be used to approach the theme in a research-based way, together with children? What types of power relations are unavoidable in research carried out with children? Multi-method research designs that aim at children's and young people's experiential knowledge and participation have an important place in the research of the rapidly changing world of media.

In the first chapter, Heta Mulari explains research perspectives on children's media cultures, topical themes and research methods. In the second chapter, Mulari and Annukka Palvalin discuss the problems involved in achieving participation by and hearing the voices of children, particularly when photos taken by and videos recorded by children and videoed peer interviews are used as research methods. The writers look at the discussion, which has recently developed, on 'child-centred' research methods and the ethical special issues that are interwoven into these, particularly related to the exercise of power between the children and between the researchers and the children that usually remains hidden. In the third chapter, Merikivi, Mulari and Vilmilä demand a perspective

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1   https://www.nuorisotutkimusseura.fi/nakokulma43

that reaches beyond the concerns voiced about the analysis of children's and young people's media relationships: a perspective which focuses on the participation of children and young people and their own views of the role of media in daily life. The studies were funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland and carried out during 2015 and 2016.

We would like to sincerely thank all the children, young people, daycare centres and families who participated in the research projects.

Perspectives on research into children's media cultures

Heta Mulari

It is morning at the daycare centre. Four-year-olds Leila, Amanda and Eevi are clearing away after playing house when I come into the room with a tablet computer. Leila spins around in the middle of the room holding a yellow chiffon scarf in the air with both hands. The scarf floats in the air and she is laughing. Eevi is spinning around with Leila and I can hear the girls chatting away enthusiastically: 'So then the scarf flies away and so does the crown.' When I ask who they are talking about Leila mentions something to me about Elsa. I realise that they are talking about Elsa, the ice princess and main character in the Disney film *Frozen* that is also popular in this group of children. I also realise that girls are acting out the turning point in the film, where Elsa has left her home and is travelling to a mountain-top ice castle and at a moment of empowerment sings the song *Let It Go*. Eevi and Leila also sing 'Let it go, let it go' in English and Leila smiles and dances, spinning around waving the scarf above her head.

This fieldwork diary entry, which was recorded in the middle of the daily routine at the daycare centre offers a good description of how the global media culture is interwoven into the children's daily life, play and peer relationships. Walt Disney Pictures' animated film *Frozen* was one example of the global media culture phenomenon that was present in the daily life of the daycare centre during the period that we were carrying out our research. (Read more about *Frozen* and its reception in Mayer 2016, 1–2.) *Frozen*, which is loosely based on H.C. Andersen's fairytale, the Snow Queen, premiered in 2013. The film's main characters, princess sisters Anna and Elsa, and the films other characters, like Olaf the Snowman, have, over a few years, permeated the consumer culture targeted at children. The Frozen phenomenon includes countless different products, from games to clothes and breakfast foods and collectable pictures. At the daycare centre, knowledge of *Frozen* seemed to be important at times from the perspective of the formation of children's

peer relationships and belonging to the group. Though the film clearly united the girls, it also divided them: Several times Amanda was told by Eevi that, "No it doesn't go like that", when she did not sing the song in the right way according to Eevi. A few hours later after the daytime nap, one of the daycare assistants was plaiting Eevi's hair into a side plait just after she had woken up. The assistant laughingly told us researchers that Eevi won't normally let anyone plait her hair, but she will agree to having her hair plaited into an "Elsa hairstyle".

These types of situations and encounters that structure the daily life at the daycare centre, the children's peer relationships and the relationships between the children and adults formed the key data for the Children's Media Cultures project[2]. The target of our research comprised the media cultures of children aged 3–6, and we carried out the daycare centre fieldwork stage of our project in groups of 3–5-year-olds and pre-school aged children during autumn 2015. The targets of the research project were to develop the methodologies of researching children's media cultures at daycare centres and at home, to consider special questions related to research conducted with pre-school aged children and the reporting of this research and the way in which the research data could be used at daycare centres in media education carried out in the sphere of early childhood education.

Our field research stage took place at an interesting time regarding early childhood education. During recent years we have witnessed several public debates about the cuts being made to early childhood education and the limiting of the subjective right to daycare. The cuts are linked with numerous threats ranging from larger group sizes to childhood inequality. Further, in spring 2016, the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care was re-drafted to include multiliteracy and information and communications technology in the curriculum for early childhood education.

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2   The fieldwork stage of the research was carried out as part of the Children's Media Cultures research project (2015-2016) funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which had the aim of developing and testing methodologies for researching pre-school aged children's media cultures. We carried out our fieldwork stage with two groups of children, Jojot (children aged 3-5) and Hyrrät (pre-school aged children, aged 6). The names used in the text for the daycare centre, groups of children and children are pseudonyms.

The new National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education emphasizes listening to and using children's views and experiences, so children's experiential knowledge of their media culture will gain special importance when it comes to media education. In recent years, more attention has been paid to the media education of pre-school aged children; the rapid digitalisation of society has had an impact on this on the one hand, and on the other, the research data gained on the subject, such as the materials produced to support the media education of pre-school aged children (see for example Sintonen, Ohls, Kumpulainen & Lipponen 2015; see Välimäki & Ojala 2008 regarding the Mediamuffinssi project) and the *Children's Media Barometers* that have been produced since 2010: the 2011 and 2013 barometers focused on children aged 0–8 (see Kotilainen, ed. 2011; Suoninen 2013) and the 2012 barometer on children aged 7–11 (see Pääjärvi, ed. 2012).

In the changing world of media and its research, it is important to firstly highlight *children's experiential knowledge* as a way of finding out how children give meaning to media devices and content in their speech, play, peer relationships and relationships with adults. Secondly, the *methodological questions of research into children's media cultures* take a key position. Which types of research methods will allow us to uncover the meanings that children give to the media, media devices and media use? What kinds of opportunities can the "child-centred" methods that aim to increase child participation offer? And what kinds of ethical special issues are related to these?

Research interest growing

Research related to children's media use and media cultures has clearly increased in recent years in Finland and internationally (See e.g. Chaudron 2015). This has been partly affected by the intense mediatisation and digitalisation of society and particularly the increase in use of mobile devices at the start of the 2010s. Children live in a children's culture that is mediatised in many different ways, which means that media devices, media contents and ways of using media are closely woven into daily life and social interaction. In the texts in this selection of articles, focus is placed on the daily media use, habits and routines of children and young

people: the way in which media is intertwined to become a part of daily life. It is not always easy for a researcher to access this kind of everyday knowledge that often comes across as self-explanatory, and approaching the theme requires flexible research methods and reflexive development of these methods. (Couldry 2012, 180-181.)

In *Mobiilimuksut* [Mobile kids], the third part of a longitudinal project, the changing landscape of children's and young people's media environment, published in 2014, Elina Noppari highlights the fact that the radical change caused by mobile technology has brought mobiles and tablets increasingly within the reach of also pre-school aged children, and playing mobile games is also becoming more popular among the youngest of children. (Noppari 2014, 5; see also Sintonen, Ohls, Kumpulainen & Lippinen 2015.) This is also supported by the results of the *Children's Media Barometer* published in 2014, which show that the internet use of pre-school aged children, particularly watching audiovisual programmes, has considerably increased since 2010. In 2010 only a tenth of children watched audiovisual programmes on the internet, whereas in 2013 already over four-fifths of children aged 0–8 watched audiovisual programmes on the internet. (Suoninen 2014, 24, 34.) Over 90% of children over the age of 2 watched audiovisual programmes daily (Suoninen 2014, 16, 24; see more Kupiainen 2014, 7–8). In homes the increase of electronic media and devices can be seen more and more in daily interaction and in relationships between children and their parents and in leisure time (Lahikainen, Mälkiä & Repo 2015, 11; Lahikainen 2015, 15–18). According to the study *Media hanskassa* [Grip on media] that was published in 2016, the media use of children in the first grades of primary school was closely intertwined with social relationships. The most important media device for young school children was their own mobile. It is notable that the youngest respondents wanted the company of adults when using media, particularly when playing games. (Mulari & Vilmilä 2016, 133.) This phenomenon has also been focused on in the international field of research. The 2013 research report of the European Union-funded EU Kids Online network found that the internet use of children aged 0–8 has increased significantly from the beginning of the 2010s: depending on their age, children spent their time playing games on the internet, watching videos, searching for information, doing homework and participating in children's virtual communities (Holloway,

Green & Livingstone 2013, 4–5; also Kupiainen 2014, 7–9).

Concerns expressed about protecting children from the effects of media are often connected to the digital revolution. The fragility and innocence of childhood and the need to protect children is also more broadly connected to the modern concept of childhood (Ruckenstein 2013, 13–14). In public dialogue, the perspective on children is often tinged with risks, threats and problems (Ruckenstein 2013, 157; Kullman et al. 2012, 23), which also extends to children's media use and relationship with media (see e.g. Kupiainen 2013; Repo & Nätti 2015, 108; Saarikoski 2009, 37; Salomaa 2016). Katja Repo and Jouko Nätti (2015, 110) describe the way in which concerns over children's media use are often manifested in the form of supervising and normatising the media use, by limiting the time spent using media and discussions on "screen time", for example. Elina Noppari (2014, 100) states that parents' concerns are related above all with the mobile internet, excessive gaming and violent media contents. The reports of the EU Kids Online network have focused on, for example, online bullying and harmful contents, such as pornography (Holloway, Green & Livingstone 2013).

Digital technologies and the rapid radical change of homes' media environment, resulting from the development of smartphones and tablets, for example, also prompt enthusiastic discussion on a media competent and skilled digital generation from time to time. Though new guidelines within the rapidly changing world of digital media are justified, there is also a danger that the discussion will be reduced to the extremes that highlight concern or enthusiasm. The discussion on digitalisation and of devices becoming a part of daily life at homes and in daycare centres easily ignores two important perspectives that we want to deal with in this book.

Firstly, despite the rapid changes, there is constancy in children's media environment and relationship with media, which easily receives less attention in the public debate that highlights the rapid change. This constancy is related, for example, to the gender-based media cultures and ways of use and the way the media is associated with social relationships (cf. Noppari 2004, 5; Kotilainen & Suoninen 2014, 16–24; Pääjärvi 2011, 64) and the use of media content in play (Ylönen 2010). Media should not be understood as a separate area that is independent from the other dimensions of the life of children and young people, such as

family, school and daycare centre institutions or peer relationships. The way that media is interwoven into daily life and peer relationships also poses research challenges in the respect that the information on media is often revealed in speech and play in flashes and occasionally. Therefore, special attention should be focused on research methods and the way in which research makes it possible to find the meanings that children give to media texts, images and devices.

Secondly, the perspective of digital natives, children of the digital age, who are assumed to be highly adept at using digital devices and media content as part of their daily life, easily ignores children's own diverse perspectives and their different ways of using media and the things they are interested in. Though commercial and entertainment contents defined the media culture of daycare centre pupils in our research group (cf. Noppari et al. 2008, 5), not all children were interested in the same "hits", such as *Frozen* or *Minecraft*. Media use is connected with consuming and not all children have the same opportunities to access devices or media content. Thus, media culture is a culture that promotes inequality. It must also be noted that there are many types of media cultures: this project studied only a small group of children in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and very few had a multicultural background. Despite the global conformity of the most popular media texts, the way children apply what they learn from the media is always connected to children's culture that is shaped by a certain place and time.

The concept of c*hildren's media culture* includes the use of various devices, the media texts and images that surround children and focuses on the social dimension of media use and close connection with the local children's culture, games and peer relationships and on interaction in the family and at the daycare centre. Children's media culture also includes a societal dimension and it encourages us to engage in critical discussion on the extent to which children's own perspectives of media can be seen in early childhood education or public dialogue. In this way, media culture is also part of issues of participation and children's right to get information, to develop their critical media literacy and express their opinions in the mediatised society. (cf. Noppari et al. 2008, 10; Pekkala 2016, 9–10.)

Research subject: experiential knowledge of pre-school aged children

> Heta: What do you think is a good age to get your own mobile?
> Minttu: Seven.
> Sara: Yes, seven.
> Heta: So, when you start school?
> Matilda: Yes, Mum gave my big sister one when she started school.
> Heta: Yes
> Matilda: And then she got a camera too and then she got
> Minttu: But I've already got my own computer anyway
> Heta: Do you?
> Minttu: And when I'm seven I'm allowed to go to a Robin concert
> Heta: Aah
> Minttu: Mum's promised

This snippet of conversation between the researchers and three six-year-old girls was recorded on the tablet on one field research day at the daycare centre. The small group engaged in relaxed conversation while also drawing and colouring and studying media material, such as film posters, every now and again together on a computer. In Minttu's, Sara's and Matilda's sentences it is possible to pick out several factors that structure children's media use and media relationships, such as the significance of media culture (and devices and contents) during transition stages, such as starting school: these children think that starting school is a good time to get a mobile phone and that you are old enough to go to your favourite singer Robin's concert with your mum when you are seven. Secondly, relationships with siblings and parents are also emphasised in the children's conversations and the way in which a family's practices affect the way in which children structure their views of media. Thirdly, the conversation illustrates the negotiation happening through peer relationships, through which the children assess, for example, age limits or the significance of certain media texts, such as games or films. These themes are examples of experiential knowledge produced together with the children through ethnographic observation.

The background for our study was a childhood studies field focusing on social sciences and humanities where childhood is understood to be

a socially negotiated and societally constructed construction, in which we are located and live in different ways, depending, for example, on social class, gender, place of residence or state of health. Childhood is simultaneously lived and experienced and societally defined and limited: childhood is thus formed by discourse and material aspects. In modern Finnish society, various childhood institutions, such as family, daycare centre and school, are centrally linked with this formation. Media can also be understood as an institution that defines and produces childhood. The institution perspective has been quite dominant in Finnish childhood studies: childhood and children have been studied in particular specifically at schools and daycare centres. (cf. Lappalainen 2006, 8–10; Kalliala 1999, 27–28; Ruckenstein 2013, 15; also Mustola et al. 2015, 18.)

As Minna Ruckenstein points out, "it has been important for anthropological and sociological research concerning childhood to consider children as the makers of their own life and active producers of meaning" (Ruckenstein 2013, 11–14; see also Kumpulainen, Mikkola & Salmi 2015, 137–138). The meaning given by children is a key factor when studying childhood: as a stage of life, childhood is important as such and it not understood to be a "waiting room" for adulthood (cf. Ojanen 2011). Central in our research project was the perspective of children as the experts of their own culture and the ethos according to which the research is carried out in cooperation with children, while actively listening to their perspectives and simultaneously observing the positions of power that are an inevitable part of the research.

The media use and media cultures of younger children have often been researched by asking adults, such as daycare centre teachers or parents, about the subject. For example, in the *Children's Media Barometer* (2014) the media use of pre-school aged children was investigated using a directed postal survey. In the earlier *Children's Media Barometer* 2010, directed at children aged 0–8, and *Children's Media Barometer* 2011, directed at children aged 7–11, participant observation at daycare centres and at the homes of children, theme interviews conducted while drawing and interviews of children in grades 1 and 2 conducted by children in grades 7–9 were also applied. (Kotilainen ed. 2011; Pääjärvi ed. 2012.)

In the field of childhood studies, interest in research designs that involve children and emphasise their experiential knowledge has already been on the rise for a couple of decades. (see Pyyry 2012, 35–37; Kumpulainen,

Mikkola & Salmi 2015, 136–138; Thomson 2008, 1–20; Kullman 2015, 11–13; Pääjärvi 2012, 11–12.) However, few Finnish studies dealing with media cultures of pre-school aged children have been conducted with a qualitative and ethnographic perspective: examples include studies dealing with or touching on the subject of media-themed play (Ylönen 2010; Kalliala 1999), a study on children's TV viewing (Valkonen 2012) and qualitative sections conducted as part of more extensive research projects (See The changing landscape of children's and young people's media environment project, Noppari et al. 2008; Uusitalo et al. 2011; Noppari 2014) and the *Children's Media Barometers* 2010 and 2011.

As Annikka Suoninen (2014, 8) emphasizes in the *Children's Media Barometer* 2014 publication, current information on children's media use is important as it allows media education efforts to be targeted in each age group on current media and media content and as a foundation for planning media education. Media education is "educating for the media culture and in the media culture": we live in a technologicalised and mediatised society where it is important for media education to include the development of cultural and aware media literacy, through which it is possible to strengthen agency and participation (cf. Pekkala 2016, 11–12).

"Pull a face and pose!"
Co-research and visual methods

Heta Mulari & Annukka Palvalin

> I notice that the children act out at least *Funniest Home Videos* and the weather forecast to the camera. The children creatively select media content that they perform to the camera and film. Leena films Minttu, who crawls about in front of the camera pretending to be a dog and then climbs onto the climbing frame. The challenge faced in the research is that all the children in the playground would like to take photos and film with the camera, but only a fraction of the children have been given consent to participate in the research. Otherwise, the playground environment is an excellent place for the children to take photos and film that enables a greater degree of own initiative, which is much better than the limited space indoors. Outside, the children clearly get excited about coming up with ideas of what to photograph and film, they perform more to the camera, etc. It seems like the children's own photography and filming can provide an excellent way of collecting data about children's culture in the daycare centre's playground.
> (Fieldwork diary, Jojot 14.10.2015)

This article's first excerpt taken from the fieldwork diary is from our third research visit to Heinäsuo daycare centre in the Jojot [Yoyos] group for pre-school aged children, when we tested and applied as research methods children taking photos and videos independently and videoed peer interviews. The videos of children playing in the daycare centre playground recorded on a tablet computer tell us not only about how children select media material to be performed to camera (e.g. *Funniest Home Videos*, the news, "right way" of posing to the camera), but also tell us about the outdoor games (land-sea-ship, Who's afraid of the octopus?) played by pre-school aged children in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area in the 2010s.

Visual methods, such as photography, filming and drawing by children, have often been used to gain the child's perspective in research (cf. Pennanen 2015, 106–107; Thomson 2008, 1–20; Burke 2008, 23–27). The use of visual methods in childhood studies has clearly increased in recent years in Finland and globally as part of a wider increase in the use

of visual methodologies in social sciences, which has largely been enabled by the growth in the number of digital devices (Thomson 2008, 8–9;). However, it is important to note that producing visual data together with the research subjects has been a key part of ethnographic research from the very beginning (Mustola et al. 2015, 11–12; Paju 2015, 119–120; Thomson 2008, 9). It is worth considering the opportunities offered by digital devices as a continuation of the wider tradition of ethnographic research.

During our fieldwork stage we took photos and videos with both groups of children and conducted peer interviews with pre-school aged children, where children had the chance to ask each other about their favourite hobbies, films, toys and games. By using these techniques our attention focused on two things: what co-research and the participation of children can mean in different stages of the research, and the power relations that are inevitably linked with co-research. We also considered the ethical questions that are undoubtedly raised by this type of research – we are, of course, carrying out the research during the daily life of a daycare centre, which will unavoidably affect daily routines and the formation of the children's peer groups. Even short-term research can affect children's peer groups and, in addition to offering opportunities for children to carry out activities and have an impact under their own initiative, it can also function as a something that excludes. The problems and research ethics of co-research are particularly important questions right now, as interest in participatory (and visual) research methods is increasing in Finland and internationally.

Though we talk about visual methods and photo and video data in this article, we understand that our way of collecting data, our data and its interpretation are multisensory in nature (Mustola et al. 2015, 13–15; Tani & Ameel 2015, 150; 156–158)[3]. During our fieldwork stage, in addition to taking photos and filming, the children also spent time jumping, spinning, sliding, climbing, drawing, scooting about on scooter

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3   As Marleena Mustola et al. found, visualness and visual methods and attributes are often used in a rather casual way in research and connected with vision. However, the production and interpretation of visual data is related to culture and time and also incredibly multisensory and bodily: for example, sound and movement is also part of audiovisual data. Mustola et al. 2015, 12–15.

boards, running around the playground and doing the splits – and also being quiet, turning away, whispering and refusing: "I don't want to be filmed", "I want to stop now". Indeed, our research is characterised by the idea that the bodily dimension and movement are a fundamental part of forming data. It is often difficult to include the bodily dimension of data and knowledge in the fieldwork diary in rapidly changing situations, so (audio)visual data may offer a way to do this (Kuusisto-Arponen & Laine 2015, 93). The bodily dimension also applies to the researcher's position at the daycare centre and the interaction between the children and researchers in the research process: during the fieldwork stage, we sat on the floor, crawled on all fours, crouched down, ran around the playground, went on the swings and drew pictures.

In this article we first study the various dimensions of co-research in research at a daycare centre through research permissions and the various ethical issues related to them. After this, we discuss the children's photography and filming, and peer interviews as methods to achieve co-research and at the end we return to the definition of co-research in a short-term research project at a daycare centre.

Dimensions of co-research at a daycare centre

Over the past few decades, in the field of multidisciplinary childhood studies, there has been a lot of discussion on pre-school aged children's participation in research and on co-research in the different stages of research. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) has had an impact on this (see Thomson 2008, 1–2) as well as the radical change, which has been taking place in the field of childhood studies over recent decades, in which particular attention has been paid to children's participation in the different stages of research (e.g. Alderson 2008; Kullman 2015; Thomson 2008; Kinnunen 2015; Pennanen 2015; Kuusisto-Arponen & Laine 2015; Kumpulainen, Mikkola & Salmi 2015).

In childhood studies, the goal of co-research is often defined in the research design as producing data *together with children*, in which children are understood as active actors and the significance of the children's and researcher's encounters and interaction in the production of data are

highlighted. (Kullman 2015 11–14; Pyyry 2012, 35, Thomson 2008, 6–8.) Researchers have started to understand children's participation in explicitly reinforcing methodological choices also as ethical choices (Pyyry 2012, 39; Pyyry 2015, 17; Alderson 2008, 278) and to emphasise children's expertise and right to participate in producing information that relates to themselves and their own cultural practices (Marsh 2012, 508; Alderson 2008, 288; Thomson 2008, 1–3). A good example of a child-oriented study of children's media use and media cultures is the longitudinal research project by Elina Noppari et al on the change in children's media environment starting in 2007 (Noppari et al. 2008).

The researcher needs to keep a close eye on the power relations involved in the research and to continuously assess what co-research could mean in the various stages of research carried out with pre-school aged children (Cook & Hess, 2007, 29–30; Holland et al. 2010, 360–362; also Hunleth 2011, 81–82; Strandell 2010, 92–93). The study carried out by Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto-Arponen and Markus Laine on the participation of pre-school children in the design of a themed play park in Tampere through drawing, discussing and play is a good example of a development project in which the aim was to confirm the involvement and co-research of children at all stages from planning to evaluation (Kuusisto-Arponen & Laine 2015, 93–104). In the Children's Media Cultures project, the role of children as co-researchers took place, in accordance with the theme of the project, during the development of methods tested during the fieldwork stage, and not during the selection of methods or interpretation of results. One concrete factor limiting the role of children as co-researchers involves research permits and permissions, which may have a huge impact on children's peer relationships and their interaction in a daycare centre environment .

Research permissions and daycare centre practices

Everyday practices, such as the daily and weekly routine and the children's groups form the framework for the research carried out in the daycare centre. We had agreed in advance that we would participate in the groups' activities on days when the programme was more flexible and included lots of unstructured playtime indoors and outdoors. During such days,

there were more opportunities for us researchers to have spontaneous encounters and discussions with the children.

We gained entry to the daycare centre with research permits, which we applied for from the municipal Department of Early Education and Care and the head of the daycare centre. We asked the parents to provide written permission to allow their children to participate in the research and the children to provide this verbally. The research permission form signed by the parents created the first problem related to the research practices, as not all children were able to participate in the research. We received permission from about 50% of the parents of the children in each group.[4] We were unable to take photos or film video clips of the children who had not been given permission by the parent of guardian to participate in the research, and these children were unable to participate otherwise with their own descriptions, photography or filming.

This caused research-ethical problems that were difficult to get around. The daycare centre staff split up each group usually into two groups and we spent time with the children who had been given permission to participate in the research. The new groups changed the daily interaction and the way children formed their own groups and sometimes caused confusion among the children. Therefore, our research unavoidably changed the interaction relationships at the daycare centre in ways that we didn't want. In the Jojot group for pre-school aged children, the children without a research permission form signed by their guardians, went on a trip into the forest on two of our research days. We ended up wondering whether some of the children in the research group would have rather gone on the trip than stayed with us at the daycare centre to participate in the research. Another example of daycare centre practices and the negotiation among us researchers took place during the winter holidays when only a third of the children were present. During the day we conducted peer interviews

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4   The children at the daycare centre researched were from very different socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds, and many of the families didn't speak Finnish as their native language. Therefore, we attended a parents' evening before the start of our research project to talk about our project, as we didn't think a letter deposited in the children's lockers would provide enough information about the purpose of our research. Despite this, we didn't reach all the parents, and without a doubt, we should have translated the consent forms into several languages.

with the children in pairs and threes. During the same day there were also other activities that differed from the normal daily routine, such as a guided yoga session, time for independent play and gymnastics in the daycare centre's small gym. The next excerpt from the fieldwork diary provides a good description of the balancing act between the voluntary nature of the research and the daycare centre's own practices.

> The yoga session is over and in the gym the children are jumping on the trampoline and building a castle. The girls are jumping high and almost doing the splits. It feels bad to take Evelin, Minttu and Siiri away from their fun. So Annukka and I hesitate at the door, but the instructors encourage us to repeat the girls' names more loudly and to go and get them. I don't think this is entirely right from a research ethics perspective, but the girls come to the door. They are already rather used to the school-like routine so that when an adult asks them to do something else they are happy to do so. We go into the back room and I tell them that we'd like to continue the interview and filming and that we'd like it if the girls could tell us a little about the programmes that they watch. They take turns with the camera and tablet, but otherwise aren't really very enthusiastic. The girls mention Littlest Pet Shop and Winx, but otherwise the girls would rather film each other and scoot around on the floor on scooter boards. We try to encourage the girls to chat, but they are not really into it today.
> (Fieldwork diary, Jojot 14.10.2015)

However, some of the children whose parents did not sign the permission form would have liked to film or be filmed. This was especially obvious in the playground games when all the children in the group were playing outdoors at the same time. "Excluding" them didn't really help to promote the participation of the children, which should have been central to research of this kind. While the children played outside, we chatted to these children in the same way as the others, but during the analysis stage we were unable to use any of the videos in which they appeared. We did not enter any of the conversations with these children in our fieldwork diaries either (cf. Vuorisalo 2010, 113–114).

"I don't want to be filmed": the subtlety of research permission

The nature of ethnographic research is always interactional and in it, data is produced through interactions between the research subjects and the researchers. Children as co-researchers and their participation in methods that are explicitly emphasised may also include an inherent pre-assumption and requirement that adult researchers should empower children to make them active agents in the research (Hunleth 2011, 82-83). In this case it could be easy to succumb to the fact that differences between children will easily remain unnoticed - not all children necessarily want to participate in the research or their ways of participating may be different.

Tomi Kiilakoski (2014, 42) highlights a problematic matter related to the promotion of participatory practice: it often takes place in a framework imposed by adults, whereas the definition of participatory practice arising from children and young people is rarer. It is, in fact, important to critically consider what kind of participatory practice is even possible in arrangements imposed by adults, if the research subjects have to conform to the subjects and processing methods decided by the adults (see Farthing 2012, 83). How can a researcher take into consideration the agency of those children who don't want to participate in taking photos or filming videos? How can the researcher read tacit, non-verbal messages that, in addition to speech, are essential in the production of data? It is important to realise that in addition to highlighting your own perspectives, participation also involves the right to be quiet (Kaukko 2015, 77).

Throughout our research project, we try to be sensitive to noticing the differences between the children and the children's messages telling us whether they want to participate in the research at that moment. Firstly, we asked each child for their permission regarding various ways of participating in the research, such as taking photos, filming videos and conducting peer interviews. Secondly, we tried to actively express in words the fact that the child would be able cancel the permission at any time at all and go and do something else. Thirdly, we tried to ensure that the children had as many options as possible to participate in the research in precisely the way that suited the child the best. (See Thomas & O'Kane 1998, 339.) Not all the children wanted to participate in the peer interviews or the filming of these, or to take their own photos

or do any filming, so they were able to do something else or go outside to play with the other children. Some of the children wanted to stay in the research group to watch the filming and interviews carried out by the others but did not want to participate themselves. Forms of visual self-expression, such as filming or drawing are not automatically natural activities for all children, as forms of self-expression vary (cf. Kiilakoski & Rautio 2015, 78).

In practice, situations change quickly in daycare centre research and researchers are required to be constantly sensitive to situations. One of our peer interviews in pairs and small groups turned into us drawing and chatting together as neither Elli nor Anni wanted to do any filming or be filmed. Instead we filmed a conversation on hobbies, books, films and toys with a video camera that was pointed towards the wall. The researcher's voice can be heard at the beginning of the recording: "It's good that you told us you don't want us to film this." In this way, in Elli and Anni's interview we try to consciously reinforce the children's participation and autonomy regarding the photos and videos taken of them.

We were not as successful in this in the other pair interview which we conducted the same day with Evelin and Amalia. The previous week, both had enthusiastically carried out peer interviews in a bigger group, but this time the situation was clearly making them feel shy and nervous. Especially when we watched the video afterwards we noticed how neither were really very happy about doing the filming or interviewing or even chatting with us. Despite this they started doing the peer interview because we had asked them to do so.

> Evelin: Now Amalia, you [unclear]
> Amalia: [in a quiet voice] I do dancing. [looks at camera and looks down, smiles a little]
> Evelin: [whispers] OK. What else?
> Amalia: Well... [looks down, thinks] nothing else
> Evelin: [laughs quietly] OK. What is your favourite programme?
> Amalia: Um... [looks down, thinks] Barbie.
> Evelin: What is your favourite toy?
> Amalia: Well... [looks down, thinks] Pet Shop.
> Evelin: Aha. [whispers] I don't know what else to ask.
> (Jojot 21.10.2015)

After this, Amalia interviewed Evelin, but it was difficult to come up with questions and Evelin didn't provide very long answers. The video shows how both seem uncomfortable. Amalia glances at the camera sometimes with her eyebrows knitted and both prefer to look down at their drawings and focus on drawing and colouring. Both talk in whispers. Evelin has a cold and on the video she seems tired. Watching this video afterwards was an eye-opener for us. As stated by Harriet Strandell, asking research subjects, particularly pre-school aged children, for research permission should be highlighted throughout the research. Though Amalia and Evelin had been happy to interview and film others in previous weeks, and had even competed for their turn to film, on that day they clearly didn't want to answer or ask questions or be filmed. Both were more interested in drawing and they gave the camera to us. We carried on chatting with them as they drew and asked about games, the Littlest Pet Shop programme and toys and the Onneli and Anneli films. We carried on filming, even though Amalia in particular, when watching her on video afterwards, seemed clearly uncomfortable with the presence of the camera. In these kinds of situations researchers should, in addition to interpreting verbal messages, be highly sensitive to gestures and expressions, to the non-verbal resistance that we researchers only noticed later from the video (Strandell 2010, 96–97).

Therefore, peer interviews and methods that aim to increase children's role as co-researchers and their participatory practice in general, should be regarded with a critical attitude. According to Harriet Strandell, enthusiastic talk of co-research can easily lead to a certain type of simplification, where the starting point is considered to directly represent "ethical" and "better" research. Thus the researcher should be critical with regard to the ideal of co-research. Strandell describes a situation in which a child participating in research may end up as a "hostage" of the research instead, carrying out the research as a co-researcher even though he or she may not necessarily want to participate. In this situation, the research has not increased the child's participation and is instead offering "more symbolic that actual influence" (Strandell 2010, 105). The danger in research, particularly in short studies, is the researcher's enthusiasm and need for data. In the case of this research, the innocent-seeming enthusiasm and need, led to actions that went against the principles of co-research and voluntariness.

Co-research as methodological development

During our project, we noticed in practice that a short fieldwork stage poses a challenge for a researcher wanting to carry out co-research. With four days of research and a large group of children, the children's contribution in the research process was unavoidably limited. However, this does not mean that it would not be possible for children to have an active role also in short research projects. Nevertheless, the researcher needs to think how to use the concept of co-research when the period of research is short and the children are only involved in the data collection stage, and not in the planning or analysis of the research (see different interpretations of co-research Higgins et al. 2007, 105; Smith et al. 2002, 192; Alderson 2008, 278–282.) In our research we did go through the data produced by the children, such as drawings, photos and video clips together with them and actively offered them opportunities to tell us more about them. However, we did not systematically collect information by talking with the children afterwards about their drawings or the photos and video clips that they had already taken.[5] An exception to this was our visit to the daycare centre after the actual fieldwork stage, when we showed the children the photos we had preliminary selected for this report, when we asked them for their thoughts on the photos and research project, and we also asked each child for permission to publish the photos in the report.

During our research, the co-research by the children was the *interactional methodical development* taking place particularly during the fieldwork stage (cf. Marsh 2012, 508–513). In the peer interview situations we often asked further questions in addition to the child interviewers, and the interview situations sometimes adapted into observation or pair interviews - on a couple of occasions, we interviewers also became interviewees and the children turned the cameras on us. This type of interactional research design led to a situation in which our research was methodologically in a constantly state of movement (Pyyry 2012, 49). Sometimes, the methods that we planned did not work and we adapted them during the same fieldwork day. We feel that this type of reflexivity

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5   See more about photo-elicitation interviews (PEI) Clark-Ibanez 2007; using drawings applying the PEI method Kuusisto-Arponen & Laine 2015, 94–95; see also Eskelinen 2012, 20–34.

of research is necessary when the idea is to create information in inter-
action with the children.

Especially in the group of older children, drawing quickly became
one dimension of observation and peer interviews, which was requested
by the children. Drawing gave the children something to do, which me-
ant chatting about media topics became more natural (see drawing as a
research method e.g. Kuusisto-Arponen & Laine 2015, 93–104; Leitch
2008, 37–58.) On the other hand, in this way, media topics sometimes
naturally became part of the drawings: Onneli's and Anneli's beds, *Littlest
Pet Shop* animal characters, *Winx* characters and the *Minecraft* building
world were all recorded on paper. We will next discuss the way in which
the methodological development with children is portrayed on the photos
and video films and in the peer interviews.

On camera: children's own photos and videos

What kinds of methodological dimensions do children's own photos and
videos offer? What could they tell us about children's daily life and how
should they be interpreted as part of the research process? Can the children's
own photos and videos convey tacit knowledge about children's culture?
Kristiina Kumpulainen, Anna Mikkola and Saara Salmi have studied the
meaning of visual methods in research when the aim of the research is to
enable the child's participation in research in a dialogical process together
with the researchers. The researchers gave the pre-school aged children digital
cameras, which they could use to record "the moments and matters in their
daycare centre environment that were significant and that produced joy and
positive experiences". (Kumpulainen, Mikkola & Salmi 2015, 136–137.)
Kristiina Eskelinen's research had the same starting point. She handed
out cameras to children participating in afternoon activities so they could
record significant matters taking place during the afternoon. Afterwards
she discussed the photos with the children (Eskelinen 2012, 20–34).

In Kim Kullman's study *Mobility Experiments*: *Learning Urban Travel
with Children in Helsinki*, primary school children took photos of significant
matters on their way to and from school and walked to and from school
with the researcher. Kullman describes his own data production process
as cooperation and *empirical moments* between the children participating

in the research, and their parents and teachers: when taking photos, the children were not only producing data for the study they were also learning more about their daily life and culture. Thus, the forms of participation and self-expression changed as the study progressed. (Kullman 2015, 13.)

In our research project we used a spontaneous and guided approach to the photography and filming by the children. The spontaneous photography and filming situations were woven into the daycare centre's daily routine, which we were part of, writing notes and photographing and filming the children playing and chatting using the tablet and video camera. In these situations the children often asked to use the devices themselves and we also actively offered them the opportunity to take photos and film. The guided photography and filming sessions were in the form of video tours, which we carried out in particular with the Hyrrät [Spinning tops] group of 3-5-year-olds, (cf. Kumpulainen et al. 2015), in which the children went around the daycare centre filming the games, objects, other children, posters, toys and drawings that were important for them. In the Jojot group of pre-school aged children, the children filmed outdoor games and carried out peer interviews using the tablet.

The photography and filming took place during the daycare centre's daily timetable when "unstructured playtime" either inside or outside was scheduled for the group: in other words the children could choose which activity they wanted to do from various activities. Of course, there were limits to what they were allowed to do. In the Hyrrät group, each could choose what they wanted to do from the things suggested (playing house, cars, dressing-up, building a den, etc) and one or two children to join them. They were usually allowed a maximum of three children at a time. Also in the group of pre-school children, unstructured activities were also guided so that there were not too many children playing together or playing a game at one time. This type of guiding was also evident in the daycare centre's institutionalised free-time, which the more unstructured activity of taking photos or making a video sometimes took into a more unconventional direction. It felt like the spontaneous photography and filming sometimes provided the children with the opportunity for more open and ambiguous moments of self-expression in the otherwise structured daily routine, which were significant for the children, and with encounters, provided through the visual expression, with the other children and the researchers. (cf. Kiilakoski & Suurpää 2014, 63.)

Photos, videos and interaction

As methods, photography and filming videos can bring out dimensions, important places, interaction and children's culture in the children's daily life that might not otherwise be noticed by adult researchers (Paju 2015). Kristiina Eskelinen writes about *listening to photos*, becoming attuned to what the children describe about the photos and interpreting the photos and videos as part of the stream of photos produced by the children (Eskelinen 2012, 22–24).

The significance of the subjects of the photos and video films as a way of capturing the daycare centre's material environment is clear from the photos of 4-year-old Leila. When children were allowed to choose what to take photos of, the children in the Hyrrät group in particular captured the material dimensions of the daycare centre – the floor, ceiling, chairs, mattresses, fabrics, favourite toys. During the unstructured playtime outdoors, Leila captured the fence surrounding the daycare centre's playground and a tree with bright yellow and red autumn leaves, and she also took a selfie. The selfie, the fence photo and the leaves were particularly significant photos for Leila and we looked at them together in the summer house in daycare centre's playground. The selfie and the photo taken together with the researcher made Leila laugh and she wanted to look at the photo of the leaves several times because she liked the bright colours. The photo may also have been important as on a couple of days before this at the daycare centre, the children had collected leaves from the playground for arts and crafts. Leila's photos provide a perspective of the daycare centre's material environment from the level of a child's eyes. In the photo of the fence, the camera has focused on the fence boards, through which you can see the block of flats opposite and its garden and garden furniture. This photo prompted the researcher to notice the difference between the perspectives of the child and an adult: as adults we are able to look over the fence, whereas captured from the child's eye level, the fence seemed very dominant. (see Images 1 and 2.)

The right way of posing to the camera and the direction taking place in interaction could also be seen in the children's own photos and video clips. There are other children in the photos and video clips that four-year-old Iida has taken indoors, including 3-year-old Venla. Iida prompts Venla to laugh to the camera, thus providing her with direction about
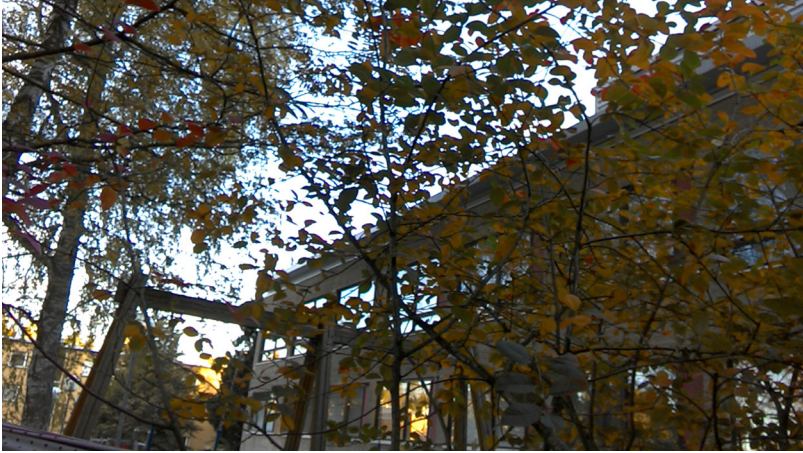
Image 1.

Image 2.

how to pose to the camera in the "right" way. In the video filmed outside by pre-schooler Siiri, Oskari acts out *Funniest Home Videos* by running, falling over and climbing on a plastic truck (see the screenshot of Oskari's *Funniest Home Videos*, Image 3). In the long video filmed in the daycare centre's playground, six-year-old Leena asks Minttu whether she wants to appear in the video alone. Minttu nods and smiles and then Leena tells

Image 3.

Minttu to move: "Move!" Minttu starts walking backwards and Leena films her. After this Leena says: "Do some funny poses." Minttu first pulls a face at the camera and then lies down on her side on the ground, she looks up at the camera with her head to one side and smiles at the camera. After this she jumps up and down on the spot with her tongue stuck out. The video continues with Leena's directions: "Be a horse", "Pull a face and pose", "Move around in a funny way", all of which Minttu does. Sometimes she comes up with her own ways to perform to the camera, and she greets the camera: "Hello!", she marches along, and pretends to be a bird and a monkey. There is continuous interaction between the child filming and the child being filmed and continuous consultation on what kinds of posing and performance are acceptable: Minttu goes and sits under the climbing frame, smiles at the camera and poses, and does not move at all. Leena then laughs and says: "This is pretty good."

By looking at children's own photos and videos, it is possible to get a closer understanding of the way in which children take possession of media content as part of their unstructured play. The children in the Jojot group spontaneously presented animal programmes, the weather forecast and *Funniest Home Videos,* for example, to the camera. In the weather forecast video Minttu speaks straight to the camera, laughing, trying to copy the intonation of a newsreader: "Today the weather forecast is for a little rain

Image 4.

[points at the 'weather map' with her right hand]. And thunder. [Behind the camera Leena asks: 'Where is the thunder?'] The next day there will be sunshine. There will be thunder in the west, south aaand... Helsinki. Good weather forecast! Goodbye! [Minttu jumps to the ground onto her knees]."

On the second day of research Leena, Evelin, Sara and Minttu came up to us with their bedtime toys and asked whether they could make a video of the toys. We went into the daycare centre's lobby and the girls spontaneously started building a theatre stage using some low chairs on which the toys would perform. Three of the girls performed to the camera moving the soft toys around on the stage while one girl filmed. The girls all took turns performing and filming. All knew how to use the camera and were happy to appear on camera. In the first videos, the soft toys chatted to the camera and to each other, and in the latter videos the soft toys started singing a couple of pop songs by pop singer Robin, partly using their own words. Thus, the use of media devices, performing to the camera, playing with soft toys and application of media content were combined, through Robin's songs, in the girls' game of making a video. (See the screenshot of the soft toys, Image 4.) A lot of tacit knowledge was recorded in the children's own spontaneously-made videos during our fieldwork stage about peer relationships and games both indoors and outdoors and the way in which media content becomes interwoven into children's speech and games.

Bodily knowledge produced by peer interviews

Videoed peer interviews were one research method that we tested in the Jojot group, which had the aim of enabling co-research by the children and to give them the opportunity to think about their own daily life, friendships and media culture together with other children and us researchers. As Noora Pyyry explains, peer interviews can, at best, level out the power relations between the researcher and research subjects and support children and young people's participation in the research. Particularly in an institutional context, such as a daycare centre or school, the questions asked by an adult research interviewer might receive more mechanical responses that can be perceived as school work. (Pyyry 2012, 41–43; see also Hunleth 2011, 82.).

In the following video excerpt, we can clearly see how enthusiastic the children are about doing the peer interview and compete to appear on camera. However, it is possible to notice how only a fraction of the interaction in the research situation is recorded on the video. What Tuomas and Elli are doing is less visible on the video, but it is still active: Tuomas tries to distract Amalia, who is filming, and Elli turns away from the camera and concentrates on drawing. This excerpt is from the fieldwork research day when we tested out filmed peer interviews for the first time with the children in the Jojot group. The children had already got to know us a little and knew we were at the daycare centre because we wanted to "learn about the children's thoughts, games and the TV programmes, games and films that they like". We asked the children to interview each other about their favourite things, toys, games and hobbies. We wanted to keep the list of tasks given sparse at first, so that it would be easy to do and also to avoid guiding the children's discussions at first too directly to the media, if they did not highlight content related to it under their own initiative. (cf. Noppari 2008, 22–23.) When Sara talks to the camera, she only mentions her favourite programme last when she mentions the film *Barbie Super Princess*.

> Sara: OK, I can. Hi, my name is Sara and I'm six.
> [Siiri jumps into shot and sits next to Sara on Sara's left. Ali also comes closer to the camera. Evelin is sitting further away at the back with Elli, who is on the floor drawing with her back to the camera]

Ali: Hiya! I'm Ali and I'm six!

[Sara laughs, and pushes Ali further away from the camera. Siiri goes behind Sara to the other side, giggles loudly, looks at Sara]

Sara: And I like to ... [looks Siiri in the eye, then back to the camera, plays with her necklace]

Amalia: Tuomas! [shouts angrily] Tuomas, stop!

Sara: ...um, gym and sailing and music club... going to music club...

Evelin [shouts from the background, looks over Sara and Siiri at the camera, Amalia lifts the tablet]: Oh, and sorry, I forgot that I go to Estonian singing club

Annukka [to Evelin]: What was that?

Sara: And... [gets up on her knees, comes closer to the camera]

Siiri: [shouts from the side] And I, sorry, but I go skating [Amalia turns the camera towards Siiri], one of the things I do is go skating at least [Amalia turns the camera back towards Sara].

Evelin: [To Annukka] [unclear]

Sara: And um... my favourite treat is ice cream!

Evelin [To Annukka]: ...because it's not Finnish, because it's blablabla.

Siiri: Mine too!

Sara: [looks at Siiri and both laugh] And my favourite film is the Barbies. We have, we have...

Siiri: Hey, so's mine a bit!

Sara: We have Barbie and Super Princess. Ummm [thinks]. Err, I don't think I have anything else. [stands up and moves away from the camera]

Amalia: Ookay. Who's turn is it to film now?

Ali: Mine!

Evelin: Sara's, Sara's, Sara's turn [sits on floor drawing, points to Sara]...

(Jojot 8.10.2015)

The excerpt from the research data is from towards the end of our peer interviews, and it shows how the children have adapted the interview method to suit them. The short question-answer dialogues from the start turned into the children's mutual situation, which had its own rules and hierarchy. ["Tuomas, stop it!"; "Sara's, Sara's, Sara's turn"], and where knowledge and experiences of hobbies and thoughts were shared. In a later interview we can see how Evelin directs Sara, who wants to be interviewed again, and tells her to stand in front of the screen that divides the rooms and tells Ali not to move about and Siiri not to jump up and down. A perfect interview seems to be one where the person interviewed is standing in one place alone, quietly and without moving. The excerpt

also shows how relationships and social dynamic between the children have a big impact on whether the peer interviews work as a method and what the research situation turns into (cf. Pyyry 2012, 44). Though building data together and reciprocally is the goal of peer interviews, research situations do not always become dialogical in an equal way without the active input of the researcher. In these situations, researchers must work in such a way that on one hand, the children in the group can, if they wish, participate in the way that suits them and that on the other hand they are given the opportunity to refuse to participate if they wish.

Knowledge of media culture increased and adapted through interaction into experience-based knowledge shared by the children in the group, both during the peer interviews and between them in spontaneous discussions between the children and the researchers. In general, the advantage of peer interviews conducted by children and young people is considered to be that young people and children have a mix of cultural and subcultural capital that adult researchers might not necessarily have (Higgins et al. 2007, 107–108). Within the framework of this research, you could say that the media data produced through interaction during the peer interviews was on the subject of the knowledge of various media contents and use of various media devices but also on the children's opinions on playing, age limits and the social dimension of media use.

During our final peer interview session, we carried out the interviews in pairs or threes and guided the children's conversations more towards TV, films, games and play related to media. Because the duration of our research period was limited, we tried to carry out at least one peer interview with each child. Some of the children were especially keen to participate, so they were involved in more than one interview. We also provided paper and pens in the interview room as we thought the children could also draw pictures related to media and that it would be a good idea to offer another activity during the interviews. In the following excerpt Luukas and Roope talk about the *Minecraft* game for a long time while drawing and Luukas draws a *Minecraft* banner (flag) at the same time. After the initial enthusiasm had worn off, the children had given the video camera and tablet to us and preferred to focus on drawing and chatting instead of conducting a peer interview.

Roope: I was Skeleton.

Luukas: Yeah, Skeleton fell into...

Roope: Can you see Roope there?

Luukas: Yes!

Roope: Then it was me, 'cos I was also playing Minecraft then.

Luukas: Or Oskari.

Roope: Yes.

Luukas: Were you a baddie or goodie?

Roope: Err, baddie.

Luukas: I was a goodie, well my dad was. That's also why you got caught in the trap.

Roope: I just wondered why this one blew up when I just flew down aaaaargh phphai. I flew head first...

Luukas: And then dad quickly patched it and then dad quickly built this thing so you can't get out.

Roope: But I built this thing so I could get into the secret corridor.

Luukas: But you couldn't, 'cos it was made of iron and it was...

Roope: But you can destroy iron.

Luukas: No, you can't destroy anything in Minecraft!

Roope: Err no. Everything can be destroyed.

Luukas: But it was something you would not...

Roope: But guess what you can destroy

Luukas: What?

Roope: Glowstone. It goes through. 'Cos you get through to another place...

Luukas: I think dad made it from Glowstone.

Roope: You use it to make a portal [tells us].

Luukas: Yeah, he did this.

Annukka: Oh right.

Luukas: Yeah, he made the base of the prison with Glowstone

Roope: And with Glowstone it's quite fragile [tells us] if you put it on the floor and there's a trap underneath then you fall in straight away...

Luukas: Yeah, that's why dad did that there. Did you end up in another land?

Roope: Yes, I ended up there with your dad and I was fighting with this man...

Luukas: What man?

Roope: I don't know, I didn't read his name.

Luukas: Well, what did he look like?

Roope: Weird...

Luukas: Well, my dad was a weird character...

Roope: Was he Skeleton?

Luukas: No. Dad had killed loads of characters and that's why those characters had come to attack him 'cos dad had killed loads of characters.

(Jojot 21.10.2015)

In the discussion Roope and Luukas give the *Minecraft* game's characters, elements and events meaning in an interactional relationship between each other and us as researchers. During their conversation, Roope and Luukas turn a game between Luukas and his dad into media cultural capital that is shared through their friendship as the children come to the conclusion that Roope had been playing *Minecraft* at the same time on his own device. The conversation was intensive and lasted a long time, they stopped drawing and, with their speech, expressions and gestures, the boys enthusiastically described the different dimensions of the game: characters, building material, battles and the interactional nature of the game. The themes of the discussion are pretty typical in our material: all our discussions with the pre-school aged children on computer games highlighted the social nature of playing and that playing is interlinked with opportunities and limitations provided by parents, grandparents, siblings and friends. The video also shows how Roope sometimes turns to explain to us researchers the dimensions of the game, such as making a portal or the characteristics of Glowstone, which he assumes that we don't understand, and thinks we will be interested in.

Multi-method approach and bodily factors

During our daycare centre pilot, we noticed that the best way of conducting peer interviews with the children was organic multi-methodology extending in many directions, which included, in addition to the guided task, drawing, movement, discussion and loose interviewing guided by the researcher. The following is taken from a peer interview in a small group, which we carried out with Ali, Luukas and Daniel in the daycare centre's small gym. They were more enthusiastic about interviewing and filming and photography when they were able to do other activities and things like jumping, climbing and sliding at the same time. (see the photos of the peer interviews and activities, Images 5 and 6.)

> [Ali lies on a "castle" made of foam plastic and looks at the camera. Luukas carries an oblong piece of foam plastic and tries to get it to stand up. His back is to the camera.]
> Daniel: What do you like playing, Luukas?

Image 5.

Image 6.

Luukas: Well, I like playing Angry Birds and also, um [adds a tower to the castle and goes round the tower and starts to climb towards Ali]...

Daniel: Uno [Ali kicks his legs back and forth, still lying on his stomach on the castle]!

Luukas: Yep and Uno and also that Minecraft [leans against the castle's tower].

Daniel: What next?

Ali: I like playing Minecraft, I like playing that Tintin, I like playing, umm, what is it now, umm, umm [kicks his legs back and forth, thinks]...
Luukas: Look, this is fun [goes round the tower to the front of the castle]!
Ali: Fred! And I like playing...
Luukas: Woohoo [takes hold of the tower, starts falling forward with the tower-shaped block, falls on the floor]!
Ali: Angry Birds. Only those games.
Luukas: Look, I'm [moves out of shot]!
Heta: What do you play Angry Birds on?
Ali: Xbox [Luukas comes back into shot carrying a square-shaped block].
Luukas: I play on my dad's phone...
Daniel: Hey, well what should we do now?
(Jojot 21.10.2015)

In the next excerpt from the conversation, Matilda, Sara and Minttu are drawing media-themes pictures of Onneli and Anneli and *Winx* characters, and they chat about playing. They are all sitting on the floor, concentrating on drawing and their conversation together. There is a peaceful, relaxed and happy atmosphere, and the children are happy to chat. The video displays shared knowledge and the various games cultures of pre-school aged children and also the bodily dimension of the knowledge, from expressions to tone of voice and stamping of legs.

Heta: Do you ever play, erm, with those phones or tablets or with those things?
Matilda: [takes a deep breath, knits her brows, thinks]
Sara: On the tablet!
Matilda: I don't play too much... My mum does not want us to play too much.
Sara: I play!
Matilda: I sometimes play with our nanna and grandad.
Minttu: I play on the tablet.
Matilda: ...then Mum and Dad were like: "Oh, then you went to play!" [imitates, speaks with high voice]. She doesn't want us to play. So we don't really play that much.
Heta: What kinds of games have you, if you've played, then what have they been like?
Matilda: *Angry Birds* games and, but...
Sara: We had *Angry Birds* on the tablet but my sister, who's fourteen, well she always finished the levels [stamps her foot on the floor, sounds annoyed]... I only did level one.
(Jojot 21.10.2015)

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At best, peer interviews can offer moments like these (cf. Kullman 2015, 13), where data is produced among the children and in interaction with the researchers so that each learns something new about the situation. A good example of the organic and changing nature of the research design was a peer interview session during which Luukas and Roope turned the tablet and video camera to face us researchers and asked us about our favourite games, hobbies and activities. Such moments can offer flashes of inspiration in the implementation of co-research in the way that both the children and researchers are offered opportunities to consider the meanings of media culture together. The excerpts from the data presented above are examples of children's media knowledge that statistical data is unable to provide us. They emphasise the interactional nature of media use, children's own understandings of the limitations and control related to media and various feelings related to media use, from annoyance to happiness and enthusiasm.

Co-research by children in research of media cultures

In this article we have discussed special issues related to co-research by children and the way in which research methods aiming to achieve participation by children, such as children taking photos and filming videos and conducting peer interviews, can be used in a short study carried out at a daycare centre. In our view, in this type of short research project, methods aiming to achieve the participation of children, work best in an organic way and by applying other types of data production, such as observation or to support interviews. As a critical observation, it must be said that when a researcher uses methods aiming to achieve participation as part of research implemented with children, it is very important to be sensitive to the interaction and power relations present in the research situation. The researcher must observe the emergence of power relations and hierarchies between the researchers and children and between the children and actively react to changes. (cf. Aaltonen & Högbacka 2015, 16–17; Noppari 208, 23–24.)

   In childhood studies, there has been heated discussion on the child's voice over recent decades. There has also been fundamental criticism.

These days it is rarely claimed that in research even the most participatory methods can make a child's voice come across directly to the researcher: research data is always produced through interaction and filters into the research through the researcher's theoretical and methodological choices and interpretations. The child's voice that can be heard in the data is context-bound and the data contains many voices simultaneously, depending on the situation, day and interactional situation. (Thomson 2008, 4–6.) In addition, no single method can automatically offer or guarantee participation (Pyyry 2015, 17). During our fieldwork stage we also clearly noticed that the children's photography, filming of videos and peer interviews can, on the one hand, bring together children who are interested in doing those kinds of things, allowing them to do something they enjoy, but on the other hand it can also divide the children depending on what they are interested in, and it may even exclude some children from a study.

To implement research with pre-school aged children, a researcher is required to have special reflexivity, flexibility and capacity to quickly adapt the research methods according to the situation and group of children. The use of the co-research concept also requires reflexivity: are the children involved in all stages of the research, from planning to analysis? What types of shared places for producing data can the different methods offer?

In this research project, co-research was realised most clearly in the photography and filming of videos by the children, where the children could decide what they took photos of and filmed. The video clips are the most concentrated and richest data also from the perspective of research into media cultures, as through them, the researcher can get nearer to the way in which the media contents become interwoven into the children's speech and play. In the peer interviews, the children had a more limited opportunity to have an impact on the forms of their co-research, as the questions had partly already been decided by the researchers.

In this research project, co-research, which means taking the child's perspectives into account in the different stages of the research, took place, in particular, as the development of the methodology. During the research, it became very clear that, as methods, video filming and peer interviews required time and worked best when combined with a multi-method, flexible framework, which also includes observation and interviews. However, various methods aiming towards participation offer

a view of children's interactional and bodily meanings of media cultures and the relationship with media, the formation of children's peer groups and their friendships and hierarchies.

For consideration: Opportunities for independent photography and recording of videos at daycare centres

Does the daycare centre have tablet computers or a video camera? Let the children film videos or take photos of their games and each other during their unstructured play time. Go through the photos and videos together. What do the children's photos and videos tell us about the interaction of the group of children and the presence of media in the children's speech and play. What things do the children bring up in their own photos and videos?

Peer interviews can also be carried out without a camera or tablet. The children can interview each other and the adults at the daycare centre about media topics: favourite films, TV series and games. What feelings do children associate with various media contents or devices. How do the children differ regarding the things they are interested in related to media contents and media devices? Do media contents and devices bring children together, or could they also create divisions between children?

Seeing beyond the concerns

Perspectives on children's and young people's mediatised leisure time

Jani Merikivi, Heta Mulari & Fanny Vilmilä

Children's and young people's culture is in many ways mediatised: devices and methods of use are closely interwoven in children's and young people's daily life, social relationships and hobbies (Mulari & Vilmilä 2016, 125; Couldry 2012, 12–13). Separating media into an independent research subject could sometimes be artificial. In this text we use research data as a basis to examine children's and young people's perspectives of hobbies related to media, digital gaming and media play. We present the idea that concerns that highlight threats related to media could reduce the opportunities for children to perceive hobbies related to media as meaningful activities and bring up ideas related to media contents in conversation with adults.

In September 2016, two studies dealing with children's and young people's media cultures and media use were published. *Media hanskassa* (A Grip on Media, ed. Merikivi, Myllyniemi and Salasuo) studies the leisure activities of people aged 7–29, with an emphasis on media, hobbies and physical activities. The study *Solmukohtia* (Turning points, ed. Mulari) deals with research methods into the media cultures of pre-school aged children and child-oriented media education. The starting point for both studies was children's and young people's experiential knowledge on media use and its role in daily life, social interaction and hobbies.

The research results are particularly interesting when reflected against the heated media discussion prompted by the Pokémon Go mobile game. The game has been praised for getting children and young people out and about instead of just staring at a screen, but at the same time, concerns have been expressed on the addictive nature of playing computer games and on the safety of children and young people wandering about town. Though Pokémon Go came out too late to be part of either study, both

A Grip on Media and *Turning Points* offer up-to-date horizons of interpretation for media-related hobbies and gaming of children and young people of different ages.

The media discussion surrounding Pokémon is a good example of the concerns related to the digital revolution, which comes from the goal to protect children and young people from the damaging effects of media. Elina Noppari (2014, 100) stated in the *Mobiilimuksut* (Mobile Kids) study that concerns are related above all to the mobile internet, excessive gaming and violent media contents. The digitalisation of homes and youth cultures due to the development of smartphones and tablets and the fact that these devices have become more common also occasionally prompts enthusiastic dialogue on a skilled "digital generation". There is a danger that the discussion on children, young people and media use will be reduced to the extremes that emphasize concerns and restrictions of use or all-round enthusiasm, which leaves little room for young people's own perspectives. Young people's activities that are connected with digitalisation are also easily explained using a one-sided, single form of activity that is popular at that time, such as a description of playing Pokémon Go.

Emphasizing the digital revolution also means that the continuities related to children's and young people's relationship with media, which are related, for example, to the interactional presence of media in children's and young people's daily lives, leisure time and hobbies, easily go unnoticed. A negative approach, dialogue that is based only on quantitative data and research that ignores the experiences of children and young people have been causes of concern for media education experts for many years now. Indeed, in recent years, perspectives that consider the daily life of children and young people have been wanted for the research approach. (Vilmilä 2015.)

A real hobby?

A hobby is a goal-oriented activity that is meaningful for the young person which the young person wants to get better at and learn and is a way of defining identity and relationship with the surrounding society (e.g. Löfblom 2013). Therefore, a hobby is a certain type of activity.

Hobbies are becoming more popular among young people. According

to the *A Grip on Media* study, 89% of young people aged 10–29 had some kind of hobby. This is a 4% increase on the previous year (Myllyniemi, 2016). 42% of young people said their hobby was media. It is worth considering, though, that young people don't necessarily consider their media hobby as a "real hobby" despite the fact that hobbies and interests were defined as broadly as possible in the questionnaire.

The study on young people's leisure time tells us that 8% of young people who said that they had a hobby related to some kind of media did not consider the time spent on this activity as a real hobby. This is, of course, very understandable in those cases when the use of media is felt, above all, to be an inseparable part of daily life or something that is considered to be a "real hobby". In this case, it may be unnecessary to consider listening to music on streaming software as a separate media hobby if the person also sings or plays an instrument. However, this is not what is meant on the basis of the survey. It looks more like the fact that young people differentiate and identify different ways of carrying out media activities but do not necessarily consider these activities as hobbies.

When the various possible forms of activities related to media are studied more closely, we can see that young people do not consider audiovisual programmes (films and TV programmes) and digital games as actual hobbies. However, these activities could be ways that a young person spends his/her leisure time, and many hours could be spent on these activities.

The young people's perspectives also regarding these activities are not unambiguous, nor do they need to be. Take football, for example. Above all it is a game, and only after that a hobby, or even a career. It can easily be played without it being or turning into a hobby for the young person. Therefore, a hobby describes an individual's relationship with some activity rather than the fact that some activity is or is not a hobby. Thus, this is also true for activities related to audiovisual programmes and digital games.

Audiovisual programmes and digital games come up precisely because some of the young people considered them as things they liked to do, but they did not consider them as "real" hobbies. This group was also relatively larger than the group of young people who said audiovisual programmes and digital games were things they liked to spend time doing and who also considered these activities as hobbies. For example, in the

leisure time study very few girls included gaming in their hobbies, even though the study found that the majority of girls played digital games in their leisure time (Mulari & Vilmilä 2016).

A likely explanation for the phenomenon is that audiovisual programmes and digital games are not generally considered to be hobbies that result in self-development and are, instead, considered as forms of entertainment. The way in which these media hobbies help young people develop in their language skills or logical thinking, for example, may be difficult to see from the outside. It may even be the case that the benefits are not understood. The young person may even face prejudice related to the time spent watching audiovisual programmes or playing games, and surrounding attitudes may make it difficult for the young person to talk about the hobby and recognise the activity as a hobby, even though the activity itself displays the characteristics of a hobby.

Caricature images are also typically related to media hobbies, even though, in reality, media hobby activities are often very multiform. The multiple forms of the activities may be one reason why young people may find it difficult to provide an unambiguous description of the hobby. For example, very few of those who describe playing the previously mentioned Pokémon Go game as a hobby consider the activity as "just" tapping away on an application downloaded on a mobile device. In a real-life example, a young person's Pokémon hunt involves an extensive range of various forms of media activities. This young person produces videos on playing and the related phenomena for his YouTube channel and in addition to this he actively follows and comments on other people's vlogs. The young person has also created a WhatsApp group for players living nearby for arranging meetings and providing tips on Pokémons. Conversations include intense discussions on what colour team you should join. The young person also photographs and updates his blog on situations related to playing Pokémon Go and the characters. The young person also follows international news and discussion related to playing Pokémon Go. Thus, this young person's online game hobby is the active consumption and production of extensive digital contents in addition to playing the game.

A condescending attitude to young people's media hobbies does not encourage them to develop their hobbies or to consider the skills learnt through these hobbies as benefits. It is boys aged 15–24-years-old, who

are the main group of young people who spend their time on audiovisual programmes or digital games, who mainly suffer from this. Instead of a condescending attitude and expressing concerns, we should think of how to support these young people in their media hobbies and get them to become organised. As long as the time spent together is informal and supports the hobby, young people will want to participate (Myllyniemi & Berg, 2013). Parents and other adults in the child's and young person's life can also participate. Though all activities related to media will not be considered as hobbyism even in the future, and with good reason, time that parents spend with their children watching the TV or playing digital games does support the child's and young person's relationship with media. Younger children, in particular, want to spend media time together with their parents (Mulari & Vilmilä 2016). Also based on the observations of the *Solmukohtia* study, pre-school aged children considered playing digital games and watching audiovisual programmes very important ways of spending time together with parents.

Media play and gender

Pre-school aged children have often been left out of longitudinal studies investigating children's and young people's media use – and when data has been collected, the respondents have usually been the parents or professional teachers. For the *Solmukohtia* book we conducted field research at two daycare centres in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and at the children's own homes using observation and interviews and applying various methods aiming at children's participation, such as taking photos and recording videos, peer reviews and drawing.

The qualitative data produced with the children provides perspectives on the diverse presence of media in children's daily life and on the meanings children give to media devices and content. The data produced with the children also helps researchers to specify their research questions so that they are genuinely based on children's own daily life. For example, the concept of media is unclear for many children and young people, and devices and ways of using them get mixed up in the children's and young people's speech.

The starting point for the *Solmukohtia* study was to research the diverse

presence – and absence – of media in the daily life and social relationships of pre-school aged children. At daycare centres, the presence of media phenomena often happened occasionally and as flashes and was creatively interwoven into children's speech and play indoors and outdoors. The videos recorded by the children show how digital devices, media contents and presenting the mediatised self (such as "the right way" to pose) are interwoven into play: in the videos the children pose to the camera, give instructions on how to pose, play "land-sea-ship", perform weather forecasts and *Funniest Home Videos* and sing a song (*Puuttuva palanen)* by popstar Robin with their soft toys. Suvi Pennanen (2009, 187–192) has defined media games as games in which children apply and use media content, such as characters and plot twists from TV series, films or digital games, for example. Thus, media play is always tied to the present time and culture, local children's culture and the daycare centre's daily routines.

The daycare centre's own, strict or lenient practices have a large impact on the way in which media play is formed. A reserved attitude to commercial media culture phenomena directed at children was particularly evident at one of the daycare centres studied. In particular, there was a negative attitude to the media play popular with boys, such as battles inspired by LEGO and NinjaGO characters, which were completely banned from the daycare centre. Through conversations with daycare centre staff it became apparent that the children already knew how to avoid NinjaGo games and to stop playing them if they saw any of the adults at the daycare centre. Banning battle games is understandable due to their violence. However, it causes problems if some forms of play related to media are completely banned, as it may make it difficult for children to bring up with early childhood education teachers media-related matters that are scary or matters that they otherwise want to discuss (cf. Ylönen 2012, 85–115).

It is possible to justifiably criticise a large share of the global media culture that is directed at children for the schematic and normative gender images, which children also use when creating gender at daycare centres. We noticed that when they spoke about boys and girls, the children frequently referred to fictive media characters, such as Elsa and Anna, the princesses in *Frozen,* or the Ninja Turtles. Thus, the children *created gender* the daily life of the daycare centre by drawing from familiar media characters (cf. Thorne 1993).

A guide on gender equality in education (*Tasa-arvotyö on taitolaji*) published by the Finnish National Board of Education states that a gender aware perspective should permeate the academic world starting from pre-primary education. A gender aware perspective means understanding gender as a socially and culturally constructed factor, questioning gender-related stereotypes and taking the diverse nature of gender into account. Based on our observations, media culture manifested itself as a single central arena which was used by children to negotiate what it is like to be a boy or a girl. Therefore, discussing the gender arrangements produced by media contents together with children is an important task in media education provided in early childhood education, especially now that media education was integrated as part of the curriculum for early childhood education in autumn 2016. A conversation in which pre-school aged children, Roope, Ada and Matilda chat about the animal characters in the animated series *Paw Patrol* is one good example of negotiation related to gender:

> Roope: I want to be the policeman here
> Ada: I also want to be the cat and the owl and...
> Luukas: I want to be all of them!
> Roope: I'm all of them apart from Kaja.
> Luukas: I'm all of them. Every one of them!
> Roope: Are you Kaja?
> Luukas: Yes. There's nothing wrong with girls.
> Ada: No, there isn't. Boys can be girls. I'm usually a boy animal.
> Matilda: Yeah, me too, and in my old daycare centre I'm nearly always a boy
> (Video excerpt, 27.10.2015)

It must also be noted that media content is only one part of children's daily life and peer relationships and that not all children have the same opportunity or desire to use devices or follow media content. Thus, media both unites and divides children: awareness of popular media phenomena may provide valuable capital, which can also leave children out of a group. Entry into a group may depend on knowing the plot twists in a *Star Wars* film or the backgrounds of the characters in *Frozen.* During the past decade, the digital revolution has been rapid and technological development has also increased inequality in children's growth environments (cf. Couldry 2012, 10–11). Researching this inequality will be one of the

important tasks in the future in the study of children's media cultures.

Participation in the research of children's and young people's media cultures

In the mediatised cultures of children and young people, social relationships and interaction are interwoven with media devices and ways of using them. Media devices and contents are so closely interwoven into the social context that it is not worth studying media separately from daily life, interaction or hobbies (cf. Couldry 2012, 8). Children's and young people's media hobbies and other hobbies connected with media are diverse, flexible and reactive. For example, children's and young people's friendships and relationships between family members are, at the same time, face-to-face and virtual: a good example is the WhatsApp instant messaging service, which has become an inextricable feature of children's and young people's friendships and families' internal communication.

We would like to see a sensitive perspective regarding analysis of children's and young people's media relationships that sees beyond the concerns expressed and emphasizes the participation of children and young people and also considers their own perspectives on the role of media in daily life, interaction and hobbies.

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In public debate, children's and young people's media cultures are often addressed through a binary perspective of haopes and fears. On the one hand, children's and young people's digital media competences are celebrated, while on the other hand we witness many concerns about changes in children's and young people's everyday lives due to digital media.

This selection of articles examines the media cultures of children and young people and their mediatised daily lives. The texts are based on a collection of articles published in Finnish in 2016 called *Solmukohtia: Näkökulmia lasten mediakulttuurien tutkimus-menetelmiin ja mediakasvatukseen* [Turning points: Perspectives on methodologies of researching children's media cultures and on media education, ed. Heta Mulari] and on an *Opinion* essay (2017) on the mediatised leisure time of children and young people writ ten by Jani Merikivi, Heta Mulari and Fanny Vilmilä.

The texts have a shared methodological perspective, and ask: How are media images and devices woven into children's and young people's everyday lives? What types of questions and methods can be used to approach the theme in a research-based way, together with children and young people? What types of power relations are unavoidable? Multi-method research designs that aim at children's and young people's experiential knowledge and participation have an important place in research of the rapidly changing world of media.