Thinking with and through leisure: A study with British Indian children

*Utsa Mukherjee
Royal Holloway, University of London, United Kingdom

Scholars of childhood studies have repeatedly drawn attention to the ways in which leisure participation of children has come to occupy a central focus in how childhood is conceptualized in contemporary (western) societies. The relation between leisure and class-inflected approaches to parenting have also been established, often nested within a Bourdieusian framework of cultural capital transference. Despite these theoretical and empirical insights into the relationship between leisure and cultural modernization of childhood, no concerted attempt has been made to map out the various everyday ‘leisurescapes’ of children in terms of their own perspectives and experiences. It is in this context, that this paper will draw upon an ongoing empirical study with British Indian children and their parents, where interviews were concluded with both children and parents alongside participatory draw-and-talk activities with children in order to gain deeper understanding of leisure in these children’s lives. Consequently, children’s everyday leisurescapes have been mapped across four sets of intersecting activities: structured leisure lessons, family leisure, peer leisure, and unstructured/solitary play. These activities, their networks of participants and the various tangible objects and affective associations they cue, create greater affordances to think with and through leisure to unpack materiality in all its complexity. Children’s leisure engagements draw upon embodied, affective, spatial, and cognitive associations and processes, that can aid us in theorising materiality and its relation to children’s agency.

*Keywords: materiality, parenting, agency, leisure*