

**7th Nordic Conference on Cultural and Activity Research
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Symposium

Chair: **Marina Everri**, m.everri@lse.ac.uk

Theme: ***Technology and the practice of everyday life***

Title: ***The 'hybrid' triangle: Methodological perspectives for the study of child-adult-digital media interaction***

The present symposium addresses a contemporary societal challenge, i.e. understanding how digital media are transforming the ways in which children and adults communicate and interact in their everyday life. This field of investigation is not new, however the definition of *methods* able to grasp the dynamic interplay among child-adult-digital artifacts, i.e. the 'hybrid' triangle, the implications for child development and family processes is still at the beginning.

The contributions to this symposium will elaborate on the notion of 'hybrid interaction', a metaphor proposed to problematize the investigation of the processes emerging from humans-digital devices interaction in significant relational contexts, such as families and daycare institutions.

Do contemporary handheld devices have the same status as videogames used to have in the families? What do actually adolescents do with their smartphones all day long? How do caregivers, parents and children in particular collaborate to develop conceptual knowledge on digital media in daycare institutions? Building upon ongoing research studies, the presentations will illustrate innovative methods which can both reply to the above mentioned questions and activate a discussion on the challenges deriving from investigating the proposed topic from a situated perspective. The symposium is addressed to researchers and practitioners, interested in devising tools to investigate digital media role's in people's lives.

List of contributions

1. The Subjective-Evidence-Based Ethnography for the study of ICTs-parent-adolescent everyday interactions*

Marina Everri, Department of Social Psychology, London School of Economics

A recent and comprehensive European report (see Livingstone et al., 2015) has highlighted that most studies on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have based their findings on quantitative and self-report methods, while few have included qualitative and ethnographically oriented methods. In fact, little is known about children's actual practices with ICTs in their everyday life, i.e. when and how they use ICTs, for which purposes, in which moments of the day, etc. Guided by the idea that quantitative and self-report based methods provide only a partial view of a more complex dynamics concerning child-ICTs interaction, this contribution illustrates an innovative ethnographic method named Subjective Evidence-Based Ethnography (SEBE) (Lahlou et al., 2015). The potentials of SEBE for documenting children's use of ICTs and their role in parent-child interaction and communication will be illustrated using video materials from an ongoing research project carried out with parents and their adolescent children (13-16 years) in

Italy. The definition of methods anchored to adolescents' actual practices in their everyday life can be particularly relevant for researchers interested in child development and family processes but also for educators and practitioners. SEBE is consistent with social constructionist theoretical approaches and activity theory, in particular. Its innovative nature allows the investigation of traditional research fields from a different perspective, never used before with children and their families.

References

Lahlou, S., Le Bellu, S., & Boesen-Mariani, S. (2015). Subjective Evidence Based Ethnography: Methods and applications. *Integrative Psychological Behavior*, 49, 216-238.

Livingstone, S., Mascheroni, G., & Staksrud, E. (2015). *Developing a framework for researching children's online risks and opportunities in Europe*. EU Kids Online, London, UK.

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2. Posing meaningful questions to families about handheld mobile devices

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In current debates about families' handheld mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, these technologies have taken on a new, precarious status as objects of concern. On the one hand, these units are seen as enhancing learning and communication, and on the other hand as alienating and undermining family structures and values. Thus this debate resembles many of the concerns that traditionally have been tied to video games, but with a difference: Video game concerns have mainly been centered around children and adolescents whereas concerns about handheld media are encompassing the whole family. The aim of this paper is to work out ways in which research may pose meaningful questions to families and their handheld devices that do not presuppose either concern or optimism, but rather address relevant issues the families consider relevant, such as what kind of work handheld devices actually do in families. For this purpose, a method developed for posing questions about video games will be presented and adjusted to handheld devices in families.

3. Toward a digitally mediated, transgenerational negotiation of verbal and non-verbal concepts in daycare

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How to develop conceptual knowledge on digital media together with young and in particular daycare children? And why is this of relevance to child-oriented practice research more generally? Recent contextual developmental psychology as well as cultural-relational ethnographic work within New Childhood Studies emphasize the importance of following children's everyday engagements in order to develop concepts and thus knowledge that helps with relating to children's experiences and actions, among others with digital media technology, in more meaningful ways. Meanwhile, the question of how exactly an adult researcher's research problem and her/his conceptual knowledge of the child-adult-digital media interaction are able to do justice to what the children actually intend to communicate about their experiences and actions, both

verbally and non-verbally, by and large remains little explored. The conference presentation will suggest that, beyond understanding children as mere informants to a researcher's problem and conceptual knowledge, problems and thereby also concepts could be collaboratively prototyped and developed together with young children as well as the adults they primarily conduct their everyday life together with. This collaborative prototyping process should explicitly draw on and integrate digital media technology present in both the daycare and the child-adult everyday life outside the daycare. It looks at CHAT's most recent transformative developmental projects with young children and studies the researcher's as well as digital media's concrete role in this setup. Based on this analysis and an ethnographically inspired pilot study in a Danish daycare institution, it presents some first suggestions on how this child-adult-digital media collaborative process can be conceptualized and how it could be purposefully implemented in a daycare institution together with caregivers, parents and in particular the children.