

Johansen, Stine Liv: Children's digital media practices – new challenges, new approaches

Assistant Professor, Ph.D., University of Aarhus

stineliv@gmail.com

Media form the basis of our interactions, and mediatization must be seen as a prerequisite for children's play and everyday practices today (Hepp 2011, Hjarvard 2013). Through their networked media practices, children form and perform their identities, related to specific communities of practice as social practices of interpretive reproduction (Corsaro, 2005). Children's everyday practices combine learning, playing, communicating, and identity-building, mutually intertwined and interdependent (Johansen, 2014).

Media hold specific technological and semiotic affordances that can be seen as having a kind of 'molding force' (Hepp 2011) on the practices with, through and in which different people perform (Couldry 2012). Digital media, such as tablets and smart phones, function as a toy, as well as a portable tool for communication, playing, learning, reading, information seeking, and storage.

These technologies have rapidly become common in day care, schools, and families and challenge our understanding of socio-cultural categories such as education, play, and friendship, while the wide range of possible uses and practices related to these technologies challenge our notion of the term 'media'.

Through an analysis of empirical examples of children's everyday uses of digital media, this paper will discuss analytical and theoretical approaches towards a more nuanced view on digital media in children's culture. The paper will draw on a qualitative, empirical study of iPads as a tool for play, which has been carried out in a Danish municipality where all children at public schools were given iPads in 2012. The study has focused on play practices and identified potentials and challenges, pointing to the aesthetic bricolage of iPad play while challenging the notion of digital natives. Fieldwork has been carried out in an after school club and in informal settings such as a football club and in children's private homes.

References

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