Young children’s sensory belonging in daily family life

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In this presentation young children’s belonging in their daily family life is viewed through the lens of materiality. Belonging is an emotional experience, known as a sense of belonging. Our sense of belonging is created through attaching ourselves to other people, places and ways of being. In this way, a sense of belonging can be characterised as a sense of bodily ease and comfort, being in safe and feeling at home. May (2013) divides belonging up into three linked dimensions as cultural, relational and sensory belonging. Cultural belonging springs with participation, memberships and acting in communities, and knowing the ‘rules of the game’ (May, 2013). Belonging is always relational; it is negotiated with other people. Sensory belonging is linked with the material world and how we create belonging through our bodies and sensory experiences. Lähdesmäki et al. (2016) define the materiality of belonging as people’s contact with their surroundings and how such activities contribute to their sense of belonging to a physical place. Agency is also built through material engagement in social practices (ibid.).

In this presentation I ask how young children create belonging at home in their daily family life. The participants were 18 Finnish 4- to 7-year-old children. Data for the project were collected during two to four visits to the children’s homes. The data consist of observations and video-recordings of daily family situations and actions, Draw-your-day interviews, taking photographs, and walking tours with children. The presentation illustrates the role and importance of materiality, i.e., home, familiar places and objects for young children’s belonging and for the organization of family relationships and children’s participation. It also discusses from the perspective of materiality and sensory belonging the uneasiness in and discrepancies of constructing belonging in children’s daily family lives.

References:


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