



Mobile diary method with children: the advantages and challenges with audio-visual methods

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Research project:
Daily life in transitions, children in multiple family forms (DALFA)
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Background

- the last few decades have witnessed profound changes in family forms
- these processes are connected with e.g. growing numbers of parental divorces and separations and different kind of family compositions
- contemporary families are facing a growing amount of unforeseen transitions and greater diversity and complexity in the life paths of family members
- the existence of a connection between family form and children's daily emotions was one of the our main outcomes of our previous research project *Children's emotional security in multiple family relations (EMSE)*, which we conducted in 2010–2013



Emotions and transitions

- the project focus is on pre-school and first-grade children aged 6–7
- whether a child experiences positive or negative emotions in daily life is not insignificant
- example of divorce and children*: the outcomes among children are heterogeneous. Some children might respond strongly to the transitions accompanying divorce, while others might remain unaffected. (Amato, 2000, 1269–1279; Amato, 2010, 661–662; see also Bernardi et al., 2013; Giddens, 1991, 209–231.)
- there are no reasons for assuming that the consequences of parental divorce and separation are only negative: consequences are **ambivalent** and **multidimensional**



Daily life and transitions

- focusing on both daily and long-running transitions in children's lives
- daily: a child coming to day care in the morning
- institutional: a child moving from pre-school to first grade in primary school
- life-path: a child having moved to another city
- in previous studies it has been acknowledged that we should deepen our understanding of the everyday practices in which families are engaged, such as moral concerns, emotions, interaction, daily relationships, coordinates of time and space, routines and rules (Daly 2003, 771–781, Morgan 1999, 15–22).



Methods

- recently, **diary methods** have been a focus of intensive development
- different forms of electronic diaries have replaced or at least complemented traditional paper-and-pencil diaries
- Family Research Centre, University of Jyväskylä** has contributed to this development work by creating a new tool, the mobile diary, for the study of everyday life (e.g. Rönkä et al., 2010 & 2014; Malinen et al., 2013; Rönkä et al. 2016; Lämsä et al. 2013).
- in our current project DALFA the special emphasis is on inventing methods to capture the everyday activities, daily emotions and social relationships of children living in different family forms with an innovative internet based method using **voice and visual material**
- we combine various forms of data – electronic, visual, textual and verbal – within a multidisciplinary mixed methods approach (see Mason 2006; Creswell & Plano Clarke 2007)



- in this method, data are collected with repeated measurements during a limited time period, for example a week.
- reports are made in close proximity to actual events in the participants' natural environments
- diary method creates a picture of daily phenomena by providing contemporaneous and detailed information about settings, events and reactions (Henker et al., 2002)



Data	Participants	Form of data	Themes	Data analysis, methods
Children's mobile diary	215 children Study I pre-school age (6 yrs) Study II first-grade age (7 yrs)	215 children x 18 questions /day x 5 days	Transitions Everyday activities Daily emotions Social relationships	Content analysis Structural equation modeling Multilevel modeling
Pre-information form filled by a parent	160/215 children	Web based questionnaire	Child's family relations Transitions and changes in life Incl. Early Childhood Version of the Survey of Children's Individual Differences (by Roy P. Martin)	analysis together with diary data
Pre-school teachers' and primary school first-grade teachers' focus group interviews	Study III 3 pre-school teacher groups 3 primary school teacher groups (5-8 participants/ group) Study V partner countries (Spain, Switzerland, Japan and Australia) 4 elementary school teacher groups	3 + 3 + 4 focus group interviews conducted by the researchers, videotaped and transcribed	Attitudes, experiences and future prospects on children's transitions from pre-school to primary school, family relations and transitions	Frame analysis Thematic analysis

- objectives are to investigate:
- what kind of activities, daily emotions and social relationships are present in children's everyday lives
- how these are related to different family forms
- adult's perceptions on children's characteristics, such as temperament and personality
- interest in the most important transitions during the child's life, including both **foreseen institutional changes** (from pre-school to primary school) and **unforeseen changes** (e.g. divorce), and also the **daily transitions** (e.g. from home to day care)



Four research questions

- ❏ **Q1.** Is there a link between family form and everyday activities, daily emotions, social relationships and daily transitions?
- ❏ **Q2.** In what ways are children's everyday activities, daily emotions, social relationships and daily transitions related to the transition from pre-school to primary school?
- ❏ **Q3.** What factors promote and what impede children's transition from pre-school to primary school from the perspective of educational professionals? Are there differences between different countries?
- ❏ **Q4.** How might existing innovative methodological approaches be further developed, and new ones devised, for the purposes of studying children's everyday activities, daily emotions, social relationships and transitions?



DATA

- WEB BASED MOBILE DIARY FOR CHILDREN

- Kisse The Cat

http://ekoutsu2.ntg.fi/member_select/223/65275

- collected 9-13 May, 2016

- 21 day care centers/pre-school groups in different parts of Finland

- 215 children**

- answering once a day, five days a week

- answering during the day in a day care/pre-school group (directed by the pre-school teacher)



Hypotheses?

- **H1.** Family form is connected to everyday activities, daily emotions, social relationships and daily transitions.
- **H2.** Problems in daily transitions, negative emotions and weak social network are connected to problems in the transition from pre-school to primary school.
- **H3.** Comprehensive knowledge of children's family life on the part of pre-school and elementary school teachers facilitates the transition from pre-school to primary school.



ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES WITH DIARY METHOD

- **Capturing diversity of family forms**
- there is a widespread notion that the existing family research in Europe and research on the well-being of families and family members has largely ignored the growing number of family transitions and the increasing diversity and dynamics in family forms, although some European research exists, for example, on divorce and non-conventional ways of doing the family (e.g. Jokinen & Kuronen, 2011, 87–89)
- However, based on our preliminary results (pre-information forms filled by parents) the children involved are mainly from relatively highly educated, fulltime working families



Children's point of view

- in this project children are seen as individual actors with the ability to make sense of their environment, initiate change, and make choices (see Kuczynski, 2003)
- based on our preliminary results (feedback forms filled by pre-school teachers) children found the diary fun to use and they liked to answer the questions
- the pre-school teachers' pointed out that using this kind of method offers new perspectives on children's daily activities, emotions and wellbeing
- pre-school teachers also found out that this method could be practically and pedagogically beneficial



Publications

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