



NTNU – Trondheim
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

Norwegian Centre for Child Research (NOSEB)

Assessment guidelines for BARN3202

Methodological Perspectives on Child and Childhood Research

(7.5 cr) – Spring 2015

- 1. Explain why ethnography can be beneficial as a research method when doing research with children. By referring to literature on the reading list, discuss different perceptions of the researcher's role.**

In this task the student should be able to pinpoint ethnography as one of the most important research methods within Childhood Studies and explain why it is beneficial, for instance by referring to Punch (2002), Nilsen (2005) and Abebe (2009). Examples can be;

- building rapport,*
- face-to-face to explore social dynamics,*
- gain a greater understanding of the participants' views and understanding,*
- facilitates direct participation in the research process,*
- enables 'thick descriptions',*
- researcher fits in participants' plans and activities, not the other way around*

However, this list is not exhaustive. Examples which should be provided when discussing the researcher's role is 'Atypical adult', 'Least adult role', and 'Friendly role' (all cited in Abebe, 2009) in addition to Solberg's (1996) point on how researchers' roles are negotiated in different contexts. It is also possible to draw on Clark's (2005) perception of the researcher as an 'architect', as a 'creator of spaces and opportunities'. Additional examples and points from other texts on the reading list, and/or personal reflections on the matter are highly valued contributions. It should also be noted that students might answer the task in excellent ways beyond the guidelines referred to here.

A clear and distinct language is positive, however, it should be noted that most students do not have English as their first language.

2. Discuss and exemplify how our perceptions of children influence our methodological choices by using the texts of Solberg (1996), Punch (2002) and Clark (2005) as a starting point.

In this task the student should describe the views of the three listed researchers, and demonstrate how their views influence the choices of which methods to use. Solberg (1996) argues for an 'ignorance of age', focusing more on doing than being, and emphasizes differences in biological age and negotiated/contextualized age. She asserts that one should also adapt to the field and its participants, not only when doing research with children, and uses participant observation, interviews and questionnaires. Punch (2002) emphasizes the danger of bracketing all children together as a group as opposed to adults, overlooking the diversity. She also shows how perceiving children either as similar or different from adults impact the choice of methods (ethnography, task-based methods, etc.). Important points to mention are critical reflections around the concept of 'child-friendly' methods, and how choice of methods is also related to cultural environment and physical setting. Clark's (2005) Mosaic Approach is inspired by the notion of the competent child and of the pedagogy of listening, and it is based on the idea that the researcher should help the children express themselves, in particular facilitating for non-written and non-oral communication. Methods employed in the Mosaic Approach is multiple, participatory, reflexive, and adaptable, focusing on multiple and visible listening.

Example of points of discussion can be whether children are perceived as competent or not; whether children are seen as similar or different to adults; and discussions on views on flexibility and adaptability. However, this list is not exhaustive. Linking the line of argument with other texts on the reading lists and/or personal reflections on the matter are highly valued contributions.

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