The Shared Culture of Children in a Story and Drawing Exchange

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This presentation analyses data from a children’s story and drawing exchange project where the purpose was to investigate what kind of cultural knowledge is exchanged.

As adults, we don’t always see or understand when children interact amongst themselves. Yet to adults partaking in children’s lives, such as parents, teachers, and early childhood educators, it appears that the children have found common ground, a shared understanding. What are the characteristics of children’s culture? What kind of elements does a child connect with in another child’s story?

This research examines children’s stories and drawings which were produced in a Storycrafting exchange. Children (aged 10-11) responded to each other’s stories by drawing pictures and by telling a response story. The exchange took place between a national school in Finland and an international school in a European country. Drawing was selected as a response method to allow children to respond to their exchange partners in a way that comes naturally to them and to limit the class teacher’s influence on the products.

Initial findings show that there were commonalities in the children’s drawings. Certain elements in the stories stood out for the children, hinting that children are engaged in similar ways by narratives with humour, or breaches to norms. There was also evidence to suggest that response stories reciprocated the themes of the partner class’s story.

Using a combination of narrative and visual methods in an intercultural exchange provides the participating children different avenues to communicate and connect with their exchange partners, and to begin to develop a shared narrative culture.

Keywords: qualitative methods, visual methods, children’s culture, intercultural encountering, Storycrafting