Playing the Archive: Researching Children’s Play Through Participatory Multimodal Ethnographies

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More information:
playingthearchive.net
@playarchive
Exploring archives, technologies and spaces for play:

- Digitising and cataloguing archives of play
- Exploring contemporary play through ethnographic research
- Designing mixed reality play experiences based on the archive
June 6th 1962

My favourite game is playing chase and I play with the boys in the playground. You have to chase the boys when you have caught the boys. They have to catch you and you have to keep on swapping over until the whistle goes.
Playing the Archive Ethnography: 
Research Questions

1. What is the nature of children’s play in contemporary society?

2. What are the key elements of continuity and change in children’s play since the 50s and 60s, with particular emphasis on the increasing part played by media cultures, especially social media and videogames?

3. What is the contribution of migrant cultures to the play repertoires of children in England?

4. How is contemporary play experienced bodily and spatially in playgrounds, and what elements of this experience can be transposed to VR/AR environments?

5. How might play be captured/represented multimodally?
Research Design

Ethnographic

Participatory

Multimodal
Multimodal Research

• Multimodal Social Semiotics (Kress 2010)
• Focus on use of signs in society
• Language seen as partial
• Play as dynamic, embodied, ephemeral
• Therefore range of methods needed

See also NCRM Research Node ‘MODE: Multimodal Methodologies for Researching Digital Data and Environments’
https://mode.ioe.ac.uk
Ethnographic Research

• Focused ethnography
• Multimodal ethnography

Special issue of Qualitative Research on ‘Multimodal Ethnography’ edited by Bella Dicks, Rosie Flewitt, Lesley Lancaster and Kate Pahl (Volume 11, Issue 3, June 2011).

See also ‘Multimodal Ethnography’ video by Rosie Flewitt for the DigiLitEY Methods Corner:
https://digilitemethodscorner.wordpress.com/2019/04/22/multimodal-ethnography/
Sociological Ethnography, Alterity and a Focused approach

**Focused ethnography** is ‘...characterised by relatively short-term field visits (i.e. settings that are "part-time" rather than permanent). The short duration of field visits is typically compensated for by the intensive use of audio-visual technologies of data collection and data-analysis. Length (extension) of data-collection as it is common in conventional ethnographies is substituted for by the intensity of data collection.’
Knoblauch, 2005
Participatory Research

Children as co-researchers or as ‘co-producers’ of research?

We took the view that participant co-production of data would be the most useful way to approach an issue which was so bound up in the ‘life-world and meaningful actions’ ...

(Bergold & Thomas, 2012)
I don't think it's a good idea
Researching Schools

• Sampling
• Sites
• Ethics
• Consent
• School Policies
Researching with Children

• Year 5-6 (age 9-11)
• Invitation to participate, opportunities for questions
• Child-friendly consent forms
• Collating adult and child consent = core group of child researchers
• A range of opt-in/opt-out methods
Negotiating Consent

Research with Children: Good Practices in Seeking Consent

As one of our children’s research team, we will ask you to do some of the following things:

- Talk to an adult researcher about your play
- Talk to another child researcher about your play
- Ask questions of children in school about their play
- Film other children in school playing (and sometimes for you to be filmed)
- **Wear a Go Pro camera on your head or chest to record your play**
- Ask an adult about what they remember about play as a child
- Take photographs of your playground
- Draw pictures/collages about your play
- **Tell us what you think of websites and virtual games we might show you**
- Talk about your work to people who will be interested in the project
- Meet with the adult researchers now and again to talk about the project.

Your name will not appear in any writing about the project.

People may be able to see you in films and photographs, but they will not know your name.

Please let us know if you are happy to take part by putting a tick in the box next to the smiley face, or if you do not want to take part, put a tick in the box next to the sad face.
# Data Collection

Regular research visits to two inner-city London primary schools, working with a core group of child researchers aged 9-11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data created by adult researchers</th>
<th>Data created by child researchers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Fieldnotes</td>
<td>• Playground video tours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Photographs</td>
<td>• Drawings/maps of playground and games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Audio recordings</td>
<td>• Child-to-child interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Video recordings (aerial and playground level)</td>
<td>• GoPro recordings using chest harness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interviews with children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Drone recordings (Sheffield)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Logging Data

• File naming (e.g. HPKC2018-02-08p005)
• Date of recording
• Media type (e.g. video, drawings)
• Location (school initials)
• Venue (location within school e.g. football pitch)
• Recordist
• Duration
• Session
• Who (age, gender)
• Overview
• Contents
• Recording notes (e.g. quality, cross-referencing between files)
• Analytic notes
Multimodal Maps and Drawings

“In designing multimodal maps, meanings are distributed across image, writing, linkage and layout ... Decisions must be made about what to include, omit or adjust ... Shifts in what the children drew and how they drew particular items provided insights into their particular interests: how they viewed the world and how they shaped their representations for (in this case) a researcher audience. Looking across images can also show shifts in interest.”

(Mavers 2007, p. 26)

See also Kress and van Leeuwen (2006).
Reading children’s drawings as data

Modal-compositional criteria

A place to start?

Look for:

- Information value
- Salience
- Framing

Group activity
with research data

Multimodal Maps and Drawings

- What might these drawings reveal about the child’s interest?
- What is this interpretation based on? (Information Value? Salience? Framing?)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lemonade</th>
<th>iPhone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lemonade</td>
<td>OMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice tea</td>
<td>Chat chat chat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coca cola</td>
<td>On my phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pepsi</td>
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<td>On my phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pepsi</td>
<td>Snapchat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn around</td>
<td>Turn around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch the ground</td>
<td>Oh no - my battery’s dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flick your hair</td>
<td>Freeze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freeze</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star star star star</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icky icky aye ah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boom</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

BBC Radio 4: ‘A Sailor Went to Sea Sea Sea’
https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00017sj
Video: Perspectives on Play

- Researcher POV (iPad)
- Rooftop POV (Go Pro 360 edit)
- Player POV (GoPro)
Multimodal methods enabling attention to the detail of embodied remediation into play: an example of dynamic literacies in action – The Floss
Sociomaterial literacies

Textual literacies

Design literacies

Socio cultural

Third space literacies

Semiotic – Multimodal

Dynamic literacies

Pedagogy

Dynamic Literacies

Literacy

Potter & McDougall (2017)
Digital Media Culture and Education. London: Palgrave p.33
All in together

1. Two players turn the rope slowly and all the other remaining players skip the rope to the rhyme:

   All in together girls
   Never mind the weather girls
   When it’s your birthday
   Please leave the rope

2. Then everyone chants the months.

3. Player must leave the rope when the chant says their birthday month.
References


Cowan, K., & Kress, G. (2017). Documenting and transferring meaning in the multimodal world: Reconsidering ‘transcription’. In F. Serafini & E. Gee (Eds.), *Remixing multiliteracies* (pp. 50-61). New York: Teachers College Press.


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