"He brought me a soldier’s outfit” The position of material objects in children’s stories of their fathers

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The material objects are increasingly viewed as operators of societies, especially within posthuman movements. Humans’ relationships with other humans are also intertwined with various physical, digital, and imagined objects (Mustola 2018, forthcoming). In this presentation, we ask: How children, their fathers, and material objects form networks together and what kinds of positions do material objects have and what kinds of actions do they perform within these networks?

We want to approach this question from the point of view of children and, hence, we use data in which children act as the narrators. The data originates from a research project in which 5–7-year-old children (n= 115) drew and told stories about ”The Important Man” in their lives. Participants were gathered through preschools and first grades of elementary schools in spring 2016. The data was gathered in collaboration with Finnish Parents’ League and project Valosa, of which the aim was to enhance children’s participation and well-being in co-operation with their parents.

As a theoretical background we user Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network theory (2005). We follow his argumentation on why ”the social” should not be limited to certain actors, such as to biological actors, but instead it could be viewed as an attribute of different phenomena assembled together. In this presentation, we examine, how material objects, children, and their fathers are assembled in the stories of children. The data reveals that material objects are consumed, given as a present and used as learning tools. Material objects act as enablers when children want to do things together with their fathers. Material objects act also as reminders of fathers when they are absent from children’s everyday life.

References:


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