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**Abstracts**

## **(Re)thinking ethnography: the *Douro litoral* as an object of study**

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The broadening of the concept of heritage, the growing interest in *popular culture* in the face of globalisation and the processes of reaffirmation of identities resulting from the crisis of the nation state have made the value of ethnographic heritage one of the most debated issues in the various fields of study, above all because it's a heritage that includes any significant testimony of human activity belonging to *popular culture*.

However, in order to fully understand it, it's necessary to go back and understand ethnography in time and space; to reflect on it as a concept, a discipline and a museological object; to trace its path, its main influences and agents; to identify the subjects covered, the respective research methodologies; to understand the reception of ethnography and the absorption of ethnography by other disciplines. The lack of a systematic study, both nationally and internationally, has contributed to the expansion of the concept, blurring its boundaries and making it difficult to define a specific research method.

Although ethnography was consolidated in Portugal between the 19th and 20th centuries by various researchers, their studies, although fundamental, are insufficient for a comprehensive understanding of the discipline in the present. The fall of the *Estado Novo* (1933-1974) and the rejection of the nationalist discourse led to a break in ethnographic production, the effects of which have yet to be analysed.

In this sense, despite its modest appearance and limited initial projection, *Douro Litoral: Boletim da Comissão Provincial de Etnografia e História* has become a work of great importance for the study of ethnography in Portugal. Published between 1940 and 1959 with the aim of recording "all the elements collected, a source for more complex works and future monographs", the *Douro Litoral* brought together a vast scientific production, including works by established and new authors, both national and foreign, on ethnographic, historical and linguistic topics.

Aware of the complexity of the subject, this research is based on accounts from the *Douro Litoral* in order to rethink ethnography. The aim is not to present a fixed definition of the terms covered, but rather to discuss the key ideas that shaped the ethnographic heritage in Portugal in the mid-20th century. On the basis of this documentation, and in the light of contemporary perspectives, the aim is to reflect on the transformations of ethnography as a concept and discipline, and to problematise its role in the construction of local identities.

**Keywords:** ethnography; *Douro Litoral*; transformations; local identities. **OEEC 2025**

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<sup>1</sup> NOTE – **Yes**, add my email to the conference mailing list.

## **Student support in different learning environments: An ethnographic study in upper secondary vocational education in Sweden**

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The study is part of a thesis project, with the purpose of investigating how extra adaptations and special support are communicated, organized and enacted in vocational teaching in Swedish upper secondary school. This abstract is based on one of four research questions: How is the enactment of support in vocational education shaped by opportunities and obstacles in its different learning environments?

As the ethnographic fieldwork is ongoing, theoretical framework is not yet decided. Theoretical approaches will be drawn from the field of special education and research on VET.

In upper secondary schools in Sweden, students at risk of not achieving the educational goals shall be given support (SFS 2010:800). Support in upper secondary schools is generally rather than individually targeted to the student's needs, and the quality of support vary greatly (Arneback & Nylund, 2017; Johansson, 2017). Vocational education involves learning in the workplace (WBL), where the school's goals tend to be subordinated to the workplace's goals and values.

Participant observation is conducted at two schools in the vehicle and transport programme, in vocational classrooms (27 lessons) and at four workplaces where students with identified support needs have their WBL (12 occasions). Individual interviews are conducted with students (5), vocational teachers (5), principals (2), workplace supervisors (4) and special needs educators (2). School-produced documents, policy documents and photos of artefacts are included in the empirical material.

**Findings:** The vocational classroom emerges as a diversified learning environment, where teachers and students have significant influence over the organisation of the school day, contributing to both inclusion and exclusion processes. In contrast to the vocational classroom, the workplace appears as a learning environment for the already 'employable'. WBL can become an opportunity for students with identified support needs linked to the school learning environment, who are able to fulfil the requirements of the workplace. For students whose support needs remain in the workplace learning environment, two options have emerged. One is to end the WBL and let the student return to the vocational classroom. The other is for students to undertake WBL in a workplace that does not require more knowledge than the student currently has. These workplaces are on the periphery of the vocational subject, or in completely different subject areas.

**Contribution to education/ethnography:** The study has made visible the everyday processes over time and in depth in classrooms and workplaces for students with identified support needs (Fangen, 2005; Jeffrey & Troman, 2004).

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## **An Ethnographic Tool for Supporting Oracy and Representation in Primary Classrooms [Theoretical and Methodological paper]**

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This paper presents a comprehensive justification for using the Intercultural Educational Dialogue Analysis (IEDA) tool as a robust ethnographic framework for observing and analysing the dialogues of multilingual learners in UK primary classrooms. Drawing on data from my doctoral research, "Dialogues of Diversity" this study explores the nuanced interactions between multilingual children, their peers, and teachers. The increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in UK primary schools necessitates innovative tools to understand and enhance intercultural communication and inclusion (Byram, 1997; Piller, 2019). Traditional methods often fall short in capturing the dynamic and fluid nature of classroom dialogues, highlighting the need for a specialised framework like IEDA. This research responds to the practicalities and realities outlined by the "We Need to Talk" report (Oracy Education Commission, 2024), emphasising the critical role of oracy in education and the need for inclusive representation. The IEDA framework, an adaptation of the Toolkit for Systematic Educational Dialogue Analysis (T-SEDA), incorporates key theoretical underpinnings from intercultural communication and educational dialogue (Vrikki et al., 2020; Piller, 2019). Developed by researchers at the University of Cambridge, T-SEDA provides a structured approach to analysing classroom interactions and enhancing dialogic teaching practices. The IEDA framework builds on the established components of T-SEDA, including coding frameworks, observation methods, and templates, while integrating special features tailored for intercultural communication (Vrikki et al., 2020). These features include principles of contextualisation, cultural sensitivity, and language support (Piller, 2019). Using ethnographic observation, the framework immerses researchers in educational settings, capturing authentic interactions and communication patterns through detailed fieldnotes. This method provides deep insights into how multilingual learners navigate and negotiate their linguistic and cultural identities in real-time classroom settings. The framework is ideal for ethnographic research, offering a systematic approach to observing and analysing intercultural dialogues. By focusing on real-time interactions, it reveals the complexities of multilingual learners' experiences and supports inclusive educational practices (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019; Spradley, 2016). This paper also tackles the critical theme of representation, as highlighted in the EAL Journal Autumn Edition (2024). Leandro Paladino, the lead editor, points out that representation is often discussed in terms of its absence, focusing on 'lack of representation' and 'under-represented' groups (Paladino, 2024). The IEDA framework addresses this by emphasising the existing strengths in oracy within primary classrooms and challenging the prevailing narratives around the politics of oracy. Frank Monaghan's article, "Oracy: Speaking with Forced Tongues?" and Ian Cushing's work (2022) advocate for shifting the focus from the 'power-less speaker' to the 'powerful listener' (Monaghan, 2024; Cushing, 2022). The IEDA tool aligns with this perspective, providing a means to

celebrate and leverage the opportunities and assets already present in classrooms. Key themes addressed in this paper include the role of language and culture in shaping intercultural interactions, the impact of teacher-pupil dialogues on inclusion, and the ways in which peer interactions contribute to the development of a supportive learning environment (Banks, 2018). This study aims to inspire further research and discussion on ethnography's role in enhancing intercultural interactions in primary education.

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## The Logic of Graded Inequality: Caste and the Social Reproduction of Educational Disadvantage

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Affirmative action through policies of reservation of seats for members of lower castes have been a leading source of public debate and conflict since the 1990s in India. The decision to introduce 27 per cent reservation for the Other Backward Castes (OBCs) in institutions of higher and professional education met with resolute and vocal resistance, when they were first proposed and when they were implemented. The ideas of merit and caste are at the heart of the ideological contestations played out in debates over reservations. Students from backward classes and Dalit communities who gain access to educational institutions through reservation quotas are often labeled as "undeserving". This perception fuels the narrative that their inclusion has diluted educational standards in the country, allegedly prompting "deserving" students to seek opportunities abroad. These views are contested by anti-caste social movements and students from "lower" castes entering Indian universities.

This paper examines the intersections of caste and educational experiences in the context of the debate about affirmative action policies through the lens of ethnographic fieldwork conducted for two years (2019-2021) in two schools and the neighborhood in an urban industrial settlement (*basti*) in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. Drawing on participant observation in schools and in the *basti* and discussions with students and teachers, the study explores the contentious discourses surrounding reservations and scholarships, reflecting the deeply embedded logic of graded inequality (Ambedkar, 1979/2014). Graded inequality is a systemic form of social stratification that assigns individuals to distinct hierarchical positions based on birth. Unlike binary systems of inequality that delineate clear oppressor and oppressed groups, graded inequality features a complex hierarchy where each level is subordinate to those above and dominant over those below.

The ethnographic approach captures the nuanced ways stakeholders articulate views on access, merit, and justice, revealing how the affective registers of reverence and contempt<sup>2</sup> shape perceptions of policies meant to address caste domination. Teachers acknowledged the role of social networks and historical exclusion in shaping educational trajectories, yet many expressed a consensus that reservations should eventually be phased out — a view shaped by dominant narratives of meritocracy and educational standards.

By foregrounding the everyday interactions and affective experiences within school settings, the paper illustrates how structural inequalities persist and provides evidence of the complexity of the struggle to contest the reproduction of material and subjective inequalities. The findings suggest that the logic of graded inequality reinscribes cultural domination through the construction of merit while

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<sup>2</sup> Graded inequality produces a society marked by 'an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt' (Ambedkar, 1979/2014, p. 45), depending on their place in the hierarchy. Ambedkar's use of the words 'reverence' and 'contempt' points to the affective component in graded inequality.

obscuring the material and symbolic conditions faced by OBC students and teachers in a neoliberal economy. This ethnographic inquiry offers a grounded understanding of how educational policymaking for social justice is negotiated, contested, and lived in an urban, non-metropolitan context, bringing to light the intricate localized dynamics of caste and education in contemporary India.

## **Educational System in Kashmir: A Scholarship of Disengagement**

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This paper provides a critical perspective on why colleges in Kashmir, as centres of academic learning, fail to provide a favorable environment to faculty members who come from some of the premier academic institutions around the globe. In a global context, colleges are established to contribute to the development of human capital and the valuable intellect of the nation. However, this paper, focuses more on the faculty members who are responsible to lay out the underpinning work for promoting the demand for quality and world-class education, while they teach in the colleges of Kashmir and are expected to contribute positively to an otherwise rote and uncritical academic culture. Therefore, this paper investigates that why college teachers in Kashmir who receive their higher education from some of the premier educational centers around the world, fail to engage effectively in their teaching roles. The paper presents these dilemmas of college education and the receding level of participation, rigor and overall hurdles that bring demise to the otherwise novel idea of quality education. This paper, therefore, responds mainly to the levels of disenchantment, which I call as 'scholarship of disengagement', and locate these 'disenchantments' squarely back in their relevant social-cultural context. At the core of this analysis is a sharp focus on the New Education policy, which helps map the changing scenario of the education system both at the local and national levels

**Key Words:** Kashmiri colleges, Politics of curriculum, academic disengagement, New Educational Policy .

**Research Methodology.** This study brings together the authors personal experiences gathered through extensive ethnographic research while working as teacher in one of the colleges of the region. Further, the data was obtained by the researcher through one-on-one, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a minimum of twenty college professors teaching at many different colleges scattered over the territorial expansion of Kashmir valley. Each Professor was interviewed a couple of times for approximately two to three hours. Respondents were asked about their educational experiences and obstacles they face normally while delivering class lectures, checking assignments or evaluating answer scripts and, more significantly, having interactions with students. However, due to the paucity of space and time, I have referred to a few selected interviews in the text..

## **Blankets of Leaves and Treasure in the Soil: Reconsidering ECEC through Young Children's More-than-Human Encounters in a Public Park**

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Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is often associated with structured environments designed to center children's needs within planned pedagogical spaces. However, children's encounters with the world extend beyond classrooms and playgrounds into shared public spaces where human and more-than-human elements entangle in dynamic ways.

Adopting ethnographic approach, this paper examines how young children in a suburban private kindergarten in a first-tier city in China encounter and become entangled with more-than-human elements in a public park across from their kindergarten. Unlike other institutions with larger outdoor facilities, this kindergarten relies on the public park as an alternative outdoor space for daily activities. On a windy early winter day, while playing in the park, children and teachers sought shelter in an unfinished trench originally meant for heating pipelines. Within the trench, fallen leaves had accumulated, which the children reimagined as blankets for warmth. Some children discovered ceramic shards embedded in the soil and repurposed them as cooking pots, engaging in imaginative play by 'preparing' hot soup using the soil. Others used the ceramic pieces as pretend tablet devices, curling up under their 'blankets' and simulating the experience of watching animated programs with their peers.

This paper argues that public parks function as relational spaces where materials, infrastructures, and children co-emerge through entangled processes of becoming. Unlike structured pedagogical environments, where activities are largely guided by teachers and pre-defined educational goals, the park introduces unpredictability, requiring children to adapt, improvise, and negotiate their actions with the environment. Materials such as trees, soil, wind, and remnants of human activity are not passive objects but active participants influence children's engagement. The public park, with its materiality and ecological diversity, presents an alternative perspective on ECEC as an open, multi-species, and material becoming process. Contrary to dominant discourses that emphasize control, structure, and safety in ECEC, public parks offer spaces where education emerges through chance encounters, material discoveries, and the agency of more-than-human elements.

By conceptualizing ECEC as an emergent and entangled process rather than a fixed institutional practice, it broadens the understanding of how ECEC unfolds beyond designated pedagogical place. Recognizing the educational potential of public, more-than-institutional environments provides new perspectives on how children explore, interpret, and become with the world.

## **Ethnography of cheating. Economic and social inequalities in exam cheating in contemporary India**

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Since the implementation of the national programme of compulsory education for all children (2001) and the enactment of the right to education (2010), the expansion of formal education in India has led to an increase in aspirations regarding academic success and access to qualifications. In 2014, family pressure on children's academic performance resulted in 2,400 suicides directly associated with failure or the fear of failure in examinations. In a school environment characterised by the reinforcement of a widespread exam culture, where academic success is quantified and objectified through grades and diplomas, I will examine how the practice of cheating and the relationships of various actors to this type of transgression reveal educational, social, and economic inequalities. In the Indian state of Bihar, the incidence of cheating during examinations is particularly high, making it a prevalent phenomenon that is difficult for state authorities to control. Every year, the media publish photographs of the façades of buildings where examinations are held, with family members climbing the walls to pass out cheat sheets or whisper answers to examinees. Moreover, some students are claiming their 'democratic right' or 'birthright' to cheat, as a form of ironic response to the degraded state of education in this part of India, where corruption permeates the examinations system<sup>3</sup>.

This paper is based on an eighteen-month ethnographic study in one of the least literate rural areas of India (Bihar), where I conducted interviews and day-to-day observations in four state elementary schools located in four socially diverse villages and in families with little educational or economic capital, often belonging to the lower castes.

Firstly, I show that in India cheating at school is a collective and family effort and a practice resulting from the articulation of family aspirations with the possibilities available in a school environment characterised by increased inequalities in access to education and real chances of completing studies. Secondly, I analyse the genesis and normative and everyday production of the practice of cheating within state primary school classrooms. How does cheating become an integral and ordinary part of the school environment, essential to academic success, while at the same time being the subject of sometimes very severe sanctions (such as imprisonment for the children and their complicit parents, fines and the cancellation of diplomas)?

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<sup>3</sup>Craig Jeffrey, « *The students who feel they have the right to cheat* », BBC News Magazine, 2014, [<https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-29950843>]

## Poor Neo-Literate Families and Educational Inequalities: How Compulsory Education Shapes Household Economic Strategies with regard to Child Labour and Matrimonial Practices in India?

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How is the recent arrival of compulsory primary education shaping new economic strategies and practices of poor, low-caste and neo-literate families in contemporary India? Based on an 18-month immersive, multi-case ethnography study conducted among and within families and four elementary schools located in rural areas with low literacy rates in the Indian poorest state of Bihar where more than half the adult population has never been to school, this paper explores family strategies in terms of expenditure on education through two dimensions: the relationship between education and child labour on the one hand, and matrimonial strategies on the other.

In 2001, the Indian state initiated its transition to universal schooling by launching a nationwide programme of compulsory education for children aged six to fourteen, followed by the 2010 law that made free primary education a statutory right. These initiatives were designed by the central government to promote equality, aiming to address caste-based economic inequalities and discrimination in access to public services. Over time, education has become widely perceived as the most effective means of social mobility and a key incentive for the social and economic strategies of poor neo-literate families previously excluded from formal education. However, the shift to compulsory schooling creates a tension between its universal nature and its meritocratic aspects, highlighting inequalities in access to education and its potential to improve family well-being. These inequalities are evident not only across different social groups but also within families, particularly in the prioritisation of boys' education over girls'. Boys typically study longer and, when affordable, attend private institutions. I introduce the concept of "aspiration horizons," which links family long-term and short-term aspirations with locally available educational opportunities and the constraints imposed by poverty and precariousness. These horizons vary, as the expectations and possibilities for poor families in rural Bihar are not homogeneous.

I argue that the link between education and work is twofold. First, formal education introduces a meritocratic division of labor, allowing low-caste families to break free from hereditary professions and aspire to jobs linked to school certificates. Second, to send children to school, families must reduce their involvement in work and chores, shifting from viewing children as 'economically useful' to 'economically useless but emotionally invaluable'<sup>4</sup>. Childhood is increasingly a time for schooling rather than labor, with families hoping that

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<sup>4</sup> Zelizer Viviana (1985), *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*, Basic Books, Princeton University Press.

education will eventually lead to better-paid, stable employment, benefiting both children and parents in the long term.

In the second part of the article, I examine how education transforms family strategies for arranging marriages. While girls increasingly attend school, their education remains tied to marriage strategies. To be valued in the marriage market, a girl's education must be seen as 'appropriate' and lower than her future husband's. High education is feared to undermine her docility<sup>5</sup>. Women's education is seen as a means to support their children's schooling. Marriage is 'compulsory'<sup>6</sup>, and the burden the dowry (*dahej*) contributes to early and child marriages, which remain prevalent despite being illegal.

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<sup>5</sup> Still Clarinda (2011) « Spoiled Brides and the Fear of Education: Honour and Social Mobility among Dalits in South India », *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 5.

<sup>6</sup> John, Mary E. (2021). *Child Marriage in an International Frame: A Feminist Review from India*, Routledge India

## **“What do you mean by "profession"? On Vocational Education and Training (VET) and cultures of labours**

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The formation of the first working class supposed the emergence of a new culture of labour (Hobsbawm, 1987; Thompson, 2012 [1963]). However, most of the VET developed within the education system has not paid sufficient attention to the world of labour of the working class (Marhuenda-Fluixá, 2012, 2019). Nevertheless, it is possible to identify VET experiences which have the world of labour as one of their central foundations (García-Goncet, 2023). In some cases, these VET experiences have a trajectory of decades and are usually located on the margins of the educational system (García-Goncet, 2022; Thompson, 2010). Considering the changes which have taken place in the world of labour during the last decades (Beck, 2007, 2009; Díez Rodríguez, 2014), it could be of interest to research about how recent changes in the world of labour are affecting to these VET experiences located in the margins of the educational system.

In this context, our purpose is to explore how the recent changes in the world of labours are affecting to VET centres which, historically, have had the world of labour as a central element. Particularly, we aim to analyse how VET teachers experience these changes, as well as to recognise the perceptions of the VET students about the world of labour. To achieve these objectives, a case study (Stake, 1999; Yin, 2018) have been developed. So, an experience with these characteristics has been selected and information has been collected around this particular VET experience. The information was collected through a critical ethnography (Beach & Vigo-Arrazola, 2021).

The results show, on the one hand, how VET teachers perceive how the new students have less interest about the training programs and their related trades or professions, while they recognize emerging difficulties to engage new students. On the other hand, VET students struggle to located a clear picture of the world of labour in their life and, remarkably, they don't link the world of labour with their sense of adulthood.

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## **Climbing Muddy Hills: Methodological Challenges of Early Childhood Ethnography in More-Than-Human Entanglements**

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This paper highlights the need for a more inclusive and entangled understanding of children, animals, materiality, teachers, researchers and significant others in educational settings, as indicated and called for in contemporary educational (see Tummons/Beach 2020) and early childhood ethnography (see Huf/Kluge 2021; Taylor/Fairchild 2020). Addressing challenges of childhoods in the Anthropocene (Ashton 2023; Spyrou 2017) in times of uncertainty, it contributes to more entangled research approaches in educational contexts (see Taylor/Hughes 2016).

Posthumanist/new materialist perspectives include and accentuate both the complex positionality of the researcher and the challenges of more-than-human perspectives in ethnographic work to a greater extent. In this paper, I propose a framework based on Barad's Agential Realism (2007) by combining questions of power relations and positionalities with assumed symmetrical human/more-than-human relations. I will outline these complexities and challenges of ethnographic research with(in) the "delicate tissue structure of entanglements" (Barad 2007, p. 396) with observations from the field. The data presented here have been collected as part of my ongoing dissertation in a SNSF research project in Switzerland, dealing with the question of how relations between humans and more-than-humans unfold. To this end, I conducted ethnographic research in two kindergartens between 2022 and 2025.

More-than-human ethnographic research processes imply being entangled in entanglements. Because not only do I as a researcher affect the research (process), but I am affected by it, too: As an ethnographer, I am the one to whom the discovered worm is passed, I am reflecting on my own ambivalent relationship with insects on the way home from fieldwork and I'm the one with my notebook tucked into my waistband trying hard to climb a muddy hill in the forest to keep up with the children.

What novel opportunities and limitations does relational ethnographic research in more-than-human-entanglements present for current and future aspirations of ethnography? What analytical significance lies in the effort of trying to think and write non-dualistically and non-anthropocentrically? To me, these methodological questions and efforts sometimes felt as unattainable as walking up muddy hills. In my paper, I outline methodological issues of how to deal with the complexity of symmetrical inclusion of more-than-human actors ethnographically in this specific field.

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## **Students in the school's secretariat. Concerns and their organisational handling**

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Students have to cope with numerous and sometimes contradictory demands in school lessons. From a school-critical perspective, these are conceptualised in the 'hidden curriculum' (Jackson, 1968). While students deal with such demands in the classroom, for example, by distancing themselves (e.g. Willis, 1988; Breidenstein, 2006), the question arises which (contradictory) requirements also exist at other places in the school context. Based on an ethnographic study with participant observations in school secretariats, this article is dedicated to the concerns of students. With approaches from practice and organisational theory (Schatzki, 1996; Gellner, 2014), the focus lies on practices in which students deal with school-related requirements in the secretariat. What do these processes reveal about school?

The negotiations in the secretariat indicate which requirements beyond the classroom are part of the school code and become decisive for students to succeed in school (Jackson, 1968). This concerns the practice of formal procedures (see also Zaborowski & Breidenstein, 2011), which are subject to the interpretative sovereignty of school staff. In this context, the referential connections between schools and other actors become thematic: on the one hand, the actions are interwoven with political requirements. This is demonstrated by the requesting and labelling of students' absences in school – processes in which compulsory attendance is manifested. On the other hand, there is also a relationship between school and family: the practices of the family are confronted with the attempt to standardise everyday life situations along an ideal of formal processes. In realising their needs, students and parents become dependent on the concessions of school and are addressed with expectations of caring or good parenting (Betz et al., 2017).

Students have far-reaching tasks in these relationships: they assume a mediating function between the needs of parents and school formalities. In doing so, the students also make their own interpretations and transmit information (Markström, 2015) and thus create leeway in the organisational framework and processes of the school.

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## **Borrowing and Reducing Policy: A Policy Ethnographic Study of an Implementation Project in Sweden**

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### **Purpose of paper**

Dalsland is a small rural region with 40,000 residents in Sweden with low educational levels and increasing social vulnerability among children and young people, many of whom are unable to complete their studies or get grades in elementary school. This situation has resulted in a three-year implementation project entitled *Backing Up all Children in Dalsland*, inspired by the Scottish social pedagogical model *Getting it right for every child*. The present research project follows this project.

Ystad, a municipality in Sweden, together with the police authority, has borrowed GIRFEC as a policy idea and developed a Swedish version called *Backing Up Children*. It is from *Backing Up Children* that the implementation project *Backing Up all Children in Dalsland* takes support and inspiration.

*Backing Up all Children in Dalsland* is a large project that involves approximately 1,000 professionals in five municipalities with the aim of implementing a new policy and developing joint and interprofessional collaboration to enable more children and young people to complete their studies and obtain grades in elementary school.

Based on the premise that policy is created and re-created within different arenas, the research project has a policy ethnographic approach.

The aim of this study is to follow and relate policy as text and policy as social practice to each other, by focusing on the professional actors in the project. This means that we focus on how policy is moved, interpreted and organized, and how teachers and social workers are educated as well as the concrete work and draws attention to the model's intentions regarding inter-professional collaboration with an aim to enable more children and young people to complete their studies. More specifically, the aim of this paper is to analyse how policy moves and transforms from Scotland's "GIRFEC"-model to the Swedish version *Backing up children-model* and the project in Dalsland.

### **Method and findings**

We have developed a theoretical toolbox consisting of policy sociology where this initial analysis is focused on policy texts from Scotland, and Sweden (Ystad and Dalsland). Findings reveal that in the Swedish version of "GIRFEC", there is a reduction and simplification of analytical tools and implementation methods, given that the social pedagogical point of departure is replaced by a developmental psychological model.

Through the reduced model, society disappears from the analysis and greater focus is placed on the individual child. Further a theoretically influenced analysis

in *GIRFEC*, is reduced to manuals and assessment forms in the Swedish version. Furthermore, the resilient child in *GIRFEC* is transformed to a child with needs and deficiencies in Sweden.

### **Contribution to education/ethnography**

Overall, this paper contributes with knowledge about how policy is transformed and reduced when it moves between different contexts and arenas. It also shows how complicated it is to borrow policy, lift it out of its context and change its basic ideas to manuals and assessment forms. Important social pedagogical work, concepts and initiatives from civil society in the Scottish model has become transformed and reduced to an approach inspired by developmental psychology.

## **Bicycles as beings of technology: a Latourian inquiry into bicycle maintenance**

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A bicycle is a perfect example of a technological object that has evolved over time from artisanal to industrial production, with tensions between refinements over time mediated by the technical and cultural milieu within which the bicycle, as an object, is located (Simondon, 2017 [1958]). Within the broad field of *Science and Technology Studies* (STS), the bicycle provides a paradigmatic example of an object for/of inquiry (Ahmed, Qureshi and Khan, 2015; Bijker, 1995; Bijker, Hughes and Pinch, 2012; Cochoy et al., 2019; McSweeney et al., 2021; Rosen, 1993; Sharifzadeh, 2022; Wieser, 2017).

In this chapter, I take a related but distinct analytical approach to the bicycle, drawing on the work of Bruno Latour and specifically on his later work *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* (AIME) (Latour, 2013). Within the cosmology of AIME, a philosophical and anthropological project that gathers together but also extends Latour's life work, and which informs my broader work as an ethnographer (Tummons 2021a, 2021b), a bicycle is designated as a being of the technological mode of existence – notated as [TEC] (Latour, 2013). Latour's construction of the mode of existence of technological beings goes further than that of Simondon, and does not only designate the technological object itself: rather, it also denotes the technologies in the most generous sense that are brought together by whoever/whatever is responsible for the maintenance of the object, the materials that might be manipulated so as to generate other tools and accompanied processes, that in turn allow for the technological objects that we are interested in to be maintained. And although we do not need an expert cycle technician to tell us that a single bicycle is itself constituted of many elements – gear systems, hubs, bottom brackets, hydraulics – that are also [TEC] beings, we do need to understand the work of the expert cycle technician in the maintenance of all of these.

Here I draw on my ethnography of a cycle technician's workshop (Tummons 2023a, 2023b, 2024a, 2024b) in order to describe the operating sequences that characterise these processes of maintenance that afford beings of the [TEC] mode their form (which is, importantly, not the same as 'permanence'). Within AIME, the unravelling of category mistakes constitutes a key focus for the anthropologist (Latour, 2013). Through this description, I discuss the category mistake that would take for granted that a [TEC] being is 'working' and thereby causing to disappear from view the many transformations, hiatuses and jumps that are in fact required for maintenance, that bring into being the assemblage of the bicycle and the technician.

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## **Labouring to Learn, understanding pupil resistance to their schooling experience**

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This paper is about today's marginalised youth, the disadvantaged and the disengaged, and those who are turned off by school. It begins by outlining the nature of resistance and explains how young people experience state secondary school in England. In 2011, Russell argued that like in Willis's study *Learning to Labour* (1977), young people were able to challenge the education system, yet were also able to confront macro structures, inject agency and gain some form of (limited) power in terms of shaping their own schooling experience (Russell, 2011). Over a decade later, drawing on ethnographic empirical evidence derived from the Leverhulme Trust funded MINE project (Mapping Interventions for Young People vulnerable to becoming Not in Employment, Education and Training in England), a shift has been detected in how resistance manifest itself. The system has changed, become more rigid, less tolerant, and consequently the young people's ability to interject agency and gain any sense of control over their own schooling experience has been thwarted. Pupils continue to use a variety of resistant behaviours to survive their everyday schooling experiences, pockets of agency remain; yet in many instances they are foiled, and compliance or outright rejection and exclusion seem to rule.

Data collected includes over 400 hours conducting participant observations across twenty-four education settings in England to include, mainstream secondary schools, pupil referral units, 14-16 FE college provision, adult community education settings, a social emotional mental health school, as well as careers providers. 159 interviews have been conducted with eighty-one young people aged 14-16, in addition to interviews conducted with 41 professionals and 10 family members. 60 Local Authority survey responses have also been obtained. Data has been analysed using Qualtrics and NVivo with the purpose of developing a NEET intervention typology and national landscape, as well as exploring young people's experiences of school, moving settings and understandings about young people's future aspirations and fears. Fieldwork commenced in November 2021 and is ongoing.

We purposely give voice to those young people struggling to cope with school and prioritise their experiences in a desire to offer insight and critique to the current quasi-market led English education system. Education is not a commodity made equally available to all; it never has been. Yet it is important to shed light on how the socio-political changes made in the English education system manifest within the young person's own resistance and compliance experiences

of school. Findings may go some way to help explain England's school attendance crisis, why secondary schools are struggling to meet the needs of young people with special educational needs status or mental health issues and why there is a rise in the number of elective home educated young people.

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## **Smartphone & Education: Navigating the Life of Kuki people during the Pandemic and Manipur Ethnic Violence.**

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Smartphones have become lifelines for education during crises, particularly for the Kuki people in Northeast India, who have endured both the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing ethnic conflict. The Kukis are major ethnic groups and recognized scheduled tribes inhabiting North-eastern India Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, and Burma. Grierson G. A. (2017) wrote that the Kukis are Mongolian stocks, part of the Tibeto-Burman group (2017, 1-2). In times of uncertainty, these devices enabled us to access learning and served as the emotional anchors. The study explores how Kuki students, parents, educators, and society have navigated learning amid war and instability, highlighting stories of resilience, exclusion, and adaptation.

The study was conducted during the pandemic and ongoing conflict, this research employs a multi-sited ethnographic approach combining virtual ethnography to examine online learning spaces and digital interactions, alongside on-site ethnographic fieldwork to capture the lived experiences of students, educators, and parents in conflict zones.

The study is grounded in Margaret Mead's concepts of intergenerational learning and cultural adaptations, it examines how education extends beyond formal schooling, becoming a communal process of survival, maturity, and cultural continuity. It draws from Daniel Miller's idea of "materiality and presence," illustrating how smartphones are not merely tools for learning but extensions of kinships, care, and belonging in times of crisis. Drawing from Carolyn Nordstrom's research on war and daily life, the study looks at how informal education continues in the face of violence. Catherine Panter-Brick's resilience concept clarifies how smartphone learning offers displaced children psychological assistance in addition to knowledge. Miryam de Bruijn's study on mobile technology in emergency situations puts greater emphasis on how cellphones serve as survival aids, filling knowledge gaps and facilitating online learning even in the face of infrastructure failure.

By emphasizing these human experiences, this study makes the case for an educational strategy that acknowledges the technological, emotional, and socioeconomic realities of learning in crisis and combines community-driven, compassionate solutions with policy-driven initiatives. The results show that smartphone-based education has both advantages and disadvantages. Although digital platforms make learning more accessible, they also present students with difficulties such as erratic internet availability, a lack of organized instruction, and the psychological effects of studying while moving. Additionally, the study highlights the dual use of smartphones as tools for survival and as symbols of hope, allowing young Kuki learners to envision worlds free from instability and violence.

This study makes the case for an educational strategy that combines policy-driven treatments with compassionate, community-driven solutions by emphasizing these human experiences. To ensure that technology promotes

rather than exacerbates educational inequality, it is imperative to implement sustainable digital infrastructure, localized learning frameworks, and academic policies specifically designed for areas affected by conflict. Finally, this study highlights how technology, education, and resilience are intertwined, providing insight into how smartphones are both instrument of survival and hope for the Kuki people.

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## Linguistic Challenges and Opportunities in Medical Education: An Ethnographic Study of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in Algeria

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This ethnographic research deals with the linguistic opportunities and challenges within the process of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) implementation in the field of medical studies in Algeria, a context informed by the country's recent embrace of English for harmonization with global standards of medicine in addition to its francophone-Arabic tradition. Focusing particularly on Bejaia University's Faculty of Medicine, the research adopts a 3-year ethnographic perspective (2021–2024) to observe students, educators, and policymakers at work negotiating linguistic, pedagogical, and sociocultural tensions in this multilingual environment. The data were obtained by employing participant observation in classrooms, in-depth semi-structured interviews with stakeholders (students, hospital-university teachers, administrators, ESP teachers), needs analysis questionnaires (health professionals), and the analysis of policy documents and curricular materials.

The findings suggest a double reality: while EMI promotes access to international medical resources and raises ambitions for professional mobility on the global stage, it also heightens inequalities based on linguistic vulnerability. Teachers and learners often code-switch between Arabic, French, and rarely English as a means of bridging knowledge gaps. Institutionally, there is a tension between the symbolic value of English and the pragmatic needs of Algeria's Francophone-Arabic healthcare system. A needs analysis highlights a pressing need for English for Medical Purposes (EMP) training, with a range of stakeholders calling for materials contextualized to the setting that include medical terminology and communication skills adjusted to the realities of Algeria's healthcare system. Methodologically, this study enhances ethnography through integrating multimodal data (surveys, interviews, policy analysis) for triangulation to map the lived experiences of EMI. Theoretically, it enhances debate on decolonizing medical education and language policy in the postcolonial context through advocating for "glocal" EMI models. Practically, it proposes a needs-based EMP framework—pilot-tested with cooperation from Algeria's IDRI Services and Oxford Pretesting—to redesign curricula with culturally responsive pedagogies and online learning platforms (SLC in the UK for 2025).

**Keywords:** Algeria, English for Medical Purposes (EMP), EMI, Higher Education, Needs Analysis, English Language Proficiency, Healthcare Professionals.

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## **Students' voices and the construction of belonging and difference in a Spanish primary school**

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The study focuses on a research conducted in a Spanish public primary school over the course of an academic year, framed within a comparative ethnography carried out in two primary schools in Spain and Italy. The purpose is to explore how students construct notions of belonging and difference, which are closely connected to inclusive education (Ainscow et al., 2006). The research adopts a critical perspective that prioritizes students' voices, enabling collaborative knowledge construction (Cook-Sather, 2006; Messiou, 2019). This approach fosters epistemologies that incorporate multiple perspectives, allowing for the deconstruction and transformation of existing relationships (Beach & Vigo, 2021).

The school is located in a municipality within the metropolitan area of Madrid, seventeen kilometers southwest of the capital. The demographic composition of the area reflects significant sociocultural diversity, characterized by families from various backgrounds and socioeconomic levels. The school serves a high proportion of second-generation migrant students and pupils with special educational needs.

The research involves a group of 26 fifth-grade students and employs the photo-elicitation strategy (Banks, 2007; Pink, 2007) to access students' lived experiences. Every two weeks, students take photographs illustrating their everyday experiences at school. These images then serve as the basis for group discussions, allowing for the deconstruction of power relations in research and the construction of shared meanings. In this way, the understanding of reality is not confined to the walls of the classroom (Rayón et al., 2022).

Preliminary data indicate that the dominant local culture and gender norms significantly influence how students experience belonging and differences, both academically and socially. Students' voices reveal that celebrations, peer group interactions, and classroom routines often reflect and perpetuate hegemonic identities. The study highlights the complex interplay between institutional frameworks and everyday school practices in shaping students' sense of belonging and difference. Furthermore, the value of this ethnographic research lies in its potential to transform structural and cultural conditions that perpetuate inequalities. Therefore, we consider negotiation processes in fieldwork with participants to be crucial aspects of inclusive research, which aspires to bring about transformation (Beach, 2023; Beach & Vigo, 2021).

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## **Encampments as Ethnographic Fields: Emplacement Activism as Material, Physical, Social, and Affective Disruptions**

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This paper is a preliminary ethnographic exploration into one U.S. public university Pro-Palestinian encampment. The encampment at Indiana University began April 25, 2024. It was characterized as the longest and with the most extreme police violence (Smith & Williams, 2024). The set of interests we focus on for this paper center on material, physical, social and affective emplacement as developed, sustained, and experienced by the encampment protestors. We use our empirical work to engage with theoretical frameworks, such as critical) and affective feminist geographies (Kern, 2021; McKittrick; 2021 Rodó-Zárate, 2023) and work on emplacement and displacement related to peace and war (Bjarnesen & Vigh, 2016).

We begin with the story of how the I.U. encampment came to be and the parallel stories of the researchers. Barbara, arrested on the first day of the encampment, became a main character in the life of the encampment and the Pro-Palestinian/Divestment movement beyond the encampment. Aly's connection to the encampment through her material and affective positioning as a former student and faculty at I.U. Trust and solidarity guide the relationship between researchers. While Aly wasn't at the encampment, Barbara invited her into the project because of their long friendship, their collective commitment to justice in the face of genocide and institutional oppression, and the need for a critical interlocutor.

Following this descriptive introduction of the field, we explore substantive practices of emplacement. Protestors created encampments in solidarity with the Palestinian encampments of Gaza and in recognition of the value of place and land in knowing one's self and one's community. The physical place with its materiality is coupled with the social and political nature of the networks settling in place. The paper produces a detailed sense of the "ethnographic field" and the manner in which encampment protests generate the field. Spatializing affect (Davidson & Bondi, 2007) can be conceptualized as an emplaced, embodied aspect of being.

Our data include interviews, newspaper reports, photographs, field notes, and personal accounts, including Barbara's first-hand experiences. We use reconstructive approaches to analyze those data with concerns for the particular place-related practices and claims. The emplacement practices of the encampment community can help us understand affective manifestations of place-based power and identity across states and institutions.

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## **Patients, the New Researchers? An Ethnographic Dive Into Co-Creation Methodology In Clinical Research**

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### **Background:**

In the effort to understand experiential methodology, this study uses an ethnographic lens to explore a co-creation approach within a clinical trial setting, based in Montreal, Canada, at the Centre de Recherche du CHUM (CRCHUM). Despite evidence of its benefits (Torfing, J. et al. 2016), institutional support for meaningful patient engagement in research remains limited. Medical anthropology has helped shape ethical practices by promoting inclusive approaches that value patients' experiential knowledge (Good, B. et al. 2010). Yet, few studies have focused on patient involvement in clinical research. To our knowledge, this is the first to extensively document a clinical team engaged in co-creation. In a setting shaped by structural hierarchies and power dynamics (Lock, M.M. & Nguyen, V.K. 2018), this study aims to provide a holistic view of the mechanisms, facilitators, and challenges of co-creation. This research highlights the epistemological and relational dynamics of participatory research and the value of anthropological insight in navigating power relations.

### **Methods:**

Drawing on extensive ethnographic fieldwork within a clinical trial setting, this study documents and analyzes the process of co-constructing research in healthcare, through a longitudinal qualitative approach, semi-participant observation, in-depth interviews and weekly focus groups. The fieldwork started in February 2022 until January 2025. Three patients with multiple sclerosis (MS) were recruited to participate in the design a randomized clinical trial "CANSEP" (CER#21.303), which aimed to assess the efficacy of cannabinoids in alleviating MS spasticity. A scoping review and a survey was co-created to understand the social representations of medical cannabis among patients with chronic conditions. This paper focuses on the co-creation methodology used for this project. The research team is composed of three patients-partners researchers (PPR), from diverse backgrounds; a neurologist specialized in MS; an immunologist and microbiologist and an addiction psychiatrist. The project was coordinated by a public health and preventive medicine physician and an anthropology graduate student

**Results:**

Results revealed a complex dynamic between PPR and researchers. Initially, PPR doubted the value of their contributions and researchers struggled with communication barriers. Clinicians adopted a more educational and explanatory approach. Patients' perspectives, initially considered trivial, proved invaluable during data analysis, leading to original insights. Patients' contributions were crucial in identifying relevant themes and accurately assessing study objectives.

**Conclusion:**

The co-creation methodology positively impacted the study, underscoring the importance of engaging patients in research protocols and data collection tool creation. Recognition of experiential knowledge was central to this process: patient-partners influenced key aspects of the research tool, particularly in shaping the language used to ensure accessibility, health literacy and relevance to diverse patient populations. Over time, researchers became more receptive to patient-driven modifications, demonstrating a shift in perspective that acknowledged patient expertise as complementary rather than oppositional to biomedical knowledge. The findings highlight the need for training on patient involvement to enhance communication and collaboration. This paper contributes to calls for reimagining research methodologies and education. It also emphasizes experiential knowledge-based collaboration and raises awareness of patient involvement among students.

**Keywords:** Co-creation, ethnography, participatory methodology, experiential knowledge, inclusive education methods

## **Academic (de)coloniality in Pakistani university ELT classes: Tracing life trajectories and (de)racialized subject positions of English language teachers from Pakistan**

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Pakistan as an ex-British colony is a multilingual country and diverse in terms of cultures, religions and ethnicities. Despite 77 languages being spoken in the country, English is an official language as well as and a medium of instruction (Mol) in universities. An increasing body of research shows how English not only serves to perpetuate linguistic racism (May, 2023) through educational policies and curricula in Pakistan (Syed, 2024) but also enacts epistemic violence through dominant ideologies, including state-centric vision of reality (Aziz, 2010), westernization (Rahman, 2005) and colonial and neoliberal discourses (Shah, 2025). Against this backdrop, the present paper – part of a larger (doctoral) critical ethnography in progress – presents the preliminary findings of English language teachers' life trajectories, examining how coloniality is manifested in ELT practice, how these trajectories change with time and in what direction. The doctoral study uses critical (classroom) ethnography (Palmar & Caldas, 2017) as a methodology and uses various datasets – informal conversations with teachers and learners, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers and focus group discussions with the learners at two public sector universities. In this sub-study, I focus on findings gathered from informal conversations and semi-structured interviews with teachers (n=12) who teach functional English as a compulsory course to students enrolled in various disciplines. The study draws on critical pedagogy – a broader theoretical framework characterized by academic coloniality (Daffri & Taibi, 2023), (de)coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Quijano, 2007), and raciolinguistic ideologies (Rosa & Flores, 2015).

Findings of the study in progress reveal participants' motivation for English fueled by their parents and early teachers due to power and prosperity attached to the English language. From a young reader of English magazines, watching English movies and reciting English poems, they were always pushed to consider English as a tool to make an impression. Consequently, some teachers promoted and reinforced racialized subject positions in teaching through language standardization, English-centrism, and American/British accent. On the other hand, some teachers' stories showed a shift in their stance towards English language pedagogy due to a traumatic memory of shame, anxiety and mistreatment associated with them as a learner. To them, English has been set as a point of competition in their journey – a neoliberal life pressure, leaving behind local languages and cultures in their social, academic and professional life.

**Keywords:** English language teaching, racialized subjectivities, decoloniality, life stories, teachers

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## **Supporting the participants' voices through ethnography in schools with special difficulties. An example through teaching practices with digital media**

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### **Purpose of paper**

In a context characterised by the cultural domination and social control of schooling, the functioning of schools and the pedagogical practices within them are partly determined by the existing conditions and the educational policies of the education systems, generating sometimes situations of oppression and exclusion. This occurs in schools located in remote geographical areas or in schools with a high percentage of socially, culturally and economically disadvantaged students. Generally, market logic underpins the schooling of certain disadvantaged population groups in some schools over others. However, other forces may work against these intentions and affect the outcomes of educational practices. The recognition of the voices of the students and the community through their positions and lived experiences enables the joint construction of teaching and learning processes as truly inclusive practices for developing within the structures that surround them. In this framework, it is interpreted that researchers can support school policies and practices, and thus education and schooling, by participating in shaping educational processes.

Supporting population groups that find themselves in a situation of oppression as experienced by certain schools has the potential to rethink the representation of these schools as supportive and politically conscious educational spaces. This ethnographic analysis highlights how ethnographic research allows to recognise genuine inclusive educational practices.

Based on ethnographic data from two R&D projects on creative and inclusive practices with digital media in 3 schools with special difficulties in Spain (PID2020-112880RB-100; PID2023-148480OB-I00), this paper addresses how researchers' participation in shaping practices with digital media takes place. It aims to generate knowledge on how researchers can engage through research to address the challenges of social justice and inclusion, by making commitments towards transforming education for sustainability and equipping people with skills, attitudes and values for their well-being in an uncertain future and complex world (UN, 2023) as is the case for educational institutions. The paper addresses how researchers support teachers of these schools through the use digital media (Mizrav, 2023).

**Design/methodology/approach:** It uses critical ethnography (Beach and Vigo, 2021) and multi-site data (Eisenhart, 2018) from 3 schools of a national R&D project on creative and inclusive practices with digital media.

**Findings:**

Findings add to existing knowledge about how researchers contribute to transform teacher's representations in research settings when teachers work with digital media in complex and challenging circumstances. They indicate three clear points. The first is that researchers show how they recognise and listen to teachers' voices in relation to the use of digital media and how they strive to make students' voices an element of control and support for learning. Secondly, the researchers promote teachers focus on the development of digitally mediated practices under pressure from an inclusive perspective. It highlights situations of dialogue and critical reflection on the use of digital media to reconstruct conservative pedagogy and enable 'transmission' (e.g. Sancho et al., 2020; Selwyn et al., 2017, 2022). Researchers, faced with the dominance of neoliberal policies that reduce research to a mechanical process (Smyth et al., 2014), experience tensions and contradictions around the meaning of research.

The third reports on the transformative processes that took place during the research process. It highlights situations of changes on the representation on the use of digital media from a performative perspective (e.g. Sancho et al., 2020; Selwyn et al., 2017, 2022). The present research addresses the role of the researcher as a force in processes of change and transformation of digital pedagogy for the creation of inclusive and socially just schools for a sustainable future.

**Contribution to education/ethnography:**

The practical implications are related to research for educational and social change for sustainability by equipping people with skills, attitudes and values for their well-being in an uncertain future and complex world.

## **Children Have Big Stories: An Ethnographic Multi-Sited Study of Contemporary Ngaanyatjarra and Pintupi Early Years Practices.**

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This research explores children's practices in three remote Australian First Nations communities in the desert region of Western Australia. Based on ethnographic research with 30 Ngaanyatjarra and Pintupi children aged 0-6 years old and their caregivers, contemporary childhood is examined across a variety of contexts. The overall purpose of this study is to contribute to the understanding of children's practices in this environment. Contemporary child-related policy discourses in this context overemphasise deficit and mainstreaming. Anthropological accounts rarely focus on children's lives prior to school or child-and-family practices. Mediascapes perpetuate stereotypes with representations of 'traditional' practices that exoticify and fail to engage with the complexity of contemporary young children's lives. There is a current paucity of serious engagement with the early years of Ngaanyatjarra and Pintupi children's lives prior to schooling. To address these concerns, the following questions are investigated: what are the key practices in Ngaanyatjarra or Pintupi children's daily lives; what does it mean to be a Ngaanyatjarra or Pintupi child today; and what are the implications for early childhood education in First Nations communities? Methodologically, the fieldwork was approached using Constructivist Grounded Theory and, to conceptualise the data, complemented with Practice Theory. These two frames allowed the study to explore how 'mainstream' child-related practices have been inserted into or discarded in everyday life. Data were drawn from participant observations, interviews, and visual materials. The findings highlight that desert children are navigating a world with multiple intersecting layers of complexity. Yet, despite myriad external forces, societal sociocultural values remain central to their practices. What is revealed in this investigation is a nuanced understanding of contemporary childhoods in remote regions, to guide the transition from home to school. The research provides potential insights to inform early childhood educators and caregivers of the need to be more aware of the context of children's everyday lives and the relevance of current service models for children living in remote First Nations communities by signalling the priorities and worldviews of Ngaanyatjarra and Pintupi communities.

<https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/items/dc036c17-c387-4668-8744-0aef1a63fb2d>

## Researcher Displacement: Navigating Collective Agency, Ethics, and Affective Tensions in Fieldwork.

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This paper is part of the research project *Young university students' learning trajectories: conceptions, strategies, technologies and contexts (TRAY-AP)*. In TRAY-AP we adopted a collaborative perspective nourished by the ethnographic method in which different encounters with university students were carried out to jointly elaborate their learning trajectories. The notion of learning trajectory refers to the interweaving of experiences, contexts, relationships, and discontinuities about learning, giving shape to a narrative constructed between the researcher and the participant in order to give an account of their learning (Jornet and Erstad, 2018).

One methodological guideline involved recording the student's learning. After explaining the ethnographic method and field observation process, the researcher gave the collaborator a field notebook for self-observation. The records in the field notebook allowed for the establishment of a space for dialogue between the two where they could construct new relationships and meanings about their own conceptions of learning (Gutiérrez-Cabello, Malinverni and De Riva, 2024). A form of research that we have already reported in other works (Pérez-Izaguirre, Correa Gorospe and Chaves-Gallastegui, 2022; Pérez-Izaguirre, Correa, Aberasturi-Appraiz and Gutiérrez-Cabello, 2024) and where we explored some of the implications for the researcher of handing over the field notebook, letting go of control and trusting the participant's senses.

In line with the controversies that currently engulf the very nature of ethnography, in this contribution we aim to look at our own displacements as researchers. The thought of authors such as Karen Barad, Rossi Braidotti or Donna Haraway, among others, help us question a hegemonic anthropocentric and humanist perspective within Western epistemologies that often tend to separate the individual from the collective, the human from the material, and the rational from the affective. In this paper, we aim to reflect, on

- (1) the affective tensions that originated in the process we undertook as a research team, motivated to dissolve the limits of the individual for a more collective agency, especially in the analysis of the field notebook entries.
- (2) the displacements involved in interpreting young people's learning as a material practice which, far from being an isolated event, is related to other agents, and
- (3) the ethical displacements derived from our reluctance to assume fixed categories.

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## **“The New Idealism “**

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The arguments of Marx (1845) in the nineteenth century and Nietzsche, (1901), Moore (1903) and Russell (1912) in the early twentieth, have shaped perceptions of idealism ever since. Most contemporary academics would answer the question, “What is idealism?”, we wager, by describing a philosophy similar to Berkeley’s subjective idealism: everything that exists is made of something that can be called consciousness, or spirit, or mental substance, or even “ideas.” Meanwhile most non-academics would answer the question by describing something they also consider naïve: the belief that human beings are fundamentally fair-minded and well-intentioned; capable - given the right circumstances - of acting on ideals to form societies devoid of exploitation or injustice. The first answer is a version of idealist ontology, the second an idealist theory of human nature.

Idealist ontologies and theories of human nature address recurring concepts implied and debated in our field - like constructivism, power/knowledge and interest convergence. They are thus highly relevant to ethnography. This paper introduces a philosophical orientation which revisits some of the more subtle forms of nineteenth century German Idealism and proposes a relatively optimistic view of human possibility. We call this “The New Idealism.”

While we combine an idealist ontology with an idealist theory of human nature our ontology differs from the one characterized above. New Idealism is not monistic, nor a single-substance ontology. It draws, in fact, upon philosophies formulated explicitly in opposition to substance-ontology. It also includes an idealist theory of human nature which informs epistemological concepts such as validity, truth and bias. We take seriously Thich Nhat Hanh’s insight: while you can never perfectly understand another person, the closer you get to understanding, the more your empathy for that person increases. And seeking to understand people is what ethnographic practices are all about. We will illustrate our arguments with references to ethnographic works from the last two centuries that provide earlier instances of our philosophy.

We coined the expression, “The New Idealism” partly to challenge some features of Barad’s New Materialism, (2007). We agree with many of the goals pursued in the latter philosophy—examining anew the distinction between subject and object, moving away from subject-centered frameworks, conceptualizing entities in terms of relations and interdependencies, questioning taken-for-granted hierarchies. However, New Materialism often succumbs to what we call “picture thinking.” Like Berkeley’s philosophical idealism, it invokes the image of a single substance, this time called “matter,” from which, and within which, all relations and entities in relation with each other form. We will explore the problems with substance-monism during the course of our presentation of New Idealism.

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## **The Digital Dilemma: Contradictions in the use of digital media in rural schools from the Teachers' Voices**

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The intention of this paper is to explore teachers' uses of digital media in small rural school in a context that demand a high digital competence and understand the digital media as a key factor to achieve an inclusive and participatory education (Player-Koro et al., 2017). The review of research about digital media in rural schools shows a tendency to consider digital media focused on (i) digital gap and media ownership (ii) practices focused on the media used (iii) practices with digital media related to digital competence and innovation. However, there is a little research that consider the digital media from a creative and contextual approach that focus on the uses of the media avoiding a utilitarian and practical vision (Craft, 2003).

In this research, study aims are (i) to identify teaching practices carried out by teachers with digital media and the discoursed around them (ii) to contrast the teaching practices with the discourses and experiences around those practices. The ethnographic study was developed from a dialogical perspective which helps us to propose ways to overcome hierarchical relationships, dualities and deepen in a critical methodology (Maisuria and Beach, 2017), conceiving reality as a process elaborated by oppositions, dilemmas and in the integration of phenomena (Armesilla, 2021). The data emerge from intense and permanent ethnographic fieldwork (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004), conducted over 10 months in two small rural schools in the context of Region of Aragon (Spain), using participant observation (320 hours), informal conversations, and 13 in-depth interviews. The data analysis process was deductive-inductive carrying out a contrasted between data generated by different techniques (Walford, 2018).

When analyzing information gathered from different techniques, it is possible to observe contradiction between the meanings presented by teachers about digital media and the design of teaching practices. When teachers are asked about the reasons why they use digital media, they allude to the possibility of responding to pupils' needs and as an opportunity to "engage" students in the learning process. However, when teaching practices are analysed, the digital media are a tool for controlling and to promote the individual learning, ignoring the consideration of learning as a social act that implies the interaction with other (Sancho-Gil y Hernández-Hernández, 2018). At the same time, it is highlighted that teachers try to make use of digital media beyond the impositions of the technological market and the purely performative curriculum, integrating the lives of students, families and the context. However, the influence of performative, decontextualized and hyper digitizing policies seems to be behind or influencing these contradictions and dilemmas.

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## **“I Don’t Count”: Identity Negotiation and Family Language Dynamics of Rural-Urban Migrants**

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This ethnographic case study investigates the language dynamics of Chinese families who migrated from rural to urban areas, often referred to as rural migrant families, in relation to their identity negotiation. Despite rural migrants’ central role in urban growth, they are relegated to urban peripheries. Navigating the urban landscape with constrained resources, rural migrant families’ language dynamics constitute multifaceted decision-making, such as societal integration through the mainstream language, family bonding through their hometown topolects, and future advancement through recognized linguistic skills in the host city (Yang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2021). This study draws on the frameworks of family language policy (King et al., 2008) and identity and investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Family language policy derives from Spolsky’s (2004) model of language policy, which consists of language ideologies, language management, and language practices. The model of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015) places investment, a choice to participate in social practice, at the intersection of identity, ideology, and capital. It builds on post-structuralist construct of identity and highlights the concomitance of individual agency and systemic patterns of control.

This study was conducted in a metropolitan city in China. Participant families recruited had migrated from different rural areas and had at least one child attending school in the city. I collected data through six-month participant observation with five rural migrant families, semi-structured interviews with each family member, direct observation via audio recordings, and collecting multimodal artifacts. Findings revealed that, while families aspired for an urban identity, they often enacted “self-exclusion,” distancing themselves from the specific host city. This self-exclusion manifested differently across families and individual members, with varying criteria for identifying as “non-local.” Parents navigated a complex interplay between maintaining their hometown topolects and fostering aspirations for their children’s assimilation into urban society through standard Mandarin. Some children positioned themselves as neither-nor between their birthplace and the host city, with the use of hometown topolects mediating their attachment to the birthplace. In contrast, two adolescents in these families self-excluded themselves from family daily interactions as a means of severing their connections to rurality. I argue that rural-urban migration is a protracted and conflicted process, where identity negotiations between rurality and urbanity are not inherently tied to physical relocation. Within this process, family language dynamics emerge as a critical site where macro and institutional (family) sociolinguistic structures intersect with individual agency, shaping and being shaped by identity negotiations, often at the cost of individual and familial well-being in the case of rural migrants.

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## **The supermarket as a non-place? A methodological discussion of observing social practice**

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Most people in Western societies depend on retail shopping for essential goods, particularly food. However, our relationship with shopping has evolved over time, as have the retail environments themselves – shifting from small, community-embedded stores to vast shopping malls and, more recently, to online platforms where consumers select products remotely via digital devices. In urban areas, physical medium-sized supermarkets remain common, serving as spaces where salespeople and customers interact to varying degrees, ranging from direct engagement to minimal or nonverbal communication. As a dynamic social space, the supermarket undergoes multiple transformations throughout the day, mirroring the shifting rhythms of society and its inhabitants.

Patterns of interaction within the supermarket vary depending on the time of day. In the morning, staff engage in friendly conversations with regular customers, assisting elderly shoppers who require help counting their coins. In the late evening, cheerful young people purchase alcohol and crisps, and some of the neighbourhood's more unconventional figures may appear. However, during a specific period – typically from around 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. – the atmosphere shifts. The supermarket, as a social space, transforms into what Augé (1995) termed a 'non-place': it loses its historical and social connections, becoming like an impersonal transit space. Customers, often preoccupied and fatigued, turn inward, frequently scrolling through their smartphones. The workforce also shifts, with non-permanent staff – many part-time teenage workers with limited familiarity with the shop's culture or customers' needs – assuming responsibility. During this period, conflicts and confrontations become more common, and interactions between staff and customers, often terse or even hostile, are minimal.

For many adolescents, a job in a supermarket represents their first encounter with the labour market (Nergaard, 2023), introducing them to the adult world of work, where individuals of different ages and backgrounds interact. This experience helps shape early conceptions of what 'work' entails, influencing their perceived space of action and possibilities for agency. It is, therefore, relevant to examine and discuss the social dynamics that emerge in such environments, particularly in vocational sectors like retail, where feelings of tension and uncertainty may sometimes arise between those present.

Through ethnographic observations of everyday interactions—including employee relations, customer-employee interactions, and individual customer behavior—in supermarkets in Copenhagen, Denmark, I will explore how to observe moments when 'nothing special is going on' (Ehn & Löfgren, 2016, p. 2). In this presentation, I aim to outline a framework for further observations within the specific 'non-place' that the supermarket represents.

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## **Embodied Connections: Rethinking Touch in Non-Formal Education**

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This paper explores the significance of touch and touchability in education. Touch remains among education's most controversial subjects, with many institutions enforcing strict "no-touch" policies to protect both educators and students (Piper & Smith, 2003). While these policies aim to reduce risks, they also weaken interpersonal connections, hinder students' social-emotional development, and block opportunities to teach healthy relational boundaries. Additionally, educators who rely on embodied and multisensory pedagogies struggle to implement them in classrooms that prohibit touch. This paper asks: how can touch be involved in embodied pedagogies? To answer this question, the study draws on ethnography from research in non-formal education in Israel, while later drawing analytically on Merleau-Ponty's (2012) phenomenological theory and bell hooks' concept of pedagogical eros to reframe touch as a non-sexual space for communication, connection, and care.

The research explores these concepts through an ethnographic study of an Israeli youth movement, where teenage counsellors are responsible for planning and running activities for younger participants. This setting resists neoliberal educational logic and fosters strong relationships in which touch plays a central role (Costas Battle, 2019). The study documents various tactile interactions, from physical contact in group games to expressions of affection and engagement with space and objects. Conducted shortly after COVID-19 lockdowns, the research captures how the prolonged absence of touch heightened participants' awareness of its significance.

Merleau-Ponty's (2012) phenomenology of perception positions the body as the medium through which we experience the world and create meaning, viewing touch as inherently reciprocal. bell hooks' (2014) concept of pedagogical eros frames education as a space of love, care, and co-creation, emphasizing the body's presence as essential to meaningful learning. Building on these theoretical foundations, this paper focuses on the nature of tactility — the body's capacity for physical, emotional, and ethical engagement.

The findings identify three key functions of touch: (1) transmitting sensory-embodied knowledge, (2) establishing authority and maintaining order within a fluid, egalitarian space, and (3) expressing care, affection, and responsibility. The ethnographic data also reveal the tensions and challenges of tactility in pedagogy, including blurred boundaries, differing bodily experiences and expressions of affection, and the disruption of sensory-embodied learning during touch restrictions.

While formal education often suppresses tactility, the youth movement offers an alternative where embodied interactions support emotional connection and collective learning. This analysis examines how the tactile dimension shapes educational relationships and challenges prevailing taboos surrounding touch. The paper concludes by discussing the potential of recognizing touch as an

integral part of non-formal education, the risks of breaking this taboo around touch in education, and the possibilities of adapting these practices to other educational contexts.

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## **Ethnography of Educational Processes in Universities: Exploring Scenarios and Discourses in the Construction of New Research Problems**

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In this paper, we explore the methodological and analytical relevance of ethnographic fieldwork in university contexts, based on two ongoing doctoral research projects<sup>7</sup> —one focused on the education of medical professionals on gender, the other on the professionalisation of sociologists in Argentina. Through the account of these two fieldwork processes, we show how selecting sites, times, and contexts for empirical and analytical work is not a technical or logistical matter, but a central epistemological and theoretical operation. Such selections do not stem from pre-defined research designs, but emerge within the very process of fieldwork itself. It is through ethnographic engagement that we discover which spaces, moments, and actors aid us in constructing relevant scenarios to interrogate and make sense of the educational and professional processes we seek to understand.

This construction of ethnographic scenarios is not neutral; it entails weaving a research problem that connects aspects which might otherwise remain disconnected or invisible. In this sense, fieldwork actively shapes what the research problem itself becomes. This process enables a richer understanding of the phenomena under study, one that responds to the logics, temporalities and experiences our interlocutors foreground.

We argue that conducting ethnographies of educational processes within universities is both necessary and conceptually productive. Despite their centrality in professionalisation and knowledge production, universities have rarely been ethnographically explored as everyday social worlds. An ethnographic gaze moves beyond official curricula and institutional frameworks to attend to the embodied, relational, and interactional dynamics shaping learning, teaching, and professional socialisation. Classes, workshops, assemblies, informal encounters, and the circulation of academic and non-academic knowledge all form part of the university's educational fabric — yet they largely remain a 'black box' in mainstream higher education research.

Moreover, conducting ethnographies “of academia” prompts critical reflection on the very production of ethnographic knowledge itself. It confronts us with the challenges of “at-home ethnography,” where researchers share much of the

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<sup>7</sup> Both currently in their final stages of writing and supervised by Dr Diana Milstein.

social, institutional, and epistemic space with their interlocutors. This positional proximity requires particular efforts of estrangement, making visible the taken-for-granted assumptions that might otherwise limit analysis.

In the case of sociologists' professionalisation, the researcher's initial assumption of a clear divide between academic and professional sociology was unsettled by interlocutors who redirected attention to historical genealogies and circulating disciplinary discourses. In the medical education case, debates around gender and sexuality unfolded not only in classrooms, but also in breaks, assemblies, and governance events —turning these into relevant ethnographic sites.

Both cases demonstrate how ethnography reveals the contingent, situated, and contested processes through which educational and professional fields are produced — and, crucially, how these processes are shaped by the production, circulation, and contestation of discourse. This discovery, emerging from our fieldwork, highlights the centrality of discourse not only in shaping educational and professional processes themselves, but also in constructing the research problem. Ultimately, the narratives emerging from our research show that the scenarios and contexts necessary to understand higher education continually expand and shift, inviting us to question homogenising representations of universities and reconsider how knowledge, education and professional identities are constituted in everyday academic life.

## **School Staff's Involvement in Young Students' Future Aspirations: A Theoretically Informed Empirical Study from a Swedish Rural Community**

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This ethnographic study is part of a larger three-year research project that began in the spring of 2022, focusing on three rural research sites (see Kjellsdotter & Erlandson, 2024; Erlandson & Kjellsdotter, 2025). The project has been approved by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority and the parents of underage participants. This study examines school staffs' involvement in young students' future aspirations in a rural Swedish community. This young generation – called Generation Alpha – has grown up immersed in their local rural environment while also being interconnected with the opportunities and metrocentric alternatives of an increasingly digital world. The research presented focuses on identifying the educational challenges school staff perceive in promoting students' aspirations.

The study employs Bourdieu's framework, particularly his concepts of habitus and the reproduction of economic, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu & Richardson, 1986), to analyze these dynamics. Additionally, drawing on Massey's (1994) perspective, we emphasize the crucial role of place, especially when examining areas outside dominant metrocentric regions. The significance of place is further underscored by previous research on rural education (Bagley & Hillyard, 2015; Beach et al., 2019; Vigo Arrazola, & Bozalongo, 2014).

Our study follows a traditional ethnographic approach, emphasizing long-term fieldwork, the analysis of specific local events, and the examination of interactions within institutional settings to explore evolving sociocultural patterns (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Jeffrey & Troman, 2004). Data collection employs ethnographic methods such as participant observation, document analysis, and both formal and informal interviews.

The results concern the emerging generation in a rural community and show the educational challenges identified by school staff, including local and global aspirations, considering local cultural factors, and addressing social aspects of preparing students for the future. This community is shaped by new tools for consuming, producing, interacting, and forming social relationships that transcend geographical boundaries. Likewise, the school staff in this rural area work in a complex socio-economic and cultural landscape, striving to support students in building prosperous and sustainable futures in a globalized world.

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## **Reframing and transforming cultural capital: ethnographic analysis of university admission and inequalities among young people**

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This article examines how the young people in the metropolitan area of Helsinki are optimizing their educational choice in the university admission process already in upper secondary education by reframing their ways of gaining legitimate cultural capital, and what kind of inequalities are embedded in this process. The paper examines how and why the young people (age 16–18) are making changes to their matriculation examination protocols in order to optimise their scores in the frame of newly reformed university admission policy. The data comprises ethnographic interviews with eleven young people and seven of their teachers, and observations (14 days along a school year) in a general upper secondary school in the metropolitan area of Helsinki, Finland. These changes occur in this study particularly in respect to matriculation examinations on Finnish as first or second language, and among pupils attending advanced courses in mathematics. Their goal is presented to be to maximize the score points gained from these examinations in the university admission, even if the reform has generally been presented as something ‘not influencing’ the general upper secondary students at all. These processes in this analysis are related to migrant backgrounds and are partly gendered, yet both of these operate in relation to schools’ middle-class institutional habitus (Reay 1998; Tarabini et al. 2017). According to the observations and the ethnographic interviews, these practices are negotiated in the every-day practices in schools both together and without the teachers. The focus of the article is on how the embodied cultural capital, social capital and economic capital are transformed finally into institutionalised cultural capital by such means that were ‘not intended’ in the higher education admission reform, but emerge as constitutive effects (Dahler-Larsen 2014). Simultaneously, they contribute to the reproduction of social positions in the society through admission to higher education.

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## **Observing apprentices at work: Reflections on the advantages and limitations of participant observation to understand training and working conditions**

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In France, apprentices are individuals aged between 16 and 29 who are engaged in acquiring vocational diplomas or qualifications under a unique employment contract that integrates on-the-job training – overseen by an apprentice supervisor – and instruction at an apprentice training center. Apprentices occupy a “borderline position”, hovering in the “grey area between student and employee” (Moreau, 2006: 393). Schools, as dedicated educational environments, stand apart from broader social frameworks, whereas training companies amalgamate educational interactions with other workplace dynamics (Denave et al., 2020).

Despite numerous ethnographic studies on working conditions over the past four decades (Cartier, Molinié & Volkoff, 2019), research on vocational training remains scarce (Duc, 2012). Yet, studying vocational training, and apprenticeship in particular, requires an ethnographic approach for two key reasons: first, apprentices spend between two-thirds and three-quarters of their training time within companies; second, *in situ* observations provide valuable insights into the processes of professional socialization (Grytnes, 2018). Consequently, it is crucial to explore how ethnographic observations can be effectively conducted to shed light on the underlying mechanisms of apprentices’ training and working conditions, and how these intertwine.

This contribution explores the advantages and drawbacks of conducting participant observations in companies that hire apprentices. It stems from a broader reflection on observation methodologies, the researcher’s role, degree of participation, and commitment (Zinn, 2017), as well as the social characteristics of the ethnographer such as age and gender (Fournier, 2006). It is based on five participant observations totaling 312 hours in French companies employing apprentices as kitchen helpers, dining room staff, and sales associates.

Participant observation leverages the researcher’s physical presence as a tool to capture the intangible elements of the social interactions at play. This embodied approach is particularly effective in documenting the professional socialization process, offering real-time insights into how apprentices experientially acquire knowledge, practical skills, and interpersonal competencies. However, this approach carries inherent limitations that can affect its internal validity. Ethnographic approach often stays at an *initiatory level*, in this specific case documenting only the first interactions with the tutoring team and the familiarization with the workspaces. Furthermore, by primarily performing tasks assigned to apprentices, the observer’s role results in field notes that primarily document their personal experiences, thereby partially overlooking the broader training interactions facilitated by the tutoring team. Finally, despite efforts to align with apprentices’ positions, the observer’s characteristics often place them in a liminal state, shifting between being *almost but not fully* a member of the group under study and an external observer.

## **“I admire the nuns, so I go to school”: Catholic Space and Capacity to Aspire for Education of Bahnar Youth in the Central Highlands of Vietnam**

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Southeast Asia holds remarkable political, cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity. Therefore, post-colonial Southeast Asia states have pursued (and continue to pursue) nation-building projects that entailed assimilationist language and education policies for the marginalized ethnic minorities (Tupas & Sercombe 2014, 13). However, to the author’s knowledge, the number of ethnographic studies on the education of Southeast Asia ethnic minorities is limited.

The indigenous groups situated in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, for most of its history, were independent communities living in tribes. Within one century, the Central Highlanders witnessed tremendous social changes making them the “minority” in their own land (Evans, 1992). Along with these external waves of influences, formal schoolings were introduced in the 19th century, yet are still alienated to many Central Highlanders (Chi, 2011)

Despite numerous development projects from the state and international organizations, educational inequalities among Central Highlanders and the rest of Vietnam remain significant (UN Women, 2017). The binary construction of ethnicity as higher and lower status has been central in Vietnam education policies towards the ethnic minorities (Luong and DeJaeghere, 2024). Contextualizing the situation requires examining Central Highlanders’ education as a space of contestation and negotiation between state policy, ethnicity, class and religions.

This ethnographic examination explores the engagement of an elite group of Bahnar youth with the Catholic church for education advancement and social mobilization. This process of making meanings for formal schooling requires Bahnar youth’s active self-positioning in both the “imagined communities” of global Catholic and indigenous Central Highlanders of Vietnam (Anderson, 1983). Bahnar youth, by relating lived experiences with trans-generational histories across the Catholic, village and formal schooling space, mobilizes their individual agency responding to the social-structural limits and assimilationist education policies as ethnic minorities in Vietnam. By presenting Bahnar community’s engagement with the *thăng tiến* (advancement) projects of the Catholic church, I argue for the centrality of Catholic cultural models, trans-regional and -national network in strengthening Bahnar youth’s capacity to aspire for education.

These aspirations for education do not disregard the marginalized status of the Bahnar nor are they habituated. They are emergent, not always realised, but specifically strengthened in a relational web of Bahnar youth’s lived experiences and influenced by the Catholic cultural models presented to them.

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## **An autoethnographic journey: Narrating the academic mother**

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Critical, decolonial, and feminist perspectives on psychosocial issues emphasize the need to challenge fundamental assumptions still embedded in scientific frameworks and the institutional and social dynamics of academia (Parker, 2015). Academic knowledge develops within specific systems that prioritize productivity, rationality, individual intellectual work, and the separation of subject and object in analysis (Holzkamp, 1983; Schraube and Osterkamp, 2013). In the social and human sciences, these structures can sometimes silence, marginalize, or objectify diverse human experiences, particularly those of culturally diverse populations and women (Macías-Gómez-Estern, 2021). This presentation applies insights from critical psychology, intersectional feminism, and interactional sociolinguistics to explore mothering narratives in academic settings (Yoo, 2020). Through a combination of personal stories, autobiographical memories, and ongoing reflective dialogues between the authors, the study uses autoethnography to examine how motherhood is socially constructed in academia. Autoethnography, increasingly used in applied linguistics and language education (Keles, 2022), is gaining recognition as a qualitative research method that offers valuable possibilities for interdisciplinary research (Bochner and Ellis, 2022; Wall, 2006).

We examine the experiences of three senior scholars from different disciplines with international academic careers, focusing on how they navigate the dual demands of motherhood and academia. Viewing narrative as a social practice (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008), we explore how our identities as mothers and academics take shape through everyday interactions. Through autoethnographic accounts of our daily experiences, we seek to uncover alternative ways of engaging with academic work—highlighting not only the challenges faced by academic mothers but also their role in fostering a more caring, relational, and dynamic university environment. Drawing on the concepts of hybrid agency and hybridization (Macías-Gómez-Estern, 2021; Lalueza & Macías-Gómez-Estern, 2024), we argue that recognizing and valuing the contributions and skills developed by academic mothers can help create a more human-centered and inclusive academic culture (Yoo, 2020).

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## **What Students' Actions in Video Counselling Teach Us About the Learning Process: A Video ethnographic Study of Student Interaction in a Highly Immersive Video Counselling Setting**

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For decades, in-person counselling was the primary method used in fields like psychotherapy and social work. However, the COVID-19 pandemic had a lasting impact on counselling practices. Most counsellors had to adapt quickly to providing their services online. While some had prior experience, others had to pivot almost overnight and learn how to conduct online counselling. Since then, there has been much discussion about the effectiveness of online counselling: good online counselling appears to be possible, but „the role of technology as a non-neutral presence in the therapeutic process needs further investigation“ (Rodgers et al. 2024, p.24) and the „ongoing implications for education/training and postqualified practice [...] will need attention from both educators/trainers and professional bodies.“ (Ibid, p.24).

In times of crisis, such as global pandemics or the effects of climate change, including floods and wildfires, it is important to recognize that online counselling can be a crucial resource for supporting people (e.g. Findlater et al. 2023), especially if in-person counselling is not available due to the collapse of infrastructure. Counsellors should therefore be specifically trained in online counselling, aligning with Rodgers et al.'s (2024) findings that emphasize the need to reevaluate how we train (future) counsellors for this evolving field. The project presented here follows these considerations by analysing students' first attempts in video counselling and hereby using a video ethnographic approach. Analysing videos of students learning counselling techniques in a roleplay with their fellow classmates, the study explores the impact of technology on interaction as well as the skills necessary for effective online counselling.

The unique aspect of this video ethnographic approach is that two stationary cameras were used to record the video counselling sessions to capture both students in their respective rooms as well as their shared digital space. The cameras were positioned to capture both, screens and students, allowing for a twofold recording of their interactions: first, the body posture and gestures of the person in the room, along with their interaction with the equipment and second, the facial expressions and gestures of the person on the screen. This setup allows for a comprehensive analysis of their actions in their own spaces and the interactions between both parties in their shared digital space.

Using a video ethnographic setup like this offers deeper insight into the unique dynamics of online counselling and the acquisition of associated skills, highlighting the need for specialized training and the importance of preparing future counsellors early in their university education. Additionally, it might offer an opportunity to explore how counsellors interact with technology, how digital

spaces are navigated during a video counselling session, and the potential role of immersion in shaping these interactions.

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## School life is a test: the practice of “tests” in primary schools in Vietnam

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In Vietnam, one of the most immediate things that a new teacher must get used to when they are inaugurated into the lifeworld of a public (state) schooling system is that their regular teaching duties are not always given priority. One of the main duties that teachers must become accustomed to are the seemingly endless number of “tests” their schools engage in. Within the teachers’ parlance these “tests” primarily refer to the “mid-term” and “end-of-year” district exams, but they also refer to “contests” and “competitions”, which appear to help with their schools’ “rankings”. Based on ethnographic fieldnotes (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011) over one school year in several primary state schools in Vietnam, this presentation aims to illustrate this world of “tests”. Because my background was in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), my interest was primarily focused on the daily practices of English Teachers in schools, and it is through their activities that this “school life of tests” is seen. Despite policy efforts to move teachers; classroom practices towards an environment more conducive to learning and communicating in English more effectively (Le *et al.*, 2020), there is still a strong expectation for schools to “do well”, and in Vietnam this is publicly understood and honoured through their performances on different “tests”. What came of interest from the study were not so much the “tests” themselves, but the social practices surrounding these “tests”. Drawing from Collins (1981, 2004, 2009) work on ‘interaction rituals’, and not too dissimilar from Albas and Albas’ (1988) ethnographic work on exams, I attempt to describe these practices as a series of ‘rituals’ which emotionally build up on one another. The main impetus here is to focus more on the ‘micro-situations’ (Collins 2004) that teachers find themselves in as they invariably go about administering, invigilating, and marking “tests” and the varying levels of ‘collective entrainment’ (Ibid) during such moments. A preliminary finding from the study was that despite the “stress” and “bad press” that can usually be associated with testing - depending on the situation - “tests” can also bring out a strong sense of “solidarity”, “self-worth”, “renewed pride” and “raised status” as schools mobilise their resources to band together and rally behind these “tests” to essentially achieve a ‘common quest’ (Blumer, 1986) for success.

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## **Transcending the conventional. Teachers' experiences in an 'alternative' rural school**

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In an education system marked by political, bureaucratic, administrative, curricular and academic performance pressures (Beach & Dovemark, 2009; Salinas-Atausinchi & Huaman-Lucana, 2021; Vigo-Arrazola et al., 2023; Yoon & Templeton, 2019), some schools are committed to a different kind of education. Taking into consideration Vigo-Arrazola's (2024) definition of creative and inclusive practices, this text aims to contribute to the improvement of educational quality in rural areas, which is often undervalued (Cuervo, 2020; Vigo-Arrazola & Beach, 2022). In accordance with the search for an education for freedom (Freire, 1969), the purpose of the study is to explore the creative and inclusive practices carried out in rural schools. The objectives pursued are two: i) to identify creative and inclusive practices that are carried out in rural schools and take into account the voices of the students and ii) to know the perceptions and experiences of teachers on the inclusion of these practices.

The study is carried out through an ethnographic design in a rural school located in the region of Aragon, Spain, based on participant observation, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations. The field presence lasted four months, following an intermittent model (Jeffrey and Geoff, 2004). A total of 330 hours were spent in the locality where the school is located, including overnight stays. This allowed for a closer relationship with the participants and an in-depth understanding of the school's situation. The analysis of the data collected was carried out using the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006).

The results show different types of creative and inclusive practices that are incorporated in the daily life of the school and that allow for the incorporation of the voices of the students. The results also show different types of teacher involvement in these practices. Teachers who lead the school project consider creative and inclusive practices as an essential factor in the teaching and learning process, while teachers who come to the school for the first time encounter barriers to their inclusion.

The conclusions highlight the importance of teachers as drivers of change in school practices for an education that includes the lives of students.

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## **Roots of Resilience: Education, Gender, Climate Change, and Courage in Tanzania**

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The rapidly melting glacier atop Mt. Kilimanjaro is a stark reminder of climate change. In the plains of northern Tanzania below, disrupted climate patterns have impacted food and water security, damaged health, and altered socio-cultural lives, including schooling. As the ecosystem shifts, so too does education. How have school communities in northern Tanzania understood and responded to climate challenges? How have students, teachers, and families innovated in the face of climate stressors? How are land pressures, climate stressors, and educational aspirations shaping everyday life within the predominately Maasai communities of northern Tanzania? What aspirations for their futures do educational actors hold in times of constraint, and what role does education play in pursuing them? What might other educational communities learn from these communities' adaptations? Laura Wangsness Willemsen and Musa Kamaika Meng'Arana will share key findings from their Fulbright-funded year of ethnographic research in schools confronting an accelerating climate crisis. They will reveal the gendered implications of, and responses to, climate change from the perspectives of diverse educational actors, with a particular emphasis on emerging innovation and transforming notions of masculinities within Maasai communities. The authors will share stories of hope and, in doing so, invite the audience to consider how their own educational stories might connect to climate hope. They will share how their study's findings have served as a catalyst for community conversations and, ultimately, action. As communities globally seek to ensure the climate crisis doesn't become an educational crisis, there is much to learn from Maasai educational communities across northern Tanzania whose resilience is rooted in care, innovation, devotion to community, and courage.

## **Writing fieldnotes as a collaborative interdisciplinary practice: Voices of the Future.**

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In this paper we describe the different ways in which fieldnotes were used in our project 'Voices of the Future' which was a three-year NERC funded interdisciplinary project that explored, across disciplines, the relationship between children and young people and Treescapes. Our focus in the project was on children and young people describing their relationship to Treescapes. Accordingly, we developed a number of collaborative strategies which enabled a shared fieldnote practice that included images, videos, scratch notes and audio notes.

We also worked across disciplines. The 'Voices of the Future' project provided an opportunity to collaborate with anthropologists and educationalists, physical geographers and artists – which meant that the team worked with heterogeneous range of approaches and theoretical framings, ethical understandings and ways of writing. The research team moved towards a genuinely transdisciplinary space when thinking about young people and treescapes.

In this paper, we explore what fieldnotes look like when they are written collaboratively, across and between researchers of different disciplines, and when they also involve the subjects of the research – in this case children and young people. From a philosophical perspective, field notes can serve as a bridge between lived experience and theoretical reflection, contributing to a more situated and dynamic philosophical practice that can help us to deepen our understanding of the complex and multi-layered nature of lived experience. Writing fieldnotes also means drawing, or rather the practices are combined as a form of notation (Gunn 2009).

A key aspect of the work we did was that each member of the team wrote fieldnotes after an event at which we had all been present. 'We' included tree scientists, forestry experts, a philosopher, an artist, an ethnographer and a childhood studies expert. Each fieldnote included personal as well as generic reflections. It was perhaps the sharing of this style of fieldnotes that has been of considerable interest as each person has observed very similar events, and yet, each person's notes have all taken on a distinct voice and personality. This combined voice allowed a more complete picture of the day and reduced the distance between the observer and observed giving a fuller a rich fieldnotes record.

In many of our activities, children were invited to make their own drawings and to write in various ways to record, observe and communicate what they were doing. In other words, children made their own fieldnotes as we went along. We gave the children and young people in the study recording devices as well as notebooks to record the activities they were engaged in. Our practices with the children generated hundreds of video, audio and still images, along with notebooks filled with drawings and writings, and experimental texts, including one fieldnote that was made by worms (Ashcroft 2023).

We conclude by asking ourselves, what kinds of knowledge does this practice generate, and how can this challenge existing ways of knowing and doing things.

## **Learning experience of 5th graders of Haitian origin in Chilean classroom.**

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Linguistic diversity in Chilean classrooms due to migration is a recent phenomenon, presenting challenges for schools, particularly public institutions. Haitian-origin students, many of whom are non-Spanish-speaking, face significant barriers to literacy development due to the lack of educational tools designed for their needs. Research highlights the importance of using students' home languages and integrating meaningful topics from their everyday lives, such as family, into teaching. However, most studies on Haitian students in Chile focus on social integration or teaching Spanish as a second language, with little exploration of their specific literacy practices and learning experiences.

This study examines the literacy practices of Haitian-origin students in primary education, drawing on New Literacy Studies, vernacular literacy practices, funds of knowledge, Critical Race Theory, translanguaging, Third Space Theory, and the Linguistically Responsive Teaching Framework. Using a qualitative multiple-case ethnographic approach, it follows four Haitian-origin students in a school with a high number of Haitian students who speak Haitian Creole at home. Their families are also included to further explore their funds of knowledge.

The study aims to understand literacy as a social practice shaped by cultural, historical, and political contexts. Findings will inform linguistically responsive teaching and inclusive educational policies to support migrant students in Chile.

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## **Following as a Methodology: Studying the Emergence of Political Subjectivity in a Challenged Democracy**

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This presentation outlines the methodological approach of "following," in a research project which investigates how teachers, students, and principals become political subjects within the context of political struggles related to the societal role of compulsory education.

To identify the political activities of teachers, principals, and students, we employ the concept of political subjectivity (Martinsson & Reimers, 2019). This concept draws on Biesta's (2022) idea of subjectification, Mouffe's (2005) notion of the political, and Butler's (2015) focus on political assemblages. We understand political subjectivity as a heterogeneous, and unpredictable phenomenon marked by public activism in order to instigate social change.

The methodology of following is a form of multi-sited ethnography where we follow chains of events in which the meaning, role, and content of education is either transformed or stabilized. Once we identify a case of political subjectivity, we follow its' emergence backward—by reconstructing repeated articulations and actions and forward—by tracing responses, actions, agents, and outcomes. Data collection involves participant observation, social media monitoring, media analysis, text analysis of parliamentary papers and political party platforms, interviews, and studies of digital platforms. Through this process, we construct approximately five case studies. The number vary depending on where we draw the boundaries of each case. These cases include: a right-wing nationalist parent acting against a supposedly leftist teacher; students who are performing climate justice activism; LGBTQI students hosting a hearing with municipal politicians; conditions for right-wing nationalist teachers; teachers opposing the Swedish school market system; and teachers resisting demands to report migrant students without residence permits. The analyses allow us to observe how meaning is constructed and transformed through different political articulations, and how this connects to or counters broader political dynamics.

To understand the conditions for teaching and learning, as well as the role of schools in democratic development, it is crucial to examine the political forces shaping educational politics across multiple sites. To gain insight into these processes, research must follow the articulations and actions that create different meanings and conditions for education.

Our preliminary findings show that several of the instances of political subjectivity emerging in Sweden between 2021 and 2024 among principals, teachers, and students are tied to the influence of the nationalist right-wing party, the Sweden Democrats, and how it affects educational processes. The pressure exerted by this party appears to provoke and facilitate political action. Another notable finding is that activities by individual actors tend to form networks, evolving into collective activism.

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## **Tastes of Belonging: An Ethnographic Journey Through Lunch Boxes, Identity and Education in Indian Schools**

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There's something uniquely nostalgic about reminiscing about school days, and few rituals stand out as vividly as the lunch break. Those 35 minutes weren't just about eating—they were moments of camaraderie, shared stories, and, at times, silent exclusions that shaped our social experiences. An important marker of Indian culture is the tradition of bringing home-cooked meals, or “dabbas” to schools which is reflective not only of the familial eating culture but also serves as a medium for social interactions among students which becomes the foundation of education in schools.

E. N. Anderson in *Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture*,<sup>8</sup> describes food as an important social marker. He says that food communicates two very important things about people, “solidarity” and “separation”. At the heart of solidarity are concepts like sharing and participating. Food is an essential part of human interactions in so many spheres like dating, courtships, business meetings, community events, religious events, festivals, political gatherings and welfare schemes. Separation on the other hand translates as the separation of one group from the other because of different food practices and transactions. Families, friendships, offices, religions, and so on can define themselves and form a group identity with respect to how they eat and deal with food transactions. Similarly, food is so central to children's identities in schools that many times we find regions and people being defined with respect to what their staple diet is like wheat, rice, and bread. In short, food is not only detrimental in defining an individual's identity but also their place in the society by means of the group/culture an individual identifies with. When one talks about one's cuisine and the particular way of cooking and eating food in groups, there is a sense of associating taste, dishes and ingredients with one's cultural or social identity. Through this paper, I aim to present an autoethnographic journey of how education is not just about academic instruction but also about identity formation, inclusion, and the negotiation of cultural and social hierarchies through the discussion of lunch boxes in schools.

The methodology of autoethnography will be instrumental in offering a deeply personal and reflective approach to understanding the intersection of food, identity and education in Indian schools. A possible way to allow for an intimate exploration of how lunch box traditions shape self-perception, familial ties and peer interactions is by situating one's own experiences within a broader cultural and social context and this is what I hope to achieve through this paper. The aim is to uncover how food becomes a focal point of self-determination, social belonging and exclusion through exploring personal narratives, memory work and lived experiences of people. An autoethnographic insight of this nature aims to explore the Indian context where food is deeply tied to caste, class and regional

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<sup>8</sup> E. N. Anderson, *Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture*, (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 125.

identity as well highlighting the many ways in which students can navigate these complexities, making it a powerful tool for analysing the role of food in education and the formation of identity.

## Among cans of soda, boxes of Tex Mex and a story of a wish to get back on (educational) track

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Drawing on the theoretical concepts *belonging, becoming and being* (Chan, 2013), I take departure in *living the narrative* (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) in a wish to understand a young shopfloor workers narrative about his job in a Danish supermarket.

On my first shift I met Omar, a young man in his early 20ies. Omar worked on the shopfloor getting the newly arrived goods in place in the store. We started out with a great deal of fun, as we were both completely unable to find the shelf reserved for a specific type of canned sodas. We looked around the entire area of the canned sodas more than once, and for every time we ran into each other we smiled a bit more. After some time, we agreed that the shelf simply could not be there and called for help. Omar smiled at me and said, '*and then they say, that everyone can do this job*', but we obviously couldn't. We laughed again.

We came to talk about why I was there. I explained shortly while we headed back with the trolley to do a refill of goods. The trolley was notably manageable compared to before when it was filled with canned soda. Now we were heading back to the store with a trolley full of Tex Mex and we came to talk about why he was there. Omar explained to me how he sees this job as a steppingstone to get back on his educational track. As we take turns going back and forth to the trolley to pick up another box of Tex Mex, he tells me that he does this job to get hold of his destructive thoughts; that he doesn't sleep very well, and the lack of sleep ruins his studies. He tells me of his fear of never completing his studies, not getting the dream job at the international medical company as he has proudly told his parents and friends about. But occasionally he interrupts himself to tell me how fun it is to work here; how nice the colleagues are and how much better this store is compared to the one around the corner. A younger colleague, whose name I don't know, walks by, he smiles at Omar and both giggle – definitely some sort of in-house joke between them.

In my presentation, and paper, I show how Omar's sense of belonging to the supermarket transpires although the job is nothing but temporary in his own perception. I also present my theoretical considerations on using ethnographic observations narratively with youth employed in Danish supermarkets.

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## **'Examining the Standpoint Position in Ethnographic Research'**

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This paper addresses the critical issue of the researcher's positionality in ethnographic research. Sandra Harding argues that the female research position is more suitable for studying gender issues than the masculine position, as the female researcher possesses a double optic (Egeland, 2008). This perspective, known as standpoint methodology, is also applied in research concerning migrants and minorities. Linda Alcoff critiques the practice of speaking for others, describing it as 'arrogant, vain, unethical, and politically illegitimate' (2014, p. 484). Privileged positions, such as being in a 'more favourable, mobile, and dominant position vis-à-vis structures of power/knowledge in a society' (2014, p. 494), are discursively dangerous because they always influence what is perceived or interpreted, even in research.

We have studied inter-generational changes in gender performances between migrant mothers and their daughters. This paper presents a meta-analysis of our research project, discussing the dilemmas faced by majority researchers studying minority women and exploring the possibilities and obstacles to conducting ethical, sustainable research on minorities. We pose the following questions:

- Is it possible to develop valid knowledge from a privileged position?
- What dilemmas do majority researchers face in ethnographic research studying minority women?
- When does a research position contribute to further discrimination, exclusion, or oppression practices?

We are inspired by standpoint theory as presented by Donna Haraway. Contrary to Harding, Haraway asserts that no research position can ensure objective and true knowledge. She emphasizes that knowledge based on social positioning does not stand in a hierarchical relationship but must be critically scrutinized and examined to avoid reproducing biases in science.

In our study, we interviewed migrant mothers and their daughters, who were between 18 and 24 years old. Using a narrative approach, we asked the mothers and daughters to discuss their childhood, youth, and adulthood. We aim to overcome some of the epistemic injustices in understanding the lives of migrant women and their daughters. Examining our position as researchers working with minorities, we find ourselves situated in a politically tense and strained field. Alcoff, in line with Harding, also emphasizes the absence of neutral places in research to interpret and construct knowledge for others. As researchers, we must strive to create conditions for dialogue and speaking with, rather than speaking for, thus reducing the possibilities of misinterpretation and contributing

to what Alcoff calls 'discursive imperialism' (Alcoff, 2014, p. 491). How we attempt to address this will be the main discussion in the paper.

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**Enduring Exclusion, Envisioning Futures: Exploring the production of local educational regimes through community schools among Muslim youth in Contemporary India.**

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Against the backdrop of a fraught socio-political context and persistent marginalisation of minority religious groups, inquiries on the educational realities and precarities experienced by Muslim youth have become pivotal in contemporary India. This paper attempts to locate the impact of socio-political exclusion on educational processes and aspirations through the resurgence of community-run schools for Muslim youth in neoliberal India. The community schools (locally known as *qaumi* schools) in comparison to state-run institutions, this paper underlines, become 'preferred' avenues among Muslim youth for not only securing educational opportunities, but also as 'safer' educational spaces. Drawing upon the ethnographic study of three schools for Muslim boys and girls from 2022-24 in the historic city of Old Delhi, the paper maps the penetrative reach of community schools in dense Muslim neighbourhoods of the city, thus, producing what I term as '*local educational regimes*' built on the interfaces of family, community, and neighbourhood.

Based on the sociological analysis of community-based educational structures, school histories, curriculum models, and everyday schooling experiences of Muslim youth, the paper demonstrates the interplay of two key aspects: (a) community schools as sites of political expression, negotiations, and identity-making for minority religious and ethnic groups in modern nation-states; (b) community schooling structures as strategies of envisioning mobility and aspirational futures amidst multiple forms of exclusion and precarity.

While community schools, broadly classified as minority institutions in India, are not disjunctured from a centralised nation-wide educational policy, they exercise the choice of functioning, structure, and curriculum. This is especially observed in the everyday school cultures produced through the use of *Urdu*, gender-segregation, scholarships, religious rituals, teacher-student relations, and the play of neighbourhood caste-class dynamics at the schools. Through affective associations and articulations by students on identity and aspirations, I argue that local educational regimes not only challenge the dominance of global schooling cultures resulting from universalised Eurocentric approaches to education (Anderson-Levitt 2003), but more significantly, they contest the ultranationalist and majoritarian ideas of identity and citizenship in a democracy. This happens through the diverse ways in which the idea of community steers, and is also influenced by, educational choices, aspirations, and anxieties in fraught political contexts.

The entanglement of educational institutions and political worlds of Muslim youth is especially significant as India has witnessed numerous struggles by students on issues of citizenship, educational policy, *hijab*, and the role of democratic universities. These struggles are not dislodged from other conflict-ridden political

realities of the global South as my paper hopes to contribute to a corpus of scholarship that understands how educational experiences of vulnerable communities are riddled with dilemmas of security, survival, dignity, and mobility in majoritarian states.

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## Participatory Ethnographic Approaches to Normative Orders of Belonging in Education.

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Over the past 15 years, videography and video analysis have gained increasing prominence in education research. This paper introduces and discusses a very specific approach to video and ethnography that centres on students' video self-productions. Primarily conceived as a methodological contribution, it examines the potential of participatory and performative dimensions in both video production and analysis with adolescents for ethnographic research in educational contexts.

For an ethnographic approach that works with students' audio-visual (self)representations, Judith Butler's (1993) conceptualisations of performance and iteration are relevant, as they foreground the body—including pre-reflexive, habitualised discursive practices. Moreover, the emphasis on "doing" in performative approaches opens up a praxeological perspective on how youth continuously interpret, reinterpret, subvert, ridicule, or dismiss institutional narratives concerning education, morality, culture, difference, and belonging. Building on Norman Denzin's performance ethnography (2003) and its potential to amplify marginalised voices, the methodological approach discussed grants students creative control over their audio-visual representations—*TikTok*-format-inspired short films with open topics that 'matter to them' and no prescribed genre, shot and edited on their mobile phones—while also actively involving them in the co-constructive analysis of their films. It foregrounds how students engage in performative acts, as well as their interpretive frames, aesthetics, and imaginaries, as they reconfigure institutional narratives of morality and belonging through embodied, performative, and visual practices.

Yet, video productions constitute a distinct, stylised, and aestheticised form of representation, created with a specific audience in mind. To examine how young people's composite and layered self-representations intersect with societal, institutional, and peer positionings—and to account for the interrelated levels at which negotiations of normative subject orders unfold in educational settings—a multi-modal and multi-sited framework is required. This framework integrates additional ethnographic methods, including both conventional approaches (e.g., participant observation in schools and during school trips, narrative interviews) and more explorative strategies (e.g., co-constructive analysis with students and teachers). Ultimately, the key challenge lies in productively integrating and triangulating the heterogeneous dataset within a multi-modal analysis, drawing on the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (Keller 2010).

**Structure and Argumentation:** At the outset (1), the ethnographic, video-based participatory-performative approach, developed within a project on gendered knowledge production and subjectivation processes in postmigrant schools in Switzerland,<sup>9</sup> is introduced. Subsequently (2), the paper explores the potential of performative-participatory video productions for ethnographic methodologies in

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<sup>9</sup>“*Gendered Narratives of Modernity. Transnationalisation from Below in Public and International Private Schools in Switzerland*” (2021–2024), Bern University of Education, Switzerland. Research Associate: Sandrine Gukelberger; Research Assistant /Filmmaker: Perla Ciommi.

education research by analysing one such film, *Brate (Brother)*, and how two students draw on marginality, masculinity, and morality to negotiate, reinterpret and transform teachers' positionings (such as being labelled as 'migrant,' 'violent,' 'toxic,' etc.) and experiences of Othering in school. The analysis highlights both the advantages and challenges of integrating a multi-modal dataset that includes audio-visual, embodied, performative, narrative and textual elements. Finally (3), the paper synthesises the potential of performative-participatory video approaches for educational research in the form of a conclusion. Advancing the discussion on post-categorical methodologies and more dialogic research forms, it also briefly engages with post- and decolonial critiques of ethnographic research.

## Enactments of Inclusive Policies in the Danish Folkeskole

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This proposal is part of a Ph.D. study that aims to explore how inclusive policies in the Danish Folkeskole (public school) are understood and enacted in practice. The study is situated within the realm of education policy research (Ball et al., 2012; Troman, 2006; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016) and investigates *what occurs when political intentions regarding middle forms* (education policies that merge general and special education) *are translated and practiced in different school contexts*. This includes identifying what underlying problems these policies are supposed to solve and how new dividing practices occur.

Thus, evaluation studies on inclusive middle form environments have illustrated how the middle forms are based on different methods of division in practice (EVA, 2022). Furthermore, the Danish Ministry of Children and Education (2021) has published a guide on middle forms for professionals in schools that outlines how students with special needs should be identified prior to being assigned to a middle form, ensuring that its design accommodates these specific (identified) needs (ibid. p. 7). Building on these materials as well as observations conducted at two schools, Foucault's concept of *dividing practices* will be employed as an analytical approach to understanding practice and power structures in relation to context, and, especially, teachers' problem understandings (inspired by Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). The analytical approaches are employed as complementary components to the policy enactment framework (Ball et al., 2012).

The fieldwork is focused on two types of inclusion-oriented practices identified as the main middle forms (Lindeberg et al. 2022, Tegtmejer et al. 2024). The two types of middle forms appear as distinct translations of policy into 'practice in action,' shaped by different contexts that, broadly speaking, represent a class(room)-based and a group-based approach to middle form teaching.

Through the poststructuralist perspectives, the study aims to bring forth narratives and descriptions from practice, presenting them as fragments of a larger dynamic whole in the complex field of problem and solution negotiation. The school cases are not selected with purpose of comparison in mind but rather to explore the significance of contexts for the shaping and unfolding of practice, which is reflected in the above research question.

Keywords: classroom studies, middle forms, inclusion, dividing practices, enactment

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## Personal or Professional? An Ethnographic Perspective on Social Relationships in Tutoring Contexts

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Homework is widely prevalent in Germany. As an activity initiated by schools but extending into extracurricular spaces and times (Krinninger and Müller 2020), it carries school-related concerns into private settings (Fuhrmann 2022). As a result, homework often involves not only students and teachers but also parents, other family members, and private tutors. Tutoring, in particular, seems to play a crucial role in this context, as approximately half of all students in Germany receive commercial tutoring at some point during their schooling (Hille et al. 2016, 115). While some international studies exist (e.g., Sen 2014, on India), ethnographic research on tutoring situations in Germany remains scarce.

In this paper, we examine the role of tutoring in afternoon homework sessions by comparing two contrasting cases. The ethnographic observations stem from the research project *The Student Job in the Homework Cycle* (<https://schau.uni-mainz.de>, project duration 2023–2026). Employing a multi-sited ethnographic approach (Marcus 1995), we followed students to all locations where homework becomes relevant: in class, on the way home, at home, and in tutoring sessions. The tutoring situations we observed varied considerably. In one case, tutoring took place at a family friend's home, while in another, a tutor was assigned through an agency. Despite the formalized nature of the latter, the situation revealed a close and almost friendly bond between the student, their family, and the tutor. In contrast, the relationship in the former case, despite the familial connection, was characterized as rather distant.

We analyze these dynamics of proximity and distance from a practice-theoretical (Reckwitz 2002) perspective: How do the actors navigate the intersection of familial and educational dynamics, thereby constituting tutoring as a social practice? Furthermore, we explore how the process of doing homework changes when a third party—neither school nor student—becomes part of the homework situation. By focusing explicitly on the students' perspectives (Breidenstein 2003), we aim to demonstrate how actors in tutoring contexts manage school-related demands while simultaneously balancing private concerns.

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## **Changing Tides: Education, Knowledge, and Livelihoods in Coastal Fishing Communities.**

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In this ethnographic analysis, the work examines how youth in fishing settlements along the Malabar coastlines of Kerala, India, manage tensions across traditional ecological wisdom, school knowledge, and adaptive livelihood options against the backdrop of accelerated socio-ecological change. After conducting empirical field research in three varied settlements, this study examines where intergenerational sea-faring knowledge overlaps or diverges with formal curriculum offerings, new media technologies, and globalized economies. Results show that though formal schooling tends to deflect youth from fishing, they are not merely giving up traditional knowledge—instead, they are being creative. Youth fishers (16-25) are inventing a "third space" in which indigenous skills and contemporary equipment meet. Some combine indigenous knowledge of fish movement with satellite mapping technology, while others use formal schooling to get access to microfinance for cooperative enterprises that support cultural-based fishing practices in current market contexts. This research has three main contributions to educational anthropology: (1) It breaks the false binary opposition between formal education and traditional ecological knowledge, and shows their possible synergy. (2) It illustrates how youth reinterpret folk tales to legitimate innovation while maintaining cultural identity. (3) It suggests policy interventions to incorporate indigenous knowledge into formal education, making communities more resilient. Overall, this study lays bare the fact that livelihood transitions among such precarious groups are economic in nature alone but also involved complex negotiations about identity, place, and cross-generational duty during the period of climatic and epistemic shift.

## **Case Discord: Methodological reflections on conducting ethnographic fieldwork online**

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In contemporary ethnographic research, there appears to be a shift from single-sited ethnography “towards blended ethnography that encompasses research sites that are both physically and digitally constituted” (Tummons, 2022, p. 153). While conducting ethnography online is not a novel idea at this point (see for example Leander & McKim; 2003, Hine; 2007) there are, in our experience, still gaps in the methodological literature. This is presumably due to there being no one ‘online’ site or community, but a plethora of platforms with their own specific affordances and correspondingly challenges for those doing research within them. The focus here is methodological reflections from ethnographic fieldwork conducted within a Discord server used for youth work (August 2022-May 2023). We regularly participated in a full shift cycle; from the pre-talk throughout an entire shift to the end of shift wrap up. In addition to the affordances set by Discord as a platform, there are rules for behavior on the server and user (youth) access is limited (Rusk, Ståhl & Nyman, 2024). For example, the server has ‘opening hours’, which means that the young people can only interact with each other on the server at times when it is being moderated. On the other hand, young people are not required to share their offline names and are known as their Discord handle unless they provide another name/nickname. The voice channels, where young people and youth workers (and researchers) hang out and do digital activities together, are the core of the servers. Cameras are very seldom used, but screen contents are often shared. This voice centered ‘field’ has methodological consequences as researcher access is thereby granted or denied primarily through our mediated voices, a perspective we had not prepared for prior to entering the field. Further, unlike traditional ethnography, this also results in us having regular conversations with participants that we would not be able to recognize on the street. Through this presentation, we wish to contribute with methodological reflections such as these so that we together are better informed on what doing ethnography online entails.

Keywords:

ethnography, online ethnography, connective ethnography, youth work, Discord

## Lessons from Canoe School: navigating space, time and curriculum for a sustainable future in the Marshall Islands

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The disproportionate impact of climate change on the island nations of the Pacific has been well documented (Kumar et al., 2000). Rising seas, warming oceans, cyclones and king tides continue to threaten the lives and livelihoods of Pacific islanders. However, as Tongan theologian Jione Havea (2018) has argued, climate change is only one of the ‘worries’ plaguing the Pacific Islands; the other being the long-term legacy of conflict. Many of the islands are environmentally and culturally scarred by their histories as arenas for combat and nuclear testing. In the Marshall Islands – the context of this paper - the Runit Dome on Enewetak atoll perhaps best exemplifies the ways in which these ‘worries’ intersect in ecologically devastating ways. Runit is an eighteen-inch thick, three-hundred-and-seventy-four feet diameter concrete cap constructed to enclose radioactive waste produced by the U.S. nuclear testing programme. The rising seas have now caused it to leak its contents into the surrounding waters. Nuclear colonialism can never be a thing of the past; ‘the particularity of its nuclear nature,’ writes Karen Barad, ‘is such that it has already colonized the future as well’ (2019:2). In the face of such unique challenges what might educating for a sustainable future mean in the Marshall Islands?

Formal schooling in the Marshall Islands has failed to respond adequately to such challenges (Kupferman 2013). Curricula, pedagogy and assessment practices are predominantly modelled on those of its last colonial power, the United States. Furthermore, a continued dependence on funding and ‘expertise’ from Western governments and development consultants in the region exacerbates and reproduces such relations (Thaman, 1993, 1997). Schools, it has been argued, not only promote values of individualism and ‘modernisation’, which ultimately work against the cultural survival of Pacific peoples (Thaman, 1997; Taufe’ulungaki, 2002; Kupferman, 2013), they are also not aligned with Pacific philosophies (Sanga, 2004) and epistemologies (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001). Neither are its purpose and end congruent with the real lives and needs of Pacific islanders (Demerath, 1999; Heine, 2002; Baba et al., 2004; Craney, 2021). Out of school rates in the Marshall Islands are amongst the highest in the region; they are particularly marked in upper secondary where 43.85% (UNESCO ILoS, 2019) of young people are no longer in school.

Drawing on eight years of intermittent fieldwork in the Marshall Islands, this paper presents a ‘patchwork ethnography’ (Gökçe, Varma and Watanbe 2020) of a range of educational sites in Majuro, the capital. Briefly drawing on participant observation and interviews in two different schools, it then focuses in more depth on an example of an education programme set up as an alternative to formal schooling: a grassroots canoe building programme, *Waan Aelōñ in Majel* (WAM) specifically aimed at those excluded from the mainstream schooling system. Based on observations of teaching and interviews with three educators, it argues that, rather than rejecting formal schooling outright, the programme skilfully

navigates a reimagined educational 'third space' (Soja 1996) by drawing on aspects of formal Western schooling, as well as capitalist work practice and combining these with Marshallese approaches to knowledge and learning. In doing so, it addresses the real 'worries', needs and challenges of the Marshall Islands – the climate crisis, continued out-migration and the demand for skilled labour.

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## **Losing the sensory shift in creative learning from tactile to digital**

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In the contemporary world, technology has become a pervasive force in all spheres of life, including education, creativity, and the arts. Its influence on sensory experiences is particularly evident in the context of creativity, from preschool education to graduate-level studies. While technology has significantly expanded access to creative tools and learning resources, it has also raised concerns about its potential to displace the sensory and tactile engagement traditionally associated with art and creative expression. As children develop, they are exposed to digital media at a young age, which often influences their interactions with the world. Digital technologies like tablets and interactive whiteboards are increasingly being incorporated into preschools today, which can enhance learning, but may also limit hands-on experiences, inhibiting fine motor skills and tactile sensitivities. Graduating students become even more depend on technology to refine their artistic identity and technique. As a result of digital technology, art forms such as graphic design, animation, and virtual reality have changed the way we create and experience art. Although these innovations may expand the boundaries of artistic expression, they may also shift the focus from sensory richness to abstract, screen-based experiences because of these innovations. As a result of this shift, questions arise regarding the impacts of these technologies on sensory awareness, emotional attachment, and preserving traditional artistic practices. To explore how technology influences sensory engagement in creative education, this paper relies primarily on ethnography and autoethnography. Through ethnographic fieldwork in educational institutions and autoethnographic reflections on personal artistic practice, this study sheds light on students' and educators' lived experiences of navigating the digital revolution. Through an analysis of technology's role across various educational stages, the study highlights the importance of enforcing a balanced approach that incorporates both digital and tactile experiences. In the end, it suggests that fostering an awareness of the sensory dimensions of art, both traditional and digital, can help prevent technology from displacing human creativity.