



## Child Studies Multiple – Collaborative play for thinking through theories and methods

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### Abstract

This text is an exploration of collaborative thinking and writing through theories, methods, and experiences on the topic of the child, children, and childhood. It is a collaborative written text (with 32 authors) that sprang out of the experimental workshop Child Studies Multiple. The workshop and this text are about daring to stay with mess, “un-closure”↓, and uncertainty in order to investigate the (e)motions and complexities of being either a child or a researcher. The theoretical and methodological processes presented here offer an opportunity to shake the ground on which individual researchers stand by raising questions about scientific inspiration, theoretical and methodological productivity, and thinking through focusing on process, play, and collaboration. The effect of this is a questioning of the singular academic ‘I’ by exploring and showing what a plural ‘I’ can look like. It is about what the [multiplicity of voice](#) 🗨️ can offer research in a highly individualistic time. The article allows the reader to follow and watch the unconventional trial-and-error path of the ongoing-ness of exploring theories and methods together as a research community via methods of drama, palimpsest, and fictionary.

**Keywords:** thinking with theory, productivity of methods, child studies multiple, child, children, childhood collaborative writing

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## PART I

### How to read this text

This text can be read in multiple ways. In a sense, it takes us back to Julio Cortázar's experimental novel Hopscotch, published in 1963, which provides the reader with many ways of reading the book but mainly two reading paths. One is a linear path, leading the reader through the story chapter by chapter. The other follows [an alternative order, specified by Cortázar himself](#) ↓ by giving page numbers – and offers the reader a somewhat different story. In this text, we want to offer multiple ways of reading through a more web-like, hypertextual openness. The buttons labelled CLICK HERE and the underscored words throughout the text give options for ordering different parts of the text to your personal liking. To get back to the page where you started after having followed the link, press together Alt and left arrow keys on the keyboard.   Readers probably read in whatever way they like anyway – skipping parts, speeding up, and slowing down irrespective of the author's intentions or permission. It is of course possible to print the text, in which case it will come out as more or less linear, and this is just another way of reading it. You can also print only parts, for example the workshop images, and use them (in educational situations) to continue the exploration and play. As it is a collaboratively written text, all the [individual co-authors](#) ↓ and the [peer-reviewers](#) ↓ have made visible textual inputs to the text, which are also clickable. All of this is to emphasise the open process and the ongoingness of not just this text but the whole process out of which this text has sprung; a collaborative exploration of theories and methods in research with and about children.

If you want to read more about how this text was written [CLICK HERE](#) ↓

### What this text is about

What this text is about

This collaborative text is a joint [critical](#) engagement with [theory and method in practice](#). The focus is on the opportunity to [reflect upon and expand theoretical knowledge and concepts through theoretical and methodological collaborations](#). It is an exploration of thinking with theory, allowing concepts, ideas, and methods to multiply the knowledge flow through face-to-face and digital collaborative processes (Jackson & Mazzei 2012). The collaboration preceding this text took the form of a three-day [workshop](#), *Child Studies Multiple*<sup>1</sup>, in which all the 32 text-authors participated. The workshop involved 32 academic research scholars from all academic levels and four collaborative workshops focusing on concepts, theories, and methods within research with and about children: 1) presentations [of key theoretical and methodological concepts](#), 2) [a drama workshop](#), 3) a [palimpsest workshop](#), and finally 4) a [fictionary workshop](#). Together, we investigated research methods as theory and theory as method. The workshop was an exercise in collaborative thinking with and through theories, methods, and one another's experiences, expertise, and knowledges. Academic scholarship is more or less always a 'thinking with' in the sense that written end products are collaborative outcomes, even though we cannot see it; through seminars, referencing, peer-reviewing, developing others' ideas, and giving and receiving collegial critique. Another way to express it is that we think and write through one another.

This way of working was inspired by the concept of the [palimpsest](#) and the idea that there is never a first draft of a written text. The clue is that we always build upon, and [write against](#) or in line with, what has been written before. This in turn draws upon a historical process dating back to Antiquity, when the re-use of parchment and paper was common.<sup>2</sup> Parchments were erased by scraping off the surface to give space for new text. The new text was then written literally on top of the old semi-translucent traces of the older texts. The important quality of the palimpsest is that the layer of earlier writing is present and [visible](#): it is right there before our eyes. The idea of the workshops and this text is to make us aware of and enable us to [play with](#) the often invisible layers of text and thinking, not just in our thoughts or [in](#) our own chambers, but in face-to-face [practice](#).

*This text is about staying with the process and questioning what collaboration and a multiplicity of voices can offer [research](#) in a highly individualistic time. In this way, the workshop and the text claim to reconsider the production of theory and methodology as other than an individual act.*

For an overview of the workshop,  
[CLICK HERE](#) ↓

Wondering about how the  
workshop functioned in more  
detail? [CLICK](#) on the different parts  
of the workshop to find out more:

[DRAMA](#) ↓

[PALIMPSEST](#) ↓

[FICTIONARY](#) ↓

## Writing this [text](#) 🗨️

The last collaborative act of the participants/authors at the workshop [Child Studies Multiple](#) ↓ is the writing of this text. It was created as part of a three-day workshop conducted at an [especially beautiful lakeside conference](#) 🗨️ centre in the [Swedish November darkness](#). 🗨️



Conference centre Rimforsa Strand, Östergötland, Sweden. Photo: Matt Finn



*Conference centre Rimforsa Strand, with the sauna. Photo: Matt Finn*

As the Child Studies Multiple workshop was jointly performed through interactive collaboration, its content and this text belong to all the participants. It is shared collective goods. [This text is not a final outcome or final product of the physical workshop. It is rather an entanglement \(Hodder 2012\) of the ongoing process of what we did, experienced, and carried with us from the workshop, in one way or another.](#)  By foregrounding writing as a collaborative process, we emphasise it as a vital part of doing method. As mentioned in the sections [what this text is about](#)  and [how to read this text](#) , collaborative writing is a method of inquiring about the world (Wyatt & Speedy 2013), in this case the world of theories and methodologies of children and childhood. The idea that writing is an integral part of doing theory and method does not come as a surprise for the strands of social sciences that have been self-reflexive about this practice (Law 1994, Livholts 2019, Richardson & St. Pierre 2018). In this text, however, we share the curiosity about thinking, doing, and writing together by visualising the collaboration. As a collaborative exploration, it also emerges as a questioning, and perhaps even a critique, of individualised academic traditions and values (Wyatt & Speedy 2013). It is also an exploration into sharing the curiosity of what it can mean to write together within the humanities and social sciences.

Writing tends to hide behind an individual name, a singular 'I', a royal 'we', and/or chosen references. This text challenges and risks the taken-for-granted singularity of writing in favour of visualising a multitude of voices. To rephrase John Law (1994: 33), researchers are networks, interdependent and constituted by past and present bodies, things, and social relations. So, the first person singular of academic writing is more accurately the ["first person, plural"](#) (see also Hirsch and Spitzer 2013: xx, Law 1994: 31). This implies that co-writing is a method in which voices are entangled with one another in unpredictable ways (cf. Hirsch & Spitzer 2013). This text visualises the undergirding of collaboration, the collective dialogues, and conversations. [We expose and share writing as an effect and affect of multiple living bodies](#) with different scholarly trainings, ideas, and experiences. To do the multivoicedness the greatest justice possible (cf. Hirsch & Spitzer 2013), we have opened up space for the workshop participants' voices and placed them visibly next to one another in speech bubbles throughout the text, just like an ongoing, never-ending conversation.

Layers of collaborative thinking during the workshop and writing add to one another in the text and through the different possible [orders of readings](#). Hopefully, this makes us as writers, and you as a reader, aware of orderings, overlaps, forward and backward flows, and entanglements. It is a call to slow down and accentuate multiplicity and singularity as each singular voice is in-itself multiple, and the multiple is made up of singularities (Deleuze & Guattari 1988; Mol 2002). The collaborative writing invites the possibility to see, hear, and read the different voices, allowing the text and the ideas to multiply with respect for the authors' likenesses and differences.

[The writing has had no outspoken goals or direction for where to end. At centre-stage is transparency and writing as inquiry \(cf. Gale 2014\).](#) To manage this endeavour, we have brought with us the generous atmosphere that was created during the [Child Studies Multiple workshop](#).

When Wyatt and Speedy (2013) and Hirsch and Spitzer (2013) write about collaborative writing, the writing is produced by two or more people who already know one another. The group that has written this text did not know one another in the sense of having all collaborated together before the workshop. Some had indeed met physically before, others had read, reflected on, perhaps even developed one another's work, some did know each other, some became new friends or academic colleagues during the workshop, while yet others had never even heard of one another. To only meet this way once creates a fragile bond. The fragility is made up of voluntarism, honesty, respect, and, not least, generosity. The

method can be compared to “friendship as method” (Tillmann 2015). Friendship as method does not seek facts; rather, it emphasises dialogical knowledge production without a predefined route to knowledge, it honours lived experiences (in our case both academic and lived experiences), and calls for an inquiry that is open and multi-voiced (Tillmann 2015). It is about the possibility of [developing together through support, caring, fun, help, and enjoyment \(Tillman 2015\). The workshop, not on purpose but in hindsight, was organised in a way that asked for this intensity and level of investment often required of friendship.](#) 🗨️ 🗨️

To visualise the layers of writing intensifies the workshop’s [palimpsest](#)↓ and [fictionary](#)↓\_games. It also does more: visualising the layers of writing more clearly makes writing part of the entire theoretical and methodological exploration of [children and childhood.](#) 🗨️ This is particularly important as we show [how we are speaking on behalf of children.](#) 🗨️ Yet, reflections on the writing of academic texts is often less valued than seemingly more important parts of the research process. While transparency is key in qualitative research when collecting and analysing material, writing academic texts has a tendency to be presented as something that is self-evident or taken for granted. How arguments are shaped is not necessarily given attention. Similarly, to the way in which methods are productive in academic knowledge production (Sparrman 2014), writing needs to be situated (Livholts 2019).

It has taken longer than expected to write this text. It has been an inquiry into how to write without a specific order, while still offering a readable text, and making it academically apposite. Two authors have written up the textual foundation with the ambition of inviting other writers and readers to keep the process going. We, Sparrman and Hrechaniuk, have written in our own chambers, met face-to-face, sat next to one another while writing, we have cut text to be able to see the flows and non-flows, while moving words and text around to connect and re-connect them. Our ‘I’ is a plural, multivoiced ‘I’, or ‘we’. Reading this text makes it impossible to say exactly who did what as our voices and silences move in and out of one another throughout the text (cf. Hirsch & Spitzer 2013).

The rest of the workshop collaborators have [waited, waited, waited.](#) 🗨️ to finally be invited to reflect, comment, develop arguments, and disagree with the text or one another through the digital platform Onedrive. A maximum of five comments and 250 words for each writer. It has been possible to write the comments collaboratively or through a singular ‘I’. Participating in the collaborative writing has, of course, been optional. A few, more practical, comments have been integrated into the text, other comments can be seen

in full-text speech bubbles throughout the text. The idea behind leaving the comments as they are is to be faithful to the openness of the process, to stay with [‘un-closure’](#)↓ multivoicedness, and the possible possibilities of the text. Anyone can use it to move the thinking and collaboration on. Sparrman and Hrechaniuk have thus not made any changes to the content of the text after the comments.

**CLICK HERE to read about the workshop as ‘un-closure’ ↓**

**CLICK HERE to see the fictionary definition of un-closure ↓**

In their responses to the invitation to comment on the text, the workshop participants/authors have underlined time in their emails. The text engendered memories of the workshop, thinking back, returning in time, a feeling of being taken back, and a feeling of too much time having passed between then and now. The text is talked about in terms of being fun, impressive, provocative, fabulous, filled with collaborative generosity. And disappointment about not being able to contribute due to the political state of the world is mixed with silences, finishing a PhD thesis, and lagging technology. In the email sent out to the authors, ‘the text’ is called a text and word document. When the manuscript was called a document in one of the author’s emails, it struck us as a brilliant re-naming of the text as document as it is the after-effect of a documentation of a larger process of ongoingness, a continuous documentation.

The final layers of writing have been contributed by the professional proof-reader Liz Sourbut and by the [peer](#)💬-reviewers. Sourbut’s careful following of the tone of this text exemplifies the ideas of ‘writing through one another’ and of the palimpsest. The journal invited peer-reviewers to give open [feedback](#)↓ on this theoretical and methodological collaborative thinking, doing, and writing process. The textual collaboration then reaches out to you as a reader because, by choosing, or refusing to choose, you also create the text in the hindsight of the workshop.

**If you want to jump to the setup of the workshop CLICK HERE ↓**

**If you want to read more about how this text ends CLICK HERE ↓**

## Framing the Child Studies Multiple workshop

The starting point for this text is the workshop Child Studies Multiple. Altogether, it involved [thirty-two researchers](#) with an interest in the child, children, and childhood. We say ‘interest in’ because not everyone participating in the workshop identifies themselves as child studies researchers. However, everyone’s research still feeds into and infuses the research area. The workshop was set-up as a “playful collaborative workshop” with a [playful twist](#). It aimed to critically explore and evaluate the conceptual and philosophical (normative) foundations of child studies by invigorating a constructive discussion of the field through [theoretical concepts](#).

The name of the workshop, Child Studies Multiple, is a way of asking questions about what is often, theoretically and scientifically, taken for granted in research on children and childhood (Sparrman 2020). Research with, on, and about children and childhood over the last thirty years or so has established a research area founded on the notion of children and childhood as socially and culturally constructed (James & Prout 1990). A distinctive theoretical apparatus has been established, comprising concepts such as: agency, participation, age, and voice (James, Jenks & Prout 1998; see also all the authors of this text). Child Studies has, as a matter of fact, more or less become an interdisciplinary discipline in itself (Smith & Green 2014). However, with the establishment of Child Studies there followed a dichotomous way of approaching the world, emphasising and defining children and childhood through, for example, their opposition to adults and adulthood rather than through positive dependencies on the world (Lee 1998, 2001; Prout 2004). There is an urge today, as in other social science areas, to leave behind dichotomous thinking and stay with the flow, the fluidity, and motions of social orders (e.g. Prout 2004, 2019). This in itself would reinforce a more heterogeneous way of thinking about children and childhood.

The need for this reinforcement is [that children do not live their lives through academic disciplines](#), their lived lives cut across the organisation of academic practices (Sparrman 2020). Children’s lives simultaneously stretch out in multiple directions, heterogeneity is a benchmark, as are complexity, fluidity, ongoingness, and sensuousness. There is no pre-fixed stability, just ongoing movements. As pointed out by Mol (2002), it takes a lot of coordination work to make something stand out and perform as a singularity. There is within the social sciences, she argues, a special adoration for wanting to make the world hang together as units, to make it look coherent, because it is easier to deal with coherency than complexity, multiplicity, or the messiness of the world (cf. Mol 2002; Mol & Law 2002; see also Haraway 2016). The question is then: how do we researchers avoid falling into the

trap of wanting to make children's lives, or for that matter children, coherent and singular? [How do we, and how do we dare, to stay with the mess?](#) How do we, for example, theoretically confront and investigate these motions and complexities of being a child? Expressed slightly differently: How do we take into consideration the multifaceted-ness of life itself as always intriguing and encouraging?

The workshop's outspoken goal was to endeavour to engage in theoretical and methodological improvisation. It was an invitation to all of us to collaborate with and beyond academia by improvising with our experiences: our bodies, our own perceptions and taken for grantedness. The workshop was a process of not just reconsidering children's worlds, in more complex ways, it also created an opportunity to shake the grounds we ourselves as researchers stand on, individually and collectively. It opened up space for asking what our scientific inspirations are and where they come from. Consequently, the ontological issue is then to ask and raise the [question: can we at all change our approach to the foundation of what a child 'is'?](#) Not by questioning the humanity of the child, but by questioning which realities are taken for granted in the research we conduct about and with children.

Of the 32 participants, 19 national and international researchers were invited to join the Child Studies team at the Department of Thematic Studies – Child Studies, Linköping University, Sweden. The plan was to mix researchers with different interests in children and childhood, covering such widely disparate research areas as – Literature, Education, the Environment, English, Sociology, Health, Disability, Feminism, Geography, Culture, Art and Design, Social Science, Early Education, Politics, Adoption, History, Tourism, Consumer Culture, Family, Philosophy, Visual Culture, and Peer Culture – and thus to encourage a dialogue between different strands of research on and with the child, children, and childhood. A spirit shared between the researchers is their questioning reflections on children and childhood. In this way, the mix of workshop participants was carefully blended, focusing on how they critically challenge the taken for granted, elaborate theoretical concepts and methods, or simply introduce new ones.

The 19 invited guest researchers were asked to talk about and present [one theoretical concept](#) each, chosen by the Child Studies team. Each concept was chosen from the participant's own research. Most were central to their arguments, while some the researchers themselves hardly knew they had used or developed as a concept. The reason they were chosen for the workshop was that they were of interest to the Child Studies team – PhD students, lecturers, and professor – and their research on the complexity of children. After having presented the

19 concepts one by one, three theoretical and methodological workshops were initiated by the Child Studies team, focusing on a collaborative process of playing with theory and method: The [Drama workshop](#) ↓, the [Palimpsest workshop](#) ↓ and the [Fictionary workshop](#) ↓.

[CLICK HERE to jump to the materials from the workshops](#) ↓

## How to end this text

One of the main arguments in this text is the call for awareness of the [ongoingness](#) 🗨️ of theories and methods. The aim is also to draw attention to academic processes of doing theory and method through hands-on collaboration and to stay with fragmentation and the incomplete, all as an alternative to the tidied up, seemingly finished, final closings of theory and method (cf. Law 2004; Lury & Wakeford 2013; Ingold & Hallam 2007; Savage, 2013).

The Child Studies Multiple workshops illustrate that [play](#) 🗨️ [as method is hard work](#); 🗨️ hence, we can call it playwork, as in playful research work. Thorough preparations went into our attempts to open up space for spontaneity and improvisation, while at the same time remaining bounded by strict workshop instructions and limited timespace. To be playful, to side-step sometimes rigid academic methods, to try out and experiment without any guarantee of success, or any goal by which to measure success for that matter – all of this is hard. Neither is it an easy decision to take on board playfulness, because to a certain extent it goes against the academic tradition of needing to demonstrate and prove serious, sombre results. You get proof that playfulness is a hard task, and to some extent a vulnerable endeavour, when it goes astray. This may happen when it crosses the increasingly porous dotted line that we as academics sometimes desperately wish to maintain between the professional and the private; 🗨️ that is, when playing with methods and simultaneously playing with memories and emotions from our own childhoods. In [a neo-liberal world, there is less and less space in academia to do things for the sake of doing, as knowledge is becoming commodified](#) 🗨️ (Thrift 2005).

[If you want to read more about play as method CLICK HERE](#) ↓

[The workshop Child Studies Multiple](#) ↓, wrapped itself up through a joint verbal sharing of experiences of the three days of collaboration. Surrounded by autumn colours and the lake, the conversation did not circulate around theories, concepts, and methods. Rather, at the centre were the experience and process of having come together. Issues were raised around what ‘real’ visible academic collaboration asks of us. And, importantly, not just as researchers but as human beings.

Three days at a Swedish countryside conference centre can bring about deep thoughts and (e)motions. During the final joint wrapping up of the workshop, the need for research was identified, along with the need to have and be given time to share the unfinished activities. Not least for the sake of being able, at an individual level, to make more and different moves in your own thinking. To share seemingly nonsense thoughts and small stuff and be met with curiosity. Opening up for collaborative [slowness](#) ↓. [Leaving with things not yet discussed](#). 🗨️ Due to concentrating on the unfinishedness, the purpose of in-betweens of presentations and workshops was not to land but to keep the on-going-ness going. The three days increased the tension around what it means to be a researcher. How does one find one’s voice in academia today? This concern may be more important than ever as universities buy into neo-liberal business models (cf. Thrift 2005). One question raised was: If researchers cannot find the time to think, then who is going to?

Was it easy? No. This workshop would never have been possible without the participants’ bounteousness. There were, as someone remarked at the workshop, no “perfect brains on sticks”. There was experimenting for laughter. There were bodies with difficulties, still sharing generously. There was struggle, vulnerability, courage, openness, dis-comfort, the incorporation of negative capabilities, still enough confidence to keep going. One can say nothing else than that this workshop of un-closed thoughts was based on everyone’s good will and generosity. It enabled, someone pointed out, daring to be different. Nothing of this was planned for, still it became part of the theories, concepts, and methods themselves. By collaborating around, through, and with theories, methods, and concepts, a perceived illusion of academic disconnection was replaced with connection. Seeing others engage with your own research enables insights and allows for some hope. Even though [the workshop brought together a lot of complexities, mixing all academic levels, genders, and ages, it was weak in terms of ethnic mixing](#). 🗨️

To reflect on the child studies multiple framework set out for the workshop allows us to use one of the concepts from [the fictionary; Un-closure](#) ↓ = resistance to closure, an open-ended process that acknowledges the effects of disclosure.

This is very much what the workshop has been and is about: emphasising the ongoingness of playwork. This includes reflecting upon whether this workshop has made it possible to contribute to broadening thinking on the child, children, and childhood and on children's living conditions? Again, let us answer with yet another concept from the [fictionary; Mega-child\(hood\) ↓](#). Mega-child(hood) is defined as allowing children multiple forms of identification. "An excessive child(hood)". This concept, and many others in the fictionary, effectively intertwined the singular and multiple (cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1988; Mol 2002) of the child, children, and childhood, accentuating and underscoring the need for the possibility of being disproportionate, too much, unnecessary, extreme, and overfull. That is, multiplying in all directions! (cf. Sparrman 2020).

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## PART II

### Playing with and through theory and method

Playing with words and concepts, play, playfulness, and a playful twist are all concepts that were used in the Child Studies Multiple workshop to expand upon collaborative methods for thinking with and through theories and methods. The [19 theoretical concepts ↓](#) presented at the workshop were clustered together and worked with in groups at three different workshops: [drama ↓](#), [palimpsest ↓](#) and [fictionary ↓](#).

Play has a special relation to children and childhood. It is traditionally seen as an equivalent to being a child (Cook 2018, Woodyer 2012). Play is often described in opposition to seriousness, morality, and/or productive work, and portrayed as innocent, free, imaginative, romantic, and at times un-useful (Woodyer 2012). There are, however, other ways of looking upon it. Play cuts across the life course as well as across different life arenas, not excluding scientific research (Powell 2009, in Woodyer 2012). In these instances, play, playing, and the motivation for play configure ways of being in the world. Play is nothing in or by itself, it becomes something through the enactment of the world (Woodyer 2012). In academic situations, play can be a vehicle for becoming conscious of things that are otherwise enacted and engaged with unreflexively, without thinking. By enacting play in and through situated practices, an extreme openness becomes

possible, and hence a potential to make us aware of the constitution of our own ways of thinking. An open take on play emphasises its critical and ethical potential (Woodyer 2012). Critical in the sense of engaging with and becoming conscious of rules and norms, and ethically generous by offering glimpses of transformation, of ways of 'being otherwise'. A method of play then, in this academic setting, accentuates the process whereby the world, theories, and methods flow in and out of one another through the distribution and entanglements of the researchers' multiple bodies, techniques, materialities, and temporalities (cf. Lury & Wakeford 2012). The openness of play is in this case what enables us to explore theories and methods and thereby the "happening of the social" (Lury & Wakeford 2012: 2) as ongoing, relational, contingent, and sensuous.

The potential of a method is found in the relation between a specific problem and the capacity to change that problem (Lury & Wakeford 2012). In both the Child Studies Multiple workshop and this text, the problem and the potential change are found in the collaborative exploration of possible fresh and deepened ways to think with, about, and through children and childhood, both theoretically and methodologically. Through an open exploration of the groups' experiences, beliefs, struggles, bodies, and lives – private as well as academic – on-going improvisations have bundled, intertwined, and dissolved (cf. Ingold 2008). Exactly what play, playing, and a playful twist mean to each participant when entering the workshop is impossible to say. It is a challenging notion. As a research method, collaborative play offers multiple paths, multiple voices, and multiple ways of characterising children's worlds.

In the end, what made the workshop become what it became was the group's investment in the playful events themselves; the three workshops – [Drama](#), [Palimpsest](#), and [Fictionary](#). This is also why the workshop processes belong to all participants. Through this collaborative line of thinking, we emphasise play as an ethics of generosity (Woodyer 2012). Playfulness underscores a processual ontology focusing on the processes of formation, flows, and transformations of materials, instead of final products or states of matter (Ingold 2010: 2–3).

The aim has never been to create new knowledge, new theoretical concepts. It has been about engaging with and committing to theoretical thinking, sharing, and collaboration through unconventional methodological ways of producing knowledge. As pointed out by John Law (2004), methods also lean on theoretical, often unquestioned, ideas about the world, which is why they can misunderstand and misinterpret themselves. It is not clear that play as method has changed, can change, or will change the conditions for researching children and childhood,

or whether it can bring about effective change in children's life conditions. The workshop was nevertheless a serious effort to contribute to the ongoing theoretical and methodological transformations of ideas about the child, children, and childhood. Accordingly, one method is not simply replaced with another; rather, it adds and multiplies the possible forms of theoretical and methodological re-thinking through research collaboration. To approach methods as the very stuff of social life means moving away from seeing methods as objects and away from the shoehorn metaphor, whereby empirical findings should be forced into a predefined format (Savage 2013). To use methods to reflect upon methods is a methodological reflection in itself. By visually sharing our doings and thought processes in this text, the relationship between the implicit and explicit in theories, methods, and academic work becomes transparent and displays the politics of methods (Rose 2012). It shows us that research is always made up of people, and their materialities.

[CLICK HERE to go to the overview of the workshop ↓](#)

### **Research collaboration as method**

#### **Drama workshop: Engaging in or with the baby perspective**

The first workshop was set up together with the renowned Swedish theatre and film producer Suzanne Osten, who is knowledgeable about working with theatre with and for children of all ages, including babies. The idea was to use drama to specifically engage together, as adult researchers, with the perspective of the baby. Even though the field of Child Studies defines children across the age span 0–18 years, the majority of research conducted involves pre-school children and children up to the age of 10 (Thorne 2008). Within Child Studies, hardly any empirical focus has been directed towards the youngest age cohort of 0–1 year (e.g. Orrmalm 2019: 220; Oswell 2013), and this is still the case now.

The workshop Engaging with the baby perspective began with moving chairs into a large circle facing one another. The room was spacious and had large windows oriented in three directions overlooking the lake, and a crispy late-autumn sunlight flooded into the room. The workshop was initiated by watching a film about theatre produced for baby audiences and continued to engage with the baby perspective in practice by conducting drama exercises. These exercises drew

on our own childhood experiences, sharing them in pairs and then in the larger group. One of the pair exercises involved trying to communicate with each other while taking on the roles of a non-verbal baby and an adult. Another exercise engaged with memories of the earliest childhood photograph of ourselves that we could remember. For yet another exercise, everyone moved down to sit on the floor to physically take the baby perspective and share an uncomfortable school memory.

Even though the workshop was planned with only good intentions from everyone involved, the drama exercises did not work fluently. This may have been due to lack of trust and familiarity within the group and towards the theatre director. To be a researcher of children does not mean that sharing your own childhood memories is either interesting or easy. For some, the child in research is a path to understanding something other than the child itself, while others work on the protection of the child, or want to give the child a voice. [The workshops were designed to have a playful twist. However, the struggle, un-easiness, and strain on the collective atmosphere meant that the workshop never fully came off as a playfully explorative process. This strengthens the argument that play is situated](#), that [play is work](#), and has critical and ethical connotations (Woodyer 2012) leading, in this case, to the outcome of discomfort. Playing with memories and emotions makes it an even more vulnerable endeavour. The group was a complex mix of knowing, not knowing, never having heard of, or met each other before. So, in hindsight, that was perhaps a limitation because it also came to play with trust. Not knowing each other could also have been an advantage, however, because it opened up the possibility to play, in the sense of pretending to be someone else. The outcome could, of course, also be a well-justified critique against the setup and the goal of the workshop. A critique that reminds us that, while encouraging others to play, we need to be attentive to the decisions that others make to leave, or to stop playing, which some of the participants did (cf. Gustafsson 2019). Rather than seeing the workshop as a failure, it was able to expose tensions and cracks (Law 1994: 32), in this case, the strains and risks within child research exposing its political missions and boundaries.

As this text does not focus on the aftermath or results of the workshops, we are not conducting an analysis of why this workshop did not work out the way it was hoped for by the organisers. Instead, we continue to see it as part of the collaborative process of the event itself. Collaboration is important, but it is also vulnerable.

[CLICK HERE to read more about the setup of the Child Studies Multiple workshop](#) ↓

### Palimpsest workshop

The palimpsest workshop was inspired by the antique parchment procedures, as discussed in [“What this text is about”](#), ↓ where writers erase previous texts and write on the same sheet. The goal of the palimpsest workshop was to elaborate upon and visualise how research is a collaborative act. Again, process rather than outcome was important. The [visual maps](#) ↓ generated during the workshop do, however, display the palimpsest idea by visualising what collaborative thinking looks like when multiple research voices are presented next to and on top of one another on the walls.

The workshop participants were divided into six groups with five or six participants in each group. The groups circulated between three different rooms. PhD students from the Child Studies team were assisting each group with information and the supplied [toolbox](#) ↓. At the end of the session, they made sure to visually document the collaborative product before leaving and moving on to the next room.

- A cluster of theoretical concepts, consisting of six or seven from the [19 theoretical workshop concepts](#) ↓. Different clusters of concepts were provided for in each of the three rooms.
- [Stationery](#) ↓ such as pens, plastic sheets, and post-it stickers, and an [image](#) ↓ drawn by the famous Finnish author Tove Jansson (1962) for her story *The Invisible Child*.<sup>3</sup>
- Two sets of [instructions](#) ↓. One for the first group visiting the room and another for the second group.

[The image](#) ↓ was the centrepiece for the palimpsest game. The invitation was not to make a visual analysis of it. Images are not just physical objects, they highlight visuality itself in the sense that the focus is on the visual event or the act of seeing (Rose 2012, drawing on Bal 2003). The use of this image was intended to trigger and initiate an interchange of seeing and looking together through the image, thereby making the social happen (Rose 2012).

The image shows an outline of a person on a dark green background wearing a pink dress. It might be more precise to say that the pink dress is attached to two legs and is floating on the page beneath a pink hair bow attached to an invisible head. The image has the potential for triggering questions about what (being a) child can or might possibly involve. The incompleteness of the figure cultivates questions. The palimpsest workshop uses the image and the clusters of [theoretical concepts](#) ↓ to generate a creative space that invites the workshop participants to join together to think through and [play](#) ↓ with critical and complex theoretical

concepts to explore both the figure and the concepts, as well as the collaborative as such.

[It was never important for the participants to know the story behind the image, The invisible child \(Janson 1962\). Still, upon arrival, each participant received a copy in their workshop folder enabling them to find out more about the story if they wanted to](#) 🗨️. The groups worked in different ways; one group read the story together while other groups ignored the text. The reason behind supplying the text was that most Nordic people had probably heard of the story, while the international research guests might not.

The instructions were slightly different for the [first](#) ↓ and [second](#) ↓ groups entering the rooms because the first group set off the project and the second group already had the first group's work from which to launch themselves. Using the toolbox, the groups each created visual maps by putting up plastic sheets on the walls. They added the image, along with new and old theoretical concepts, they drew lines between image and words, adding post-its and sometimes crafting objects, such as a [paper plane](#) ↓ made out of the image of the invisible child. Those taking a first stab at the visual map were asked to leave empty spaces for the next group, who would continue the work the first group left behind when they left the room. Both groups made photo documentations of the visual map they had created so that afterwards it would be possible to see and share where, and how, the [writing on top](#) ↓ of one another had been carried out. In this way, the visual maps display collaborative theoretical thought processes, within which the palimpsest consists of additions and overlappings between the work of the two groups.

While half of the participants engaged in the 45-minute palimpsest workshop, the other groups worked with the [fictionary game](#) ↓, and afterwards the groups switched places. The second-turn groups received their [own set of instructions](#) ↓, as described above, encouraging them to continue working on the visual map from where the previous group had left off, filling in gaps, writing on top and/or side-stepping, or even erasing, the previous writing. The [tools](#) ↓ facilitated these possible changes: erasable markers, the movable plastic sheets, and sticky notes that could be moved around or used to cover things up. The second-turn group also photographed the new map/s before leaving the room, documenting the entire visualised thought process of both groups.

Even though the toolbox allowed erasures, the three second-turn groups did not erase what the first three groups had accomplished. Instead, they started drawing their own map on a new plastic sheet, connecting it with arrows and post-it notes

to the first map. The [second-round groups](#) ↓ also unintentionally made their maps symmetrical: the new plastic sheet they started with would match the [previous mind map](#) ↓ in length or orientation (horizontal or vertical). This might have been due to respect for the first group's work or wanting to conform to or actually continue the first group's visual thinking. The physical space of the room also set the frames for the scale of the visual maps: in the small rooms, the visual maps became [small](#) ↓ and in larger rooms they became [large](#) ↓.

At the end of the workshop, [all maps were rolled out](#) ↓ and placed next to one another on the floor in the primary conference room. In this way, everybody could get an overview and see and share the layers of thinking. Both the theoretical concepts and Janson's (1962) image multiplied, grew, and changed over and over, across the different groups and participants. This also shows how the figure of the invisible child (Castañeda 2003) multiples through theoretical concepts as the workshop participants shared experiences, knowledge, embodied practices, and engagements. Collaborative arrows, post-its, and words all point to the possibilities to think and re-think the invisible. [The workshops](#) 🗨️ show how seeing together multiplies the possibility of the child, and perhaps of becoming visible?

If you want to see the materials from the palimpsest workshop [CLICK HERE](#) ↓

### Fictionary workshop

The idea for the fictionary game is a result of searching for innovative ways of working with and elaborating upon theoretical and methodological concepts. The inspiration for the workshop comes from the Italian children's author Gianni Rodari (1996), who describes the game of adding prefixes to everyday words and making up stories about or defining the newly coined words. The word 'fictionary' is borrowed from the parlour game in which one person chooses an obscure word from the dictionary, to which the other players need to imagine and write down a definition. Afterwards, the host reads out all the made-up definitions together with the original dictionary definition of the word, and the players are required to guess which is the correct definition.<sup>4</sup>

[This workshop](#) 🗨️ addresses the tension between the need to somehow define and flesh out theoretical and methodological concepts in research and the unwillingness to allow these definitions to congeal and close up our understandings of the world;

or, more precisely in this case, of children. In contrast to the messy visual maps created in the [palimpsest workshop](#), the idea of the Fictionary workshop was to come up with fresh theoretical and methodological concepts with definitions. By combining a 'dictionary' of already defined theoretical concepts with 'fiction' and [play](#), a [Fictionary](#) was compiled. This fictionary is, however, neither final nor comprehensive. It is there to be used for thinking, re-thinking, and visualising the collaborative process of creating theoretical concepts. In this way, the fictionary is filtered and mixed through the workshop participants' experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and imaginations. All dictionaries are the result of collaboration, and in that sense the fictionary is no different. The discrepancy is partly that all participants 'own' the concepts and that it is openly described how they were produced. The concepts were also shared, twisted, and turned across the three days of the workshop.

The workshop participants were divided into six groups with five or six participants in each group. The groups circulated between three different rooms. PhD students from the Child Studies team assisted each group with information and the supplied [toolbox](#). At the end of the session, they made sure to visually document the collaborative product before leaving and moving on to the next room.

- Six or seven theoretical concepts out of the [19 theoretical workshop concepts](#), different concepts were provided for in each of the three rooms.
- [A linguistic toolbox](#), consisting of a list of suffixes and prefixes to help think through and transform the already existing concepts.
- Stationery such as a [laptop](#), [plastic sheets](#) to write and sketch on, coloured markers, sticky notes.
- Two sets of instructions, one for the [first group](#) visiting the room and [another for the second group](#).

One aim of the fictionary workshop was to push the language and theoretical thinking to challenge concepts already in use in research with and about children. The underlying question is how concepts that have been elaborated by researchers interested in children have the potential to change how children are approached, perceived, and recognised. The task was to invent three concepts and their lexical definitions within a limited time slot of 45 minutes. The groups could choose whether they wanted to type up the definitions on a [laptop](#) or write them down on [sticky notes and plastic sheets](#). The approaches varied.

The other aim of the fictionary workshop was, once more, to work collaboratively within and across the groups. Half of the groups did the fictionary, developing concepts, while the other half did the [palimpsest workshop](#) ↓. Afterwards, the other three groups took over the newly created fictionaries and were encouraged to continue the work of their ‘predecessors’.

Few second-round groups dug into the first group’s freshly created concepts. This was manifested in a number of discursive ways, such as coining new concepts without connecting them to or building upon their predecessors’ concepts, as well as in very tangible ways, such as avoiding writing on the previous group’s post-it notes or drafts.

After the workshop, we compiled the Fictionary – an alphabetical list of 34 more or less completely defined concepts. These included: mega-agency, non-sociology and childship. Some concepts made it to notes but lacked definitions. These words have been incorporated into the fictionary as well, and are open for use, definition, transformation, and reflection. For example, two of these terms are: [ageage](#) ↓ and [childscape](#) ↓. Some concepts in the final version of the fictionary do not derive from the theoretical and methodological [core concepts](#) ↓ presented by participants at the workshop; for example, [controllify](#) ↓. As the idea behind the method and the task was to create an environment for theoretical and methodological thinking, these concepts are included in the final compilation. The fictionary suggests that large changes can be achieved by adding prefixes and suffixes or by the change of a single letter. This is seen not least in the definitions of the concepts. For this reason, original spelling of the concepts and clarifications has been preserved.

An important addition to the workshop is to dare to stay with uncertainty and method as mess (Law 2004). It is not the newness of the concepts that is innovative (cf. Lury & Wakeford 2013), it is rather their intensification, how with small changes they can capture something slightly different, how they grow and extend the possibilities of the child, children, and childhood. Even though the fictionary with its listed concepts might look like a completed outcome, it offers all participants, and readers, the opportunity to fill in the gaps, continue to develop the concept, or reference them in their own writing.

**If you want to see the materials from the  
fictionary workshop [CLICK HERE](#) ↓**

### PART III

In its own way, this book consists of many books, but two books above all. The first can be read in a normal fashion and it ends with Chapter 56, at the close of which there are three garish little stars which stand for the words The End. Consequently, the reader may ignore what follows with a clean conscience.

The second should be read beginning with Chapter 73 and then following the sequence indicated at the end of each chapter. In case of confusion or forgetfulness, one need only to consult the following list:

73 - 1 - 2 - 116 - 3 - 84 - 4 - 71 - 5 - 81 - 74 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 93 - 68 - 9 - 104 -  
10 - 65 - 11 - 136 - 12 - 106 - 13 - 115 - 14 - 114 - 117 - 15 - 120 - 16 -  
137 - 17 - 97 - 18 - 153 - 19 - 90 - 20 - 126 - 21 - 79 - 22 - 62 - 23 - 124 -  
128 - 24 - 134 - 25 - 141 - 60 - 26 - 109 - 27 - 28 - 130 - 151 - 152 -  
143 - 100 - 76 - 101 - 144 - 92 - 103 - 108 - 64 - 155 - 123 - 145 - 122 -  
112 - 154 - 85 - 150 - 95 - 146 - 29 - 107 - 113 - 30 - 57 - 70 - 147 - 31 -  
32 - 132 - 61 - 33 - 67 - 83 - 142 - 34 - 87 - 105 - 96 - 94 - 91 - 82 - 99 -  
35 - 121 - 36 - 37 - 98 - 38 - 39 - 86 - 78 - 40 - 59 - 41 - 148 - 42 - 75 -  
43 - 125 - 44 - 102 - 45 - 80 - 46 - 47 - 110 - 48 - 111 - 49 - 118 - 50 -  
119 - 51 - 69 - 52 - 89 - 53 - 66 - 149 - 54 - 129 - 139 - 133 - 140 - 138 -  
127 - 56 - 135 - 63 - 88 - 72 - 77 - 131 - 58 - 131 -

Each chapter has its number at the top of every right-hand page to facilitate the search.

*Table of instructions from the novel Hopschotch, Julio Cortazár (1962)*

## Playing with words and concepts: Tools and materials

### GROUPS OF CONCEPTS

#### Concepts 1

1. Agency, Florian Esser
2. The Athenian child, Karen Smith
3. Deleuze and empirical research, Rebecca Coleman
4. Hybridity, Nick Lee
5. Kid Orientalism, Kathryn Bond-Stockton
6. Sociology, Alan Prout
7. Ethic as method, Katherine Runswick-Cole

#### Concepts 2

1. Child as a collection of partial objects, David Oswell
2. Disclosure, Spyros Spyrou
3. The figure of the child, Claudia Castañeda
4. Indigenous cosmologies, Mindy Blaise
5. Post-participation, Linnea Bodén
6. Provincializing the European child, Matt Finn

#### Concepts 3

1. Child figure in Deleuze, Ohad Zehavi
2. Critique, Karin Lesnik-Oberstein
3. Feminism and childhood, Rachel Rosen
4. The posthuman child, Karin Murriss
5. Slowness, Peter Kraftl
6. Entangled lives, Affrica Taylor

*Groups of concepts*

## Palimpsest



*The image of the invisible child, Tove Jansson (1962) ©Moomin Characters™*

## WORKSHOP II: PLAYING WITH WORDS AND CONCEPTS

### PART #1 PALIMPSEST, 45 min

#### INSTRUCTIONS (first-time groups)

*pa-limp-sest noun*

1 : writing material (such as a parchment or tablet) used one or more times after earlier writing has been erased

2 : something having usually diverse layers or aspects apparent beneath the surface

The online Merriam Webster Dictionary

o This is a collaborative thinking/writing/sketching game that we called Palimpsest where you work with a few concepts and an empirical example. Part of the game consists of 'writing on top of the writing' and so creating a set of palimpsests. Your group will create the first draft of an 'analysis' which the group coming afterwards will continue working with. The idea behind this is to visualise how we think and reason together, in face-to-face interaction and through each other's texts.

o At the station you will find:

an empirical example;

a list of concepts;

a roll of paper and colour pens.

o Use the concepts from the list to discuss the example: how can we think about this image and the character through the concepts? Use as many or as few concepts as you want – the goal is to see them work in practice. Today the focus is on thinking theoretically with the concepts rather than on the empirical material itself or on doing a coherent analysis.

o Then use the paper and pens to draw, jot or write down your thoughts. The 'manuscript' can be messy and sketchy – just leave some space for the next team to fill in the insights from their discussion.

o Do not forget to note the collective authorship of the manuscripts since we will be using them for a future publication.

*Workshop instructions, first-time groups*

## WORKSHOP II: PLAYING WITH WORDS AND CONCEPTS

### PART #2 PALIMPSEST, 45 min

#### INSTRUCTIONS (second-time groups)

*pa-limp-sest noun*

1 : writing material (such as a parchment or tablet) used one or more times after earlier writing has been erased

2 : something having usually diverse layers or aspects apparent beneath the surface

The online Merriam Webster Dictionary

o This is a collaborative thinking/writing/sketching game that we called Palimpsest where you work with a few concepts and an empirical example. Part of the game consists of 'writing on top of the writing' and so creating a set of palimpsests. The group who worked with the example in the past hour created first draft of the 'analysis' – we encourage you to keep on working with the draft. But you can also start afresh or combine both strategies. The idea is to visualise how we think and reason together, in face-to-face interaction and through each other's texts.

o At the station you will find:

an empirical example – same for all groups;

a list of concepts – different for each group;

a roll of paper and colour pens.

o Use the concepts from the list to discuss the example: how can we think about this image and the character on it through the concepts? Use as many or as few concepts as you want – the goal is to see them work in practice. Today the focus is on thinking theoretically with the concepts rather than on the empirical material itself or on doing a coherent analysis.

o Then use the paper and pens to draw, jot or write down your thoughts. The 'manuscript' can be messy and sketchy.

o Do not forget to note the collective authorship of the manuscripts since we will be using them for a future publication.

*Workshop instructions, second-time groups*





Min map concept group 2, turn 2, large room © Child Studies Multiple workshop



Mind map concept group 5, turn 1, small room © Child Studies Multiple workshop



Mind map concept group 6, turn 2, small room © Child Studies Multiple workshop



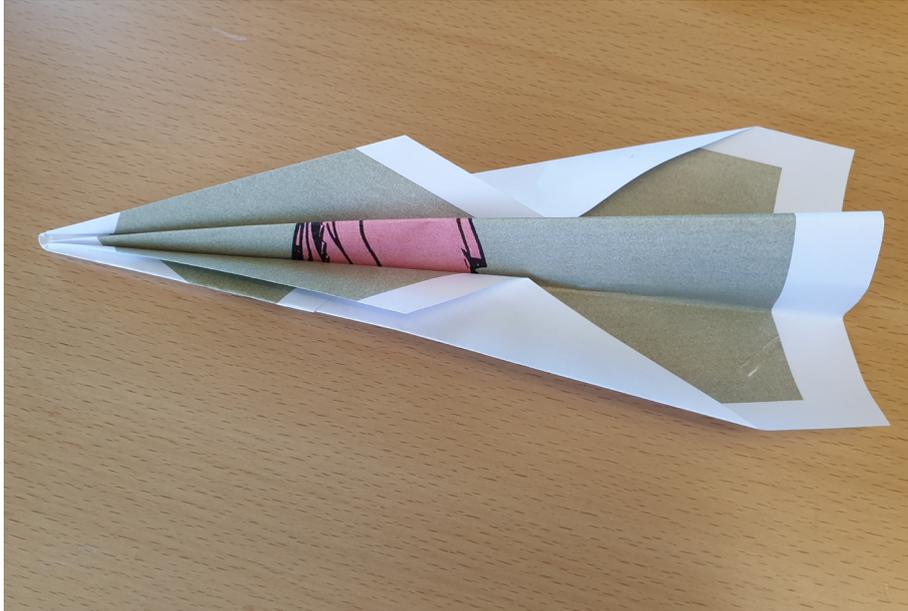
Zooming in on the map by concept group 6, small room © Child Studies Multiple workshop



Zooming in on the map by concept group 6, small room © Child Studies Multiple workshop



Mind map concept group 3, turn 1 © Child Studies Multiple workshop



The invisible child image folded into a paper plane, addition to the mind map © Child Studies Multiple workshop



Mind map, concept group 5, turn 2 © Child Studies Multiple workshop



All mind maps unrolled on the floor at the end of the workshop © Child Studies Multiple workshop

## Fictionary

### WORKSHOP II: PLAYING WITH WORDS AND CONCEPTS PART #1 FICTIONARY, 45 min INSTRUCTIONS (first-time groups)

- o This is a merge between an old parlour game and a linguistic game invented by the Italian children's author Gianni Rodari that we called Fictionary. This is because by the end of the workshop we will compile a collective 'dictionary' – or 'fictionary' – of concepts. The idea is to take the playful twist of this workshop even further – and to test the limits of both thinking and the concepts that we have been working with during the past two days.
- o At the station you will find:
  - a list of concepts – different for each group;
  - a 'linguistic toolbox' – same for all groups;
  - a laptop;
  - a roll of paper and colour pens.
- o Have a look at both the list of concepts and the 'linguistic toolbox', a list of prefixes and suffixes. Build up new concepts by combining contents of both lists! Add other linguistic tools and tricks if you want. What do the new concepts mean, could mean and don't mean?
- o You will get all the materials that the previous group have produced – their definitions and drafts. You can fill in on what they have done. You can also start afresh. And you can also do both.
- o Type in or write 'dictionary definitions' of at least 3 concepts by the end of the workshop.
- o Do not forget to note the collective authorship of the manuscripts since we will be using them for a future publication.

*Instructions, first-time groups*

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# Culture Unbound

Journal of Current Cultural Research

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## WORKSHOP II: PLAYING WITH WORDS AND CONCEPTS

PART #2 FICTIONARY, 45 min

### INSTRUCTIONS (second-time groups)

o This is a merge between an old parlour game and a linguistic game invented by the Italian children's author Gianni Rodari that we called Fictionary. This is because by the end of the workshop we will compile a collective 'dictionary' – or 'fictionary' – of concepts. The idea is to take the playful twist of this workshop even further – and to test the limits of both thinking and the concepts that we have been working with during the past two days.

o At the station you will find:

- a list of concepts – different for each group;
- a 'linguistic toolbox' – same for all groups;
- a laptop;
- a roll of paper and colour pens.

o Have a look at both the list of concepts and the 'linguistic toolbox', a list of prefixes and suffixes. Build up new concepts by combining contents of both lists! Add other linguistic tools and tricks if you want. What do the new concepts mean, could mean and don't mean?

o You will get all the materials that the previous group have produced – their definitions and drafts. You can fill in on what they have done. You can also start afresh. And you can also do both.

o Type in or write 'dictionary definitions' of at least 3 concepts by the end of the workshop.

o Do not forget to note the collective authorship of the manuscripts since we will be using them for a future publication.

*Instructions, second-time groups*

### Workshop II: Playing with words and concepts

#### Linguistic toolbox

Prefixes	Noun suffixes	Adjective suffixes	Verb suffixes
anti-	-age	-able/-ible	-ate
auto-	-al	-al	-en
de-	-ance/-ence	-en	-ify
dis-	-dom	-ese	-ise/ize
down-	-ee	-ful	
extra-	-er/-or	-i	
hyper-	-hood	-ic	
il-, im-, in-, ir	-ism	-ish	
inter-	-ist	-ive	
mega-	-ity/-ty	-ian	
mid-	-ment	-less	
mis-	-ness	-ly	
non-	-ry	-ous	
over-	-ship	-y	
out-	-sion/-tion/-xion		
post-			
pre-			
pro-			
re-			
semi-			
sub-			
super-			
tele-			
trans-			
ultra-			
un-			
under-			
up-			

*The linguistic toolbox of prefixes and suffixes*



## **Fictionary in alphabetical order:**

### **A**

**Ageage** –

**Agency** – as embodied temporalities and spatialities. See also [Transtangling](#) ↓.

Amplifying agency –

### **C**

**Child-ance** – trajectories of becoming

**(Super-)Child-ization** – the rendering of something into a child. The attribution of childness, child status across a range of sights and discourses. Might take different forms, relationships. And this is how it is different from infantilization. Neither desirable nor undesirable – who does this. Includes exclusion by definition. Children excluded from childness? Children includes other forms of childness – a way of disrupting normative notions of the category. Childization studies – speaks to a process. Figuration is not about the child, specific to child but childization is.

**Childscape(s)** –

**Child-ship(s)** – outcome of childization. Childship studies. –ship is movement, never-ending movement, not setting a boundary of what childship is or is not. Fluidity. Uncertainty. Allows you to sit with the uncertainty – the invisible child. Allows to see and play on different shapes of childhood – childship & childshape.

**Controllify** – our grasping at the world through language and putting intelligence only in the human

**Critiqueship** – the craft of selecting between different points of which critique might start or end.

### **E**

**Entangled nonsensing** – collaborating in non-sensing and creating new ideas (negative capability). [...] Also a kind of non-sensing – sensing-other, sensing-as-other, de-sensing, not sensing (at all)

[Entanglian 1](#) ↓ – a consciousness. A sense of. Partial knowing enactment of entanglement.

[Entanglian 2](#) ↓ – an entanglement that partly knows it is one.

Ethics as inter-method – method that is split against itself; inter as the enter-ing in-between. For example: ethics and method; method and method; possibly: différence

**Ethic as method** – ethic should not be added – it is always already there. Adult perspective on their own childhood: give voice and agency to their own ‘child’? When are children capable of saying they ‘want’ or desire to participate in research? Children in research who want to have name included: were denied. Who am I (researcher) to make that decision?

## H

**Herenowchild** – being in a setting. But is this a command. So does it make any difference to talk about the... see [Nowherechild](#) ↓

**Human Disempowering** –

**Hybrid material/non-material agency** – relational networks of intentional, non-intentional, thick, thin,

**Hyper-hybridity**: excess of itself (hybridity); lacking stability; post-assemblage; perfect-paradox. For example: invisibility of the child through dispersion.

## I

**I...n...f...r...a...s...l...o...w...n...e...s...s...i...f...y (say it slowly)** – thinking with plastics as they accumulate and percolate. Regressing to a more primordial rhythm. How we utter, articulate, perform words (in this case very slowly). What is the effect-affect of uttering in this way? The rhythm and cadence of words.

**Intra-agency** – object-orientated ontology. Trouble the distinction between living and non-living. Mountain ranges having agency and ‘being on the move’. Movement is associated with agency

### L

**Living Ethics in Action** – don't shun a responsive relationship. The map is not the territory – ethical guidelines are not the rules. Mutual enactment of ethics in relation with participants. Ethics as a living thing that constantly needs to be negotiated (like consent). Be attentive to interactions as they unfold. Ethics as principles – institutions impose on research vs. ethics of research practices is more relational – respond in context.

### M

**Mega-agency** – oppressive – how 'big theory' comes about. Mega-agency as 'more than human agency': it's already there. -Mega – agency of the tsunami versus the small wave. Would we behave differently if the ant was the size of an elephant (or vice-versa)? Is agency impact? It's a continuum.

Un-recognized agencies: agencies which impact us and impact the world constantly, but they remain unacknowledged because we are unaware of what they do e.g. bacteria in body, pollution.

**Mega-child(hood)** – child allows for multiple forms of identification. An excessive child(hood).

**Monstr-ance** –

**Monstro-city** –

### N

**Non-intentional agency** – spectrum/continuum from non-intentional to intentional agency.

**Non-sociology** – provoking, irritating, bypassing sociology.

**Nowherechild**  see also  [Herenowchild](#)  (to be used with discretion – either now-here or nowhere the term can be read either way of any way). As a paradox of the 'actual' child – who exists now, here, but is/are also fictional and non-existent.

### P

**Particulation** – the process of making this (see [Child-ization ↓](#)) particular. Partial, particles, toxins in the body. Provincialization at different scales. Politics of location in feminism studies.

**Post ‘human agency’** – not doing away with agency, but moving beyond the idea of agency as being exclusive to the human. Not a rejection of ‘human agency’ – taking parts of this theory without fully rejecting it.

**Post-punctualism** – OR de-punctualism – we need to trouble this since punctualism is another attempt to fix – the problem, the person, give certainly. Move beyond the grammatical subjectivisation and the upright eye. We live in the age of hyperpunctualism. Identifying moments of punctualisation that are so mundane you do not see them – job of a post-punctualist. Barthes’s punctum – both captures and disturbs/disrupts. See also [Un-closure ↓](#).

### S

**Slowhood** – an inhabitation of a lengthening temporality as privilege and/or burden.

### T

**Trans-agency** – ‘post’ agency: not doing away with agency but locating it.

**Transtangling** – the movings of and amongst heterogeneous coming-togethers. See also [Agency ↓](#).

### U

**Un-closure** – is a revealing and simultaneously a resistance to closure. Un-closure [is](#)  shifting the focus to an open-ended process of staying open and acknowledging the effects of disclosure.

### **Authors' bios in alphabetical order**

**Olga Anatoli Smith** is a PhD student at the Department of Thematic Studies – Child Studies at Linköping University, Sweden. She is pursuing her second PhD degree, focusing on very young children acquiring multiple languages. Olga's first PhD is in Applied Linguistics. Her areas of expertise are interactional linguistics, African Studies, and the Swahili language.

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**Claudia Castañeda** is an Independent North American Scholar whose interdisciplinary work addresses how the workings of adult privilege have

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**Nick Lee**, Associate Professor, University of Warwick, UK. Lee has published across the fields of Childhood Studies and Science and Technology Studies. His most recent book, *Childhood and Bio-Politics: Climate Change, Life Processes and Human Futures*, examines relationships of power, youth, and generation in the contexts of biotechnological innovation and climate change.

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## Open reviews

### Reviewer 1

**Sonja Arndt, University of Melbourne**

*Importance and relevance of the paper* (Excellent/Good/Average/Below Average/Poor)

Excellent - see my comments to the authors below.

*Originality and innovativeness* (Excellent/Good/Average/Below Average/Poor)

Excellent - see my comments to the authors below.

*Quality and soundness* (Excellent/Good/Average/Below Average/Poor)

Excellent

*Structure and argumentation* (Excellent/Good/Average/Below Average/Poor)

Excellent. The experimental style of this article works very well to capture the style of the workshop engagements that it sets out to further develop.

*Language and style* (Excellent/Good/Average/Below Average/Poor)

The style of this article includes questioning at some points by the authors of potential directions that the linguistic experience of this process could have taken, should the workshoping experience have been conducted in other languages. Deviating from the dominance of the English language - in my view - would be a further and important extension of the breaking down of boundaries that it aims/claims to do.

*Comments to the author*

This text excites and challenges. Opening up wholly new dimensions in its lively intermingling of researchers' engagements, it creates new spheres in which to play, grow and imagine new ways of seeing, encountering, researching and treating, not only children, but ourselves, each other and the world. In a deeply thoughtful way, the text deals with a matter that remains often inexplicable, or at least is not explained. That is, it explicates in fine detail the reasons for and processes of an undoing of dominant methods of workshoping, researching, and writing. Throughout, as stated on page 19, the engagements 'shared, twisted and turned' by the authors during their workshop build and rebuild multiple ways of knowing, being and doing conceptual comings together, movements away from and ultimately forming and re(-)forming a very specific – but utterly unspecific

– image of the child. Philosophically the text draws me back to such notions as those espoused by Mikhail Bakhtin amongst others, and introduced to the West by Julia Kristeva, holding that utterances in their many forms are always multiple. Utterances might then be oral, textual or otherwise, and, following this theorizing, always arise from all that has previously led up to, is currently affecting, and the confluences of thought, language and beings that continue to shape it and its interpretation. Illustrating the uncertainties raised by the disruptive and highly generative thought that emerged in this process, the authors play out the ethics, slowness, and reciprocities that are sometimes lacking in what is called collaborative writing. The authors do what is often espoused, as they ‘think and write through each other’ (p. 3), to create what has the potential to shape (or at least begin to give language to) entirely new conceptions of children and childhoods. In this opening up of potentialities and implications I, perhaps predictably, wanted them spelt out in more detail, but maybe they shouldn’t or can’t be spelt out? This perhaps is this text’s most striking achievement – as suggested in some of the comments: it provokes – even demands - a sitting with all of these uncertainties.

## Reviewer 2

**David Cardell, Stockholm University**

Pinboarding ... an “active”/explorative/non-blind review-contribution

‘Child Studies Multiple – Collaborative play for thinking through theories and methods’ (CSM) is about research collaboration and development, and important processes and practices of scholarship. The authors of the CSM text – participants in a workshop – recognize that play is hard work. A playful workshop and collaboration offer a possibility of challenging academic practice and ideals, the text suggests.

The request to review and be “active” in relation to CSM invites me to “stay with mess” and “un-closure”, and to add a layer to the main CSM text. I am not sure how playful I can be, and how much closure and final comment that is required. We will have to see...

CSM moves between the workshop as an important event and examples which cover wider structures and tendencies. The “document” offers a focus on concepts, theories, and methodologies. In comparison with standard articles in academic

journals, this contribution adds several different layers; integrating Word “balloons” and lists into the document. There is a manifestation of an “ongoing-ness of exploring theories and methods together as a research community via methods of drama, palimpsest, and fictionary.” Different components are described.

Turning reviews – and this specific review – into a part of journal publishing transforms the role of anonymous reviewers. Instead, there is a *visible reviewer-commentator* or contributor, offering reflection in a brief academic sequel (or prequel, depending on reading strategies). I become an involved researcher, who joins CSM in practices focusing on openness, transparency, different layers, collaborative efforts and thinking.

Some parts in the CSM document remains blank, including suggested fictionary concepts – such as “Ageage” and “Childscape(s)”. I am tempted to explore and contribute. The visible emptiness of selected concepts invites us – me/you/the authors – to further work. But even if this specific review is a kind of review-contribution there is the feeling that distance is required; I cannot really “enter” CSM, edit the manuscript and become one of the participants and authors; or maybe I can? I offer a modest attempt – *partially outside the document*.

Play and transparency are two key dimensions in my understanding of CSM. CSM highlights questions of authorship, voice, and collaborative dimensions. There is the “I”, a “we” and “never-ending conversation”; exemplified in several ways. If it is important with closure and final definition, CSM is set to disappoint. And this generates questions about what “peer-reviewers” including myself fail to comment on? Several matters, probably.

The complexity of CSM involves societal development, academic practice, studies of children and childhood, and ideals which guide individual and collective aspirations. There is also time: for a workshop, for events during a workshop, to reflect, to comment on writing. Can anyone fully comment on these related dimensions (in a few weeks, with other tasks at hand), and can I – as a non-participating commentator, reading and writing with no workshop experience? I believe there is the opportunity to cover some core elements.

CSM is open and transparent about ambitions and some limitations. Limitations involve time for the workshop (45-minute time limits, for specific workshops), as well as challenges to produce a text with more than 30 authors – and addition of “final layers of writing” from “the professional proofreader Liz Sourbut and by the peer-reviewers.” Thus, there are instructions and information about events

during the workshop. Also, we are presented with a word limits for contributors who comment on the main text (five comments, 250 words). The final layer turn into a matter of polishing/commenting/offering guidance. So, what you read now is one of the final layers.

(No limits are provided for this layer or peer-review, so this text proceeds indefinitely...)

Workshop time is defined and limited: there are segments, and the days for the entire workshop. These are comments about the relevance and challenges of specific events. We learn about a drama workshop. There is reflection and focus on failures and the vulnerability of researchers. There are comments about the “fun” of the “workshop” and themes of “play” and “games”. Slowness is highlighted, along with a need for time for thinking. And time when writing takes place. 45 minutes for a workshop, is that slow? Where are the locations of slowness?

*Play/playfulness/a playful twist work* as guiding concepts, being desirable and productive. Both for the workshop and CSM as a text/structure/document. The meaning and usefulness of play turns into a topic of discussion (see the “balloons” in the text). Play can be open and exclusive, involving rules and values; and there are dimensions of power and exclusion ... Stop playing, time is out!

CSM integrates play and worktime, as part of the workshop and the CSM document. As part of ambitions of transparency, we are offered images of sticky-notes and workshop environment. Images include workshop environment (buildings, rooms, etc.), instructions, writing tools, “MIND MAP” and handwritten concepts. Together with images of tools there is description of processes of writing, and development of CSM into a final text.

Here, organizational aesthetics – images of products and processes – does not include humans. We cannot see how and when researchers fail during a drama workshop, and where there is success and fun. We see no adults or actual children in the images from the workshop. Colorful elements and papers represent this academic event, and creative stages with developments of ideas and collaboration. CSM is persuasive in its orientation to transparency, with documents and descriptions of processes. The text is successful in highlighting possibilities of academic work, when we meet to discuss concepts, theories, methodologies. One prospect is to discuss the role of “workshops” and “play” in current organizations (literature about play and organizations). It might offer a further background to *playwork*, which is part of CSM:s “playful research work.”

In other fields of research, scholars develop notions such as “critical playshops” (see: Toombs, A. L., Ferri, G., Grimme, S., Gross, S., Stallings, M. D., Bardzell, J., & Bardzell, S. (2016). Making a critical playshop. *interactions*, 24(1), 34-37.). A focus on new and innovative ways to approach research through events and meetings is not unique to scholarship on children and childhood. I believe that CSM can contribute to topics including play, games, and work, the relations between child and adult, and how topics and different actors become part of interdisciplinary research and methodology.

- Reviewer Guidelines: “Originality and innovativeness” = excellent. OK, let’s continue to play.

There is an expectation there is a good fit or “excellent” match of the reviewer and the CSM contribution. I am an interdisciplinary scholar of childhood, so it makes some sense. According to the instructions, this brief text is a task which “investigates the peer review process itself” and is more “active”. Active probably means a longer text (with more detail, reflexive about what peer-review involves etc.), and a visible reviewer. A reviewer turns into someone who is “transparent” on particular terms: trying to offer insight, not posing stupid questions, offering some sort of coherent approach; not writing a book about a journal manuscript; trying to limit the text to what matters; respecting the idea of “active” involvement with some sort of investigation. Thus, there is production of text, and I become accountable? Hm, exciting. Ok.

One way to think further about publication of this text – a non-blinded peer-review – is to locate the “place” of this review-contribution. It is on the side of CSM, rather than “over” it, or trying to argue against what it describes. Is this what is meant by “the a-critical” where there is composition rather than critique, involving discovery of new connections? (see Blok & Jensen, 2020, Redistributing critique). The comments in this brief text, then, give direction in appreciating the contribution and suggest further possibilities. Thus, it resonates with what already is integrated into the CSM argument.

- “Structure and argumentation” = good, and unique?

By placing and making review-contributions visible next to the CSM main text there is an expansion of a *pinboard methodology*, discussed by John Law (2002: 197-98; Aircraft Stories) as a methodology that makes complexity in “a way that narrative does not”. We follow and click links and texts, navigating between CSM text, “balloons”, and review contributions. We are even invited to read in

non-linear ways, to appreciate CSM through different areas and layers.

What is especially intriguing is how to make sense of a text that include “buttons labeled CLICK HERE” and suggest “multiple ways of reading” in a “web-like” and “hypertextual” structure., One layer can understandably build on a previous and “original” one. And there are uncommented components, separate, as well as left-over sticky-notes.

Gathering and working together, playful and with serious intentions, is hard work. With CSM, we see that through *work as process and product*. The “document” is about making key dimensions of collaborative efforts visible and into points of discussion. Here, CSM is consonant with recent developments of Critical Childhood Studies (see Spyrou 2018 *Disclosing Childhoods*), emphasizing openness and disclosure. In CSM, this becomes visible through argument and form.

- “Importance and relevance of the paper” = yes, good, or excellent perhaps?

Reviewing a manuscript with several layers and contributors (some visible in MS Word “balloons”) is also hard work. I make notes. I use papers, and some “balloons”. There is an additional dimension here, where the everyday world comes to challenges and make visible a present mode of *academic playfulness*.

*I think about how my three-year-old son now recurrently invites me to games and play – demanding that I make unorthodox use of office supplies, or academic books. My tools, and the tools of CSM, offer him other possibilities and different layers. I want to write something, while he simultaneously turns books and sticky-notes into elements of play. One of the sticky-notes (including comments on research) turn into a train ticket, in our living room. He integrates tickets and me into a situation which mix work, play and media, for a different purpose. It is not about research. But the transformation of sticky-notes into tickets offers a focus for what CSM might be about.*

Considering CSM as a ticket: it is one which can generate an orientation towards exploration, openness, and collective work. We might share notes and ideas, thinking together about important and future matters. In this, there can be focus on opportunities and failures and the vulnerability of researchers. There will be space to explore mess and un-closure, including the role of *playful review-contributors* in efforts of adding something. Whether a review can transform CSM into something else is an open question. Perhaps other reviewers will have success in discussing the transformative potential of CSM, or they might transform the manuscript into

something I yet cannot imagine.

- Note to self: CSM can probably be important. “Quality and soundness” = good, or maybe excellent?

Sticking with the openness of CSM there are however current and future possibilities: inviting children to playwork research or “playshops”; elaborating further on slowness and academic pressures in research; the role of concepts and fiction in CSM, in relation to sociological fiction and stories. The fictionary exemplify innovation of concepts, highlighting also – through layers – *collective dimensions of pinboard methodology*.

I add, you add, we add – sticky-notes, “balloons”, new concepts. As we commit ourselves to fun and important tasks there is also a need to ask – following Oswell – where “I stand in relation to this text” and “what is contributed”. In my reading, there is the highlighted relevance of developing concepts – which I sympathize with, for thinking about children, childhood, research, and society in new ways.

I believe that CSM offers an intervention into research on children and childhood. Joining Spyrou (“balloon” comment), I recognize that “we might need to construct different narratives for different audiences, some more and some less messy.” Here there is some mess, and un-closure. There are blank concepts and openness. Based on Spyrou and Oswell, there is a question of when to apply pinboard methodology.

When should we as researchers add new/fun/exciting/provoking stuff: at strategic moments, e.g., during a workshop; or, repeatedly, as a new standard? For me there is at least potential beyond a single workshop in CSM. There is stuff to reflect further on. To think about and put to action. Will there be relevance of an extended fictionary, and when can we expect a workshop sequel?

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<sup>2</sup> The dictionary definition of 'palimpsest' that we used in the instructions for the workshop: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/palimpsest>  
palimpsest, The Chicago School of Media Theory  
<https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/palimpsest/>

<sup>3</sup> Link to the image, accessed 18/9-2019  
[https://66.media.tumblr.com/bd4ea84cfcc07ef0ef53646003447216/c8207aefec555edb-53/s128x128u\\_c1/f54d8e8d3d1d0869a005ba4f77744eea5fb2b1e0.jpg](https://66.media.tumblr.com/bd4ea84cfcc07ef0ef53646003447216/c8207aefec555edb-53/s128x128u_c1/f54d8e8d3d1d0869a005ba4f77744eea5fb2b1e0.jpg)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/88659/14-parlor-games-bring-back-holiday-season-plus-one-you-definitely-shouldnt>