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This article presents a longitudinal account and analysis of conducting collective ethnographic research based on the project 'Citizenship, Difference and Marginality in Schools: With Special Reference to Gender', an exploration of how gender's self-constructions, its construction by primary and secondary teachers and pupils, and its connection with – and contextualisation by – other social and cultural dimensions of difference. In the article we analyse our own activities as researchers, including our preparation for fieldwork, our experiences in the field, and collective forms of analysis. The article offers examples of our ways of working taken from our observation notes, field diaries and project meeting notes. We discuss our memories and trace our subsequent activities with fluctuating patterns of proximity and distance.

**Key words:**

ethnography · collectiv research · feminist methodology · secondary school · gender · difference

Contact address: Elina Lahelma, Department of Education, PO Box 9, FI-00014 University of Helsinki, Helsinki. E-mail: elina.lahelma@helsinki.fi

# Collective ethnography, joint experiences and individual pathways

TUULA GORDON, PIKKO HYNINEN, ELINA LAHELMA, TUIJA METSO, TARJA PALMU AND TARJA TOLONEN

Classic ethnographies have often been conducted by solo researchers who locate themselves in the field and endeavour to make sense how local cultures operate. Therefore we did not have many examples to pursue when we begun our collective ethnographic project of secondary schools. Our collaboration has a long history that facilitated our joint work. In the late 1980s Tuula, Pirkko and Elina started a national *Gender and Education research network* (since 1994 Education and Difference – EDI), and Tuija, Tarja and Tarja joined the network at early stages. In this group, coordinated by Tuula, we started to theorise gender as a social construction, and used the concept of the sex-gender system to connect school to society.

Our meetings took place in Villa Salin. This old villa is located by the sea, and surrounded by a park. Our collaborative ways of working were formed partly in the context enabled by such space, including shopping for food and preparing our meals, as well being able to stay the night in the Villa – hence we had more flexible timetables. Experiences in this space were constructed in a way that was more fluid than in seminar rooms

in the university. The collective carried out a *Physical School* project which drew our attention to school buildings and to the use and regulation of voice, space, movement and time (Gordon, Lahelma & Tolonen, 1995; Gordon & Lahelma, 1996).

In the mid-nineties the six of us, with the experience of working together in the network, started to conduct collective ethnographic research in secondary schools. In this article we provide a glimpse of the often invisible processes and practices of research through analysing our activities in the field and examining collaboration within the team, including joint discussions and ways of working together. We outline the starting points of the project, we discuss our planning for the fieldwork, being in the field, our ways of working, and we demonstrate the processes of collective analysis we have practiced. As data we use our own field notes, research diaries and records from our project meetings.

In present article we incite ourselves as «we», although each of us has her own perspective and own voice. «We» often presents itself in the research process side by side with the researcher as «me». However, because we all have our own individual, albeit complementary research foci, at times we also formulate our own diverse positions. Particularly Tuula and Elina combined ethnographic approach with macrolevel comparison and crosscultural analysis (Gordon & Lahelma, 2004; Beach, Gordon & Lahelma, 2003).

This work was carried out jointly with Janet Holland, who conducted similar research in London (Gordon, Holland & Lahelma, 2000b). The rest of us focussed on our own PhD studies as well as the joint ethnography. Pirkko Hynninen studies careers guidance, Tuija Metso (2004) relationships between schools and parents, Tarja Palmu (2003) mother tongue teaching and Tarja Tolonen (2001) youth and student cultures at

school. Sinikka Aapola and Jukka Lehtonen joined the project and shared the theoretical starting points but not the fieldwork; their theses (Aapola, 1999; Lehtonen, 2003) draw from separate data.

## Researching differences at school

In the official educational politics the starting point is a gender neutral «pupil» who is to become an abstract «citizen». However, at school «pupils» are girls and boys, and in society «citizens» are women and men. We have asked how gender is constructed and how it is manifested in the everyday life at school. We consider how gender is linked with other social and cultural dimensions of difference such as social class, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation. We see these dimensions of difference not only as discursive constructions, but also as material aspects of everyday life (c.f. Williams, 1976; Roman, 1993). Such material aspects both shape discourses and practices and are also shaped by them. The name of our project, *Citizenship, Difference and Marginality at School – with Special Reference to Gender*, encompasses the central concepts that have guided our planning of the research. We were interested in practices and meaning making of people at school, and also focused on time, space, movement, voice and embodiment.

Starting an ethnographic research requires a commitment to engage in a long term process and preparedness to be faced with surprises. We spent a long time in the field and utilised multiple methods of data collection. Our aim has been to conduct multifaceted analysis on cultural and social processes and on meanings that the participants assign to these. Researchers themselves are instruments of research in ethnographies. In a collective ethnography the commitment to collaboration with colleagues is solid, and therefore it is

necessary to develop ways in which experiences and data are shared and ways in which analyses are conducted together.

School ethnography differs from anthropological research, because the school is so familiar to all of us; if an anthropologist endeavours to make the strange familiar, the school ethnographer must be able to see the familiar with new eyes (Spindler & Spindler, 1982; Delamont & Atkinson, 1995). We trained ourselves to work in the field and aimed to recognise and to question our own taken for granted assumptions about school. We remembered our own schooling by adapting a method of memory work (Haug et al., 1987). We wrote small stories about agreed themes and then discussed these in a memory work group. In this way we became conscious of our own experiences and emotions that we had dealt with as school girls.

An ethnographer cannot observe everything that happens in a classroom. In order to focus our gaze as comprehensively as possible we adopted a layered response to the school: the official, informal and physical school (Gordon, Lahelma, Hynninen, Metsu, Palmu & Tolonen, 1999). The official school is defined in curricula and other formal documents that influence schooling. In the everyday life of the school the official is evident as teaching methods and materials, text books, as well as in the content of teaching and pedagogical interaction.

The official school also refers to school rules and formal hierarchies between teachers, other staff and students. The informal school refers to unofficial interaction during lessons, breaks and special occasions. Student cultures and unofficial hierarchies are part of the informal school as well. The physical school frames the practices and processes of the official and the informal school and refers to space, movement, voice, time and regulation of embodiment at school. These layers of the school can be distinguished

from each other analytically, although in the everyday life of the school they are intertwined and overlap each other.

We decided to conduct our research in two secondary schools. Through the process of mirroring the two schools with each other it is possible to construct a multifaceted picture about everyday life of the school as well as about the processes of differentiation. Despite our careful planning and preparation we were apprehensive about starting our ethnography, and many concerns crossed through our minds. We anticipated our entry into schools: how will we be received, what kinds of negotiations do we need to conduct with students and teachers, and what space do we find in the social orders of the school as adults, researchers and women?

### **The beauty and the beastliness of being in the field**

We started our ethnographic fieldwork during the first school day in August (see Lahelma & Gordon, 1997). In the beginning we spent two days a week in both schools. We first followed two seventh grade classes in each school and later included ninth grade classes. As well as attending different lessons and different classes, at times there were several researchers in the same classroom. This enabled us to observe different things: for example one researcher observed the teacher and the other the students, whilst sometimes the third one focussed on the classroom as a space, as well as on the embodiment of the students and the teacher.

We observed more than 900 lessons during one school year. We wrote notes during lessons, breaks and different school events and ceremonies. We observed in classrooms, corridors, schoolyards and staffrooms. We interviewed more than 160 students, 44 teachers, other school staff and 41 parents. We collected curriculum texts, teaching ma-

terials and other texts used during lessons and also texts written by students. Both students and teachers completed metaphor and association tasks and answered questionnaires. We participated in festivities, thematic days, discos, parents' evenings and staff meetings.

Due to the constant negotiations for entrance to lessons we spent much time in the staff room during breaks, and sometimes all the six of us met there. Meeting each other in the school helped us in the feeling of loneliness and sense of being an outsider. These instant meetings also enabled us to share practical information as well as our astonishment about incidents we had observed. Such discussions included initial reflections and interpretations about those events. In this sense the collective reflection and analysis started immediately.

In our early field diaries we often reflected our position in the schools, and these reflections were constantly discussed jointly. The students were interested in our notes and asked what we wrote about them. The teachers were interested in what we had observed in the classrooms. We had to work out what we could say about our observations without breaking anybody's trust:

The teachers became aware that we know the students better than they do. What can we tell about the students? How much openness can we expect from the teachers, whilst at the same time keeping our own mouths shut? Maybe we should frankly tell the teachers that we can give them absolutely no information [about the students]. (Field notes; EL, 16.9)

We all questioned the implications of our own research to the research schools, to the academic community and to ourselves:

I feel somewhat ambivalent. I think about the meaning that our work has to the schools. I have the feel-

ing that they are like our playgrounds, and I'm not sure if we even deserve to be welcomed. Maybe [...] it is worthwhile to regard us with suspicion. These schools are only examples of «a school» for us. And our analysis, what ever the content, is fundamentally critical. (Field notes; TG, 15.9)

We were happy to get to know teachers and students, little by little. We wanted to be accepted and at the same time we were afraid of causing some disturbance:

After the lunch break I go out and see that «Pirkko's girls» have found Pirkko. I go and buy some Sisu-pastils and chewing gum and offer them to Pirkko and girls who are sitting [in the seats outdoors]. When I carry on along the corridor, other students – Meri, Samuel and others – are chasing my pastils. Teachers too, at least Raila. I understood the idea: when you have sweets, you have friends and it is a good reason to make contact. I miss a dog again. If I had a dog, I would take it to the schools, and then everybody would want to pat it. What a dream (don't tell anybody). (Field notes; TT, 22.11.)

After two months the collective ethnography differentiated. Each of us started to focus on her own topic, and for some of us visits to school became less frequent. We all kept on visiting until the end of the spring term, however, and in the last school day we brought sweets to the students and strawberries and sparkling wine to the teachers. It was sad to leave «our» schools, «our» students and «our» teachers.

#### **From classrooms to meeting rooms**

In our project meeting notes we recorded theoretical, methodological and practical discussions and decisions. The first notes preceded our field work:

We discussed whether we need to start to record our meetings. The most useful form to

write notes was talked over a great deal. Keeping notes was regarded as crucial – especially because we were going to conduct collective ethnography, and it would be useful to collect documents about our discussions. (Notes of a meeting on 19th of April)

Project meetings have had different functions during different periods of the research process. In the very first meetings we outlined the project and commented on each other's plans. Before going to the field we prepared ourselves for the collective ethnography. Once we were in the field, the social life of the schools was absorbing, and we wanted to get together for joint reflections. Interpretations of encounters in the field were discussed. We also wrote notes about our efforts to distance ourselves from the field:

TG suggests that perhaps we should read our lesson notes and discuss them more systematically, because we so often discuss notes and the process of taking them. EL suggests that everyone would choose some of her notes to be shared (...) There is some talk about what is worth writing down. There are important contextual things to be recorded: for instance if one is tired, if there is too much happening in the classroom to write down, or if one just cannot write. The messing about with the process of marking down the seating orders in the classroom and so forth would be good to document. (Notes of a meeting on 16th of September)

After the field work we had exceptionally rich data that was to be organized so that it could be easily used. The system we created proved to be functional, thanks to the planning ahead and the help of the research assistants. It was easy to find, for instance, all the lessons of a certain class, certain subject, or ones taught by a certain teacher. As well as taking notes we recorded «instant» com-

ments on structured forms. From these comments we were then able to trace lessons that had included rich data for example on negotiations about gender, constructions of ethnicity, struggle over space, or use of innovative pedagogy.

Analysis of a large corpus consisting of different types of data is challenging. Some of us utilized NUDIST software. Generally we have been reading the data all over again, both horizontally and vertically, in order to compose summaries, to find surprises and to identify recurrences. We have used thematic reading and in the process of analysis the preliminary themes were extended with new ones that emerged from the fieldwork. We also conducted analytical reading through using our central concepts. Such a multilayered way of reading the data produces an approach that is constantly in process. We also wanted to grasp the silences and gaps in our data, as well as to pay attention to oversights and misunderstandings; focusing on these has forced us to reconsider our concepts.

Our collective discussions about our activities in the field helped us to develop reflexive interpretations. We did not merely endeavour to «see from a distance» – we were, rather, concerned to trace related, parallel stories, gazed whilst we were alongside the participants and shared the experience. Discussing different interpretations helped us to see the narrative character of ethnographic writing: everyone constructs his or her own story (e.g. Clifford, 1986). A collective ethnography is composed of various stories. The subject «we» was working as a resource and a reflexive surface for each of us in her own interpretations.

Amanda Coffey (1999) has suggested that the feelings of ethnographers are often left out from the stories, even if the field work might have had a very deep impact on the «workers» themselves. In our project meetings we found it equally important to share our feelings as it

was to discuss the research. We wrote diaries to be shared with each other which meant that the collective «we» acted as a strong internalised reader. Doing research on the physical school made us sensitive to different discussions and practices with regard to corporeality and space. For us space has been important as a meeting place, as an object of study and as a focus of analysis.

Our project meetings took place in enjoyable places such as homes, gardens and restaurants. We have used what we called «fun methodology»; while working seriously, we have enjoyed each others' company, laughed and been cheerful, not to mention having good food and drink:

The first meeting as an official research group. The first meeting after summer holidays with the whole group. The office of Tuula and Tarja T. is opened up as a project room. We decorate the room with serpentes. We receive two beautiful sunflowers. And of course, POKS [our pseudonym for sparkling wine]. It opened up with festive noise. (Notes of a meeting on 10th of August; TT/TG...?)

The notes below demonstrate ways in which issues could crystallise when discussed jointly. This then leads to a decision to embark on further exploration of such a crystallisation:

First we talked briefly about interviews. Then we started with Tuula's paper (...) The main point is: space seems self evident but it is central. Elina was surprised to realise how strongly space comes through. Tarja T. talked about timetables as a metaphor of space, and space of a hospital patient and a student, atmosphere as space, sensation of air, closed doors, locked doors (...) Tarja referred to staff room as a space which inspired Tarja T. to name the staff room as an intermediate space to a researcher. We decided that everyone would make notes on «a researcher in a staff room» by 19th of April. (Notes of a meeting on 21th of March; TT/TG...?)

Working together also provokes differences of opinion. We wanted to follow democratic principles, and sometimes reaching a consensus took time. In the Academia «we» was dispersed into different positions. Tuula was responsible for funding to the Academy of Finland, Pirkko, Tuija, Tarja and Tarja wrote their theses under the guidance of Tuula and Elina, and Tuula and Elina wrote a book with Janet Holland. Collective work collides with university's demand of individual performance, especially because the doctoral theses were supposed to be individual monographs.

Some research groups have had difficulties including jealous guarding of one's own ideas, problems related to personal attachments or differences in research orientations. None of these problems impinged on our collaboration substantially. We had become used to working together already during Villa Salin's times. We also shared general ideological perspectives on society and research. The third reason was emotional commitment that was constructed through the hard but pleasurable work that we regarded as personally important (cf. Coffey, 1999). Collaboration is so valuable that occasional annoyances can be swallowed or talked over face to face. The fourth reason was that we had such rich data with so many grains of gold that there was no need to be jealous about ideas.

Sharing the data turned out to be problematic, though, and it was on the agenda in several meetings. Principles of using the joint data and the rules about showing it to outsiders were gradually formed. We had some difficulties in scheduling our collaboration; it was not always easy to combine personal life and duties with the requirements of doing ethnographic research and engaging in joint work as well. The collective «us» was dispersed into different individual lives as well.

## Frills and thrills of joint analysis

In our analysis we combined several approaches. We are sociologists and educationists conducting research on schools, youth cultures, families and politics of education and curriculum. In our theoretical, methodological and thematic EDI-seminars we have travelled in the same fields, sharing many interests mediated through feminist perspectives. Theoretically we draw from social constructionist, poststructuralist, textual and material perspectives and cultural studies, each of us combining these in our own ways.

Through analytical discussions in our project meetings, the multi-layered every day life of the schools started to unveil to us as a rich chain of both predictable and unexpected events. Each of us reflected on these discussions in her interpretations. We now fork the frills of our analytical work by using examples in which brainstorm-like discussions and collective considerations have evoked important ideas. We discuss, first, the process through which the new students are integrated and examine how they join in the every day life of the school and, secondly, we analyse discussion on students' resistance. Through these examples we demonstrate how our understanding of gender has changed.

One of the foci of our joint interest was how girls and boys, coming to the new school, learn and are taught the routines of the school. Therefore we followed how students in the seventh grade became immersed in the school during the first few weeks. Many practices and rules that are later regarded as self evident and difficult to see are formulated during these first weeks (eg. Ball, 1984; Delamont & Galton, 1986; Salo, 2003). We introduced the concept of a *professional pupil* (Lahelma & Gordon, 1997; Gordon et al., 1999) and in the initial phase of our ethnography we observed how the

skills that are needed for pupil professionalism emerged.

During the first two weeks the students (and the researchers, although not equally competently) learned the order-that-is-to-be (Davies, 1983) of the school. Teachers used much time and energy teaching the students to follow the time-space-paths. They were more involved with control in relation to keeping classroom order rather than pedagogy and taking care of informal relations. Time and embodiment were strongly involved in these processes. Students were expected to learn to take for granted that they are supposed to be in a certain space at a certain time. Gradually the classrooms were occupied by professional pupils without caps and coats, chewing gums thrown outside into the dust bins, equipped with the text books, exercise books and pencil cases. But students started negotiating the orders of the official school as well.

They also built mutual informal relationships by searching for closeness to some of their class mates and keeping a distance to others, thus constructing both difference and communality (Gordon et al., 1999.). In the beginning the students did not seem to pay much attention to us. In order to find the space and the place of their own, it was essential for them to make contacts with other students. After this they started to discuss with us, asking who we are and what we are doing. Then, little by little, we also became a part of the order of our research classes.

Both in the beginning of the school year, as well as later, students are both subjects of teachers' control and active participants. In educational research their agency has often been analysed through the concept of resistance. Resistance has been connected especially to working class boys who use sexist and racist language, like Paul Willis' (1979) «lads».

Inspired by Willis, feminist researchers have analysed girls' resistance (e.g. Anyon, 1983). Our experience and data from the every day life of schools provided us possibilities for more nuanced interpretations (see also Öhrn, 1998; Lahelma & Öhrn, 2003). The ethnographic method, comparing observations with other data, enabled us to connect observed patterns with their background. In the every day life of the school we were able to trace multiple practices such as negotiation, testing, side stepping, irony, dramatizing and carnevalizing, which traversed between resistance and conformism. Joining these under the (often romanticized) concept of resistance blurs the manifoldness, layered-ness and polyphonic-ness in the school (Gordon, Holland, Lahelma, & Tolonen, 2005).

Students' practices vary, and genders are not always positioned dichotomously. We still see gender as a social and cultural construction, but intersecting with other dimensions of difference (c.f. Skeggs, 2004; Arnesen, 2002). Considering spatiality, temporality and embodiment in the analysis has given more shades to the concept of gender, and we have tried to grasp its materiality. In the beginning we found Nancy Lesko's (1988) concept *curriculum of the body* useful, but we have elaborated it by including the pedagogic dimension. Time, movement, space and voice intertwine with gender depending on the situation: gender is always in motion. Also emotions are engaged in the dynamics; therefore gender becomes manifold.

For example, when we analysed voice, we problematized understandings of the pitiful passivity of the silent girls in the schools, and also turned our gaze to silent boys, who often get even less attention than do silent girls. Being silent can be a problem, but it can also be a resource including various competences and ways to act (Gordon et al., 2005; Tolonen, 2001). The analysis of Valerie Hey (1997) on

girls' relations, including practices of exclusion within them, has helped us to analyse our own data, in which girls, according to our observations, help and support each other. On the other hand, in the interviews girls emphasize their mutual problems and the settlements involved (Gordon, Holland & Lahelma, 2000a).

Besides the cultural and social processes and meanings, the psychic dimension is important in the construction of gender as well (Walkerline, 1990; Walkerline, Lucey & Melody, 2001). When analysing our data we have traced situations in which gender provides students with safety when they are building their social orders, as well as situations in which individualised rather than gendered discourses are used. We have endeavoured to trace the joys and sorrows of the school (Kenway & Blackmore, 1996), and have analysed pleasure in theoretical, empirical and political terms.

Both girls' commitments to femininities and boys' commitments to masculinities are often heavily loaded. Processes of constructing, confirming and challenging gender take place in practices that are interconnected in many ways. Meanings of sexuality and gender intertwine in the context of the semi-public character of school space. Such meanings are not always stable. In the current discussions on gender, moral panic about the feminisation of schools and concerns about problems of boys tend to encompass rough generalisations that oversimplify complex processes at school (c.f. Francis, 2000; Weaver-Hightower, 2003).

## Project policies

Feminist ethnographic research requires constant ethical reflection (Skeggs, 2001). We were bodily present at schools and could not avoid having an impact in the daily routines of the communities. The students seemed not to have been too disturbed by

our presence, and some of them said they enjoyed it (Gordon & Lahelma, 2003). Some young people made new adult friends. Our interviews with them might have elicited issues that they were not conscious of before. Especially using the students' unique experiences was problematic, though.

Although we were careful about anonymity of the participants, we could not be sure if they would be hurt when reading our texts. We informed our participants about our results as soon as we could. Later we have given articles to students we have met whilst conducting a longitudinal study on their transitions as well as a book that we wrote especially for «our» teachers and students (Lahelma & Gordon, 2003).

Our relationship with the teachers was sometimes complicated. Most of them were kind to us and in the interviews said that our presence was positive. But we often felt that we were an extra burden to the busy teachers. Our approach was critical towards the school as a system, and this was not easy to explain to the teachers who might have felt that we were criticising them personally. Sometimes some teachers asked us for advice and wanted to hear how certain students had behaved in other teachers' classes. We could not fulfill all those hopes, and that understandably caused disappointments and hesitations.

We had other ethical dilemmas as well. What should we do in situations where teachers or students were rude or unfair to each other? How should we react when a teacher humiliated a student or when students harassed each other or tormented a substitute teacher? There was not much time for reflect, and interfering in situations rose from the basis of «adult responsibility» to take action (see e.g. Lappalainen, 2002; Gordon & Lahelma, 2003).

A critical ethnographer aims to look at the familiar with a stranger's eyes in order to question truisms (Delamont & Atkinson,

1995; Spindler, 1982). One of our ways of doing this was through a cross-cultural approach. Educational institutions have surprising similarities over systems and states, and that makes the differences interesting. In our memories from our own school times the familiar time-space paths were self evidently recognised (cf. Kosonen, 1998). Sitting at the desks as adults helped us to understand why so many students have compared the school to a torture chamber or a prison.

We discussed these experiences when we realised that some metaphors collected from schools in England referred to home or youth clubs. We also learned that the students in London schools had more space and time for informal interaction during their school days. But then again, the importance of defending the socially just traits of Finnish comprehensive school was stressed when Elina and Tuula conducted comparative studies on Finnish and English curriculum materials or compared observations on differentiation of schools in London and in the San Francisco Bay area (Gordon, Holland & Lahelma, 2000b).

Our aim has been to cross over disciplines. We have participated in the everyday life of schools with our bodies and souls. We have been ready to change our prior plans and have adjusted our results on the basis of our ethnographic experiences. We have listened to different stories from our data. We have stretched the boundaries of analysis, but have done it humbly, knowing that we can convey only a tiny part of the insights that have been within our reach (cf. Rhedding-Jones, 1996). The neo-liberal trends in management in the university context require personal accountability. Joint reflections do take time, and today it might not be possible to collect such rich data and to spend as much time doing collective analysis.

Villa Salin, where the project was initiated, was originally open just for women. In

the traditionally masculine scientific community it was important for us to have a space and place of our own, but this does not preclude collaboration with male colleagues. A space of our own, even in the margins, is a resource. Even though we talk about fun methodology, doing research has mainly been hard work, and difficult to combine with our other obligations. We have wanted to talk about collaborative celebration because such issues are seldom talked about (Coffey, 1999). More typically the Academia celebrates individual merits and victories gained through processes such as struggling with writing and defending dissertations. We celebrated insightful discussions and small pleasures of everyday life.

## Our paths after the project

The writing and rewriting of this article now, in 2005, indicates that we are all still interlinked as colleagues as well as friends. Each of us has pursued different directions, but there are also interconnecting aspects. We have all continued the themes of the project and have introduced new elements as well. In current projects some of us have continued to work with the young people we met at school. Several new interlinked projects have started, with the support of the Academy of Finland and the University of Helsinki.

We ourselves participate in these projects in various combinations, and many new colleagues are conducting their PhD studies in these contexts. We all still work in the *Education and Difference* group which continues its collective collaboration that focuses on concepts, content and methods, but also seeks to address ways in which we work – how we read, how we think, how we talk and how we write. We have been to many conferences together, in some combination or another. For many of us, cooperation in the

Nordic context within the *EtnoPed* network (1999–2003) has been most fruitful (see also Beach, Gordon & Lahelma, 2003), as well as the *European Network for Educational Ethnography*.

Collective commitment and continued interaction among us has carried us through many tensions. Intensive togetherness provided concrete content to the idea of a scientific community, and challenged the idea of individual performance. Learning to work and think collaboratively has also been a resource for pedagogical practice. We are still very important to each other, even though we have other networks of collaboration elsewhere too. In the context of our busy lives in the academia (and in Tuija's case outside the university) our encounters in networks that have formed round our project provide a heavy mix of relaxation, combined with constant stimulation of the mind. Even if the collective «we» is not an immediate presence in our current research, it is there by proxy, at least in the learned habit of doing research collectively and sharing times of joy and sadness.

## Note

The present article draws largely from our earlier article published in Finnish in *Naistutkimus* (Gordon, Hynninen, Lahelma, Metso, Palmu & Tolonen, 2000). The names of the authors are in alphabetical order.

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