

Children's learning through observation in the context of work and play

Barbara Turk Niskač

University of Ljubljana, barbara.turkniskac@ff.uni-lj.si

Abstract

This paper analyses ethnographic studies of childhood in Slovenian agrarian society in the first half of the 20th century. It shows how children were organically integrated into daily life, work and interactions, allowing them to directly learn through observation and gradual participation. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork from 2011/2012 in southern Slovenia, it presents a case study of children's learning through observation and participation in domestic chores and thus questions the dichotomy between "traditional" societies in which children could learn through observation and the "information society" in which it is said that childhoods are becoming institutionalised, and more formal learning strategies are needed in order to socialise them into current society. Theoretically, the paper draws on current anthropological theories on children's learning and socialisation.

KEYWORDS: anthropology of childhood, learning, socialisation

Introduction

In this paper, I first present certain contemporary theories on children's learning and socialisation¹ that I find useful when exploring non-formal learning strategies, such as learning through observation. In the continuation, I analyse childhood in Slovenian agrarian society in the first half of the 20th century and demonstrate how children were organically integrated into daily life, work and interactions, allowing them to directly learn through observation and gradual participation. These were important learning strategies in the pre-industrial agrarian society, which was the dominant social group in Slovenia until the Second World War.

Even though learning through observation has mostly been studied in relation to indigenous groups, it can be found in any society in those contexts in which children belong, participate and are continually present in the adult world (Gaskins & Paradise

¹ Even though the term 'socialisation' has been problematised and its understandings criticised (see Toren 1996; Ingold 2007; Christensen & Prout 2011; Toren 2012), I use it as a term for a general understanding of social learning.

2010). Children in the contemporary information society live a parallel and often isolated life from adults: while parents spend most of their time at work, children do so at pre-school, school and institutionalised after-school activities. Christensen and Prout (2011), describe the institutionalisation, familisation and individualisation of childhoods: at times complementary and other times contradictory processes. These processes dictate that children spend increasing amounts of time in various institutions. At the same time, they are dependent on their families and contained within them. Moreover, there is increasingly less autonomous movement by children around their neighbourhoods. Children's lives are becoming increasingly restricted and controlled.

Finally, there is a trend of looking at children as those who take part in deciding about their lives (ibid.). It seems that we want our children to be independent, self-reliant and active from an early age on and yet, paradoxically, we are also 'so concerned about protecting their *future* prospects, we deny them the chance to *be*' (Lancy 2010: 457). The period of dependency and learning has thereby become greatly extended. Accordingly, in the information society we perceive childhood as 'a protected and innocent sphere that has to be divided from political sphere, public sphere and work' (Zidar 2003: 359) yet we simultaneously emphasise children's participation, their rights and agency. Therefore, even if children's status today is egalitarian, with the emphasis on their participation in deciding and realising their wishes (Močnik & Turk Niskač 2012), these relations seem to be ambiguous and often paradoxical. Children's agency is often restricted within the boundaries that parents or other significant adults draw and within which children are expected to explore, learn and practise their agency.

At the end, however, I show that we cannot claim that the protected childhood described above is representative of any society as a whole, but only for certain social classes. I present a case study of a rural area of Slovenia where children can, to a certain extent, practise learning through observation and are afforded autonomy in participating in and practising of the observed interactions. I believe this is an aspect often neglected by theories of childhood in contemporary society.

Perspectives on learning as a social process

As Toren observes, socialisation, enculturation and acquisition studies became blurred in the 1970s and 1980s (1996: 513). In the general understanding, these processes enable an individual to learn to function successfully as a member of a community or society in which they live (Toren 1996: 512; Ingold 2007: 112). However, these notions have recently started to give way to notions of social learning and meaning making. Ingold, for example, considers learning to be an open-ended social process. He does not think of the process of learning as filling up the mind of novices, nor as a march to a fixed and final target, but as of tuning up to the particular circumstances of the environment (2007: 117). Toren similarly understands learning or making sense of the world as a 'micro-historical process in which people's schemes of thought are continually differentiated through functioning' (2011: 24). Toren proposes the idea of 'autopoiesis as a historical process that begins at conception and ends only with death' (2012: 25). In the process of

human autopoiesis, we engage others in the process of our own becoming.

In the process of making meaning, humans are constantly making meaning out of meanings that others have made or are making and are thus conveying their own understandings. We all assimilate each other's ideas and accommodate ourselves to them. This is also the developmental process of how children make meaning (Toren 2002: 187). In fact, all our ideas and practices are historical products of our own experiences and relationships with other people (Toren 2007: 111). At the same time, in the process of autopoiesis, meaning is always emergent, never fixed. In this process, in every aspect, living things continue over time as relatively autonomous systems of transformation. Thus, this micro-historical process renders each person's ideas unique (Toren 2004; 2007). Consequently, even though 'we have common biology, are subject to the same general physical conditions and physiological processes,' yet 'each one of us has to make meaning of the world by virtue of engaging with meanings others have made and are making' (Toren 1999: 267). Therefore, as human beings, we are all a dynamic transforming product of the past we have lived and simultaneously we are placed in relation to all other human beings whose ideas and practices help structure the conditions of our present existence (Toren 2012: 25). The model explained above represents an alternative to the understanding of socialisation as a process of being 'socialised' into a social being because it understands 'humans as at once products and producers of history' (Toren 2002: 200).

Under the influence of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, developmental psychologists re-conceptualised socialisation and rejected the idea of a child as a passive recipient of social, cultural and parental influences (LeVine and New 2008: 160). The idea that knowledge is simply internalised was similarly rejected. Ingold, for example, claims that 'novices grow into knowledge rather than having it handed down to them' (2007: 115). In recent decades, we have been able to follow new theoretical perspectives suggesting that children are active subjects (James & Prout 1997; Christensen & Prout 2002) as well as perspectives that are interested in how children themselves are making meanings over time as a function of autopoiesis (Toren 2002; 2007; 2011; 2012). We might say that socialisation can be understood as a negotiated, two-way process between parents and children (Ingold 2007). Moreover, 'recent research shows that adults rarely play a prominent role in children's skill acquisition, other more likely candidates include observation, imitation, make-believe, emulating older siblings and the chore curriculum' (Lancy 2010: 7). Moreover, 'recent research shows that adults rarely play a prominent role in children's skill acquisition, other more likely candidates include observation, imitation, make-believe, emulating older siblings and the chore curriculum' (Lancy 2010: 7). Humans construct meaning from experience, and learning is profoundly embedded in social processes. We can see that children learn through various learning strategies and that most learning takes place within a social context. We should also acknowledge that if, on one hand, we are interested in children's active role in learning, on the other hand learning does not take place in a vacuum. Even though 'learning arises from within the child' (Bock 2010: 19), and 'children in all cultures actively make meaning from their experiences' (Gaskins & Paradise 2010: 97), parents and other adults nevertheless manipulate children's time and activities so that they are more likely to be exposed to certain

types of information, and there is great variation in how much responsibility children are given for organising the details of their everyday world (Bock 2010: 19; Gaskins & Paradise 2010: 97). Harkness and Super coined the term “parental ethnotheories”, referring to ‘cultural models that parents hold regarding children, families, and themselves as parents’ (Harkness, Super et al. 2010: 67). Parents’ ideas regarding children, families, and themselves as parents also include ideas on when, what and how the child learns and who should guide and instruct the child. These ideas are often ‘implicit and taken-for-granted ideas about the “natural” or “right” way to think or act, and they have strong motivational properties for parents’ (Harkness, Super et al. 2010: 67–8; on parental expectations also see Toren 2002). Zarger proposes that the individual child, the cultural routines of daily life, parental and cultural beliefs and expectations, socioeconomic and subsistence strategies, and the local biophysical environment itself influence learning and child development (2010: 354). However, even though caregivers and significant others structure the conditions of the existence lived by the child, nobody can determine what the child makes of them. Toren emphasises that it is exactly the ‘ethnographic studies of how children make sense of the conditions in the world created for them by adults that can contribute to the dynamic systems perspective on human development over time as an autopoietic and historical process’ (Toren 2012: 32).

Formal institutionalised teaching and learning strategies are based on direct verbal instruction, verbal explanation, demonstration, and directing attention. Children’s learning in this context depends in large part on others’ directing children’s attention to specific objects and events (Gaskins & Paradise 2010: 101).² This kind of learning strategy is also typical among parents of certain social classes. Such strategies in the family setting are said to lead to success at school and thus in life generally. Lancy suggests that learning from observation and interacting with others is changing in the information society, where ‘significant others serve less often as role models and more often as didactic teachers or guides’ (2010: 456). He claims that granting children the autonomy to learn through observation does not work in the information society, ‘where making a living depends on the long-term acquisition of material that is essentially hidden from view and must be packaged and delivered by experts’ (2010: 457). Along with parental anxiety about their child’s optimal cognitive, motoric and intellectual development and about their child’s success at school comes an insistence on early cognitive, motoric and other stimulation of the infant, parent-child play and constant didactic teaching of the children from the parents’ side. However, parents’ ideas and practices related to child development vary substantially, even in contemporary society, as we shall see below. It is true that ‘in recent decades, children’s opportunities to interact with each other in “adult-free”, unstructured settings have dropped significantly’ (Maynard & Tovote 2010: 199).

There is, however, increasing awareness that unstructured learning settings for children have their advantages: ‘Perspective-taking, empathy, and communication skills

² Note however, that the pre-school pedagogy in Slovenia differs greatly from school pedagogy. It is predominantly based on play, learning through play and learning through experience.

are readily learned from siblings and peers, and unstructured interactions provide the substrate for these skills to develop' (Maynard & Tovote 2010: 199). Gaskins and Paradise similarly emphasise that in the absence of adult guidance, children are more likely to be consistently active learners in the sense that they are intrinsically motivated to learn, take initiative, and organise their observing and making sense of it (2010: 97).

Children are thus not only active in their own socialisation but are also active socialisers of others, namely younger siblings and peers (Gaskins, Miller & Corsaro 1992). As mentioned, according to some social classes, a child needs explanation, they need to be motivated, and their attention is being directed by significant others. Yet in many societies, parents do not teach children or play with them 'because they are absorbed in adult work and playing with children is considered inappropriate adult behavior' (Maynard & Tovote 2010: 183). Instead, children are encouraged to learn on their own and are expected to learn from older children, siblings and peers, through observation and play. This is especially true for cultures that emphasise and amplify learning through observation. Various informal learning strategies encompass many ways that children acquire information, including 'through observation, guidance by adults and siblings, active teaching and trial and error' (Bock 2010: 19), as well as 'verbal and bodily instruction, imitation, and guided participation' (Zarger 2010: 362). We often perceive learning that is confined to silent learning by observing, without questions and explanations as passive and irrelevant, especially in educational perspectives and the information society. As Gaskins and Paradise argue, observational learning is in fact an active learning process since 'children are intrinsically motivated, take initiative to learn, and direct their attention actively to what is going on around them' (2010: 94–5). They suggest that learning through observation in daily life is a universal learning strategy in childhood and beyond. Observational learning typically occurs in familiar contexts in which one person performs an activity while another person, who knows less, watches them do it. In the case of children, they might intentionally watch because they want to learn, but they might also watch for the fun of watching or just for the pleasure of being in the company of the person who is working. Learning then becomes an incidental by-product of social life, an almost invisible part of everyday interactions (Gaskins & Paradise 2010: 85).

As already noted, learning through observation is especially important in societies in which children can observe and participate in the economic and productive activities of adults on a daily basis. This is related to the society's mode of economic production. If adults' work is organised at the level of the home community, children are likely to be around. Since the child identifies with those being observed, they want to belong and be like them. Moreover, because the child observes while participating in meaningful family-based social activities, these activities seem relevant and interesting to them. In order to render learning through observation meaningful, children have to be present, participate regularly in activities and events and be ready to take responsibility for their learning. If this is not the case or when children are present but are waiting to be told what to do or are paying little attention, the effectiveness of learning through observation is reduced. All kinds of knowledge can be acquired through observation, from physical skills, work skills and specific tasks to language, social interaction behaviours,

expressions of emotion, situational scripts, politeness posture, and even spiritual beliefs and other abstract knowledge (Gaskins & Paradise 2010).

Next, we analyse learning strategies in the pre-industrial agrarian Slovenian society, followed by an analysis of current learning through observation possibilities in early childhood. As we will see, in pre-industrial agrarian Slovenian society, learning through observation was an important learning strategy in childhood and to some extent it is also present nowadays.

Learning from the pre-industrial agrarian to the information society

Agrarian society dominated in Slovenia until the Second World War. Rural areas could be described as pre-industrial, while there were emerging working classes and a small number of middle-class people in urbanised and industrialised areas. The family economy, which was predominately self-sufficient, and the survival of the family depended on physical work in agriculture (Brumen 2000: 213). In addition, the working classes strived to be self-sufficient (Kremenšek 1970: 23; Ravnik 1981: 62). For agricultural society, until the Second World War, the domestic setting often played a more important role in children's social learning than school. In the beginning of the 20th century, school represented an intruder that 'divided parents and children temporally, territorially, in working processes and mentally' (Sok 2003: 81). Children also participated in the family economy and contributed with their work, which was often given priority over school obligations. Modernisation of the agricultural sector only came after the Second World War. With fewer working hands being needed, children lost their productive role and turned from producers into consumers (Zelizer 1985; Montgomery 2009). At the same time, the role of children's education gained significance. However, attitudes to schooling varied according to one's social class and over time. Higher social classes already emphasised children's need to play and educate in the 19th century. This attitude has gradually also spread to lower social classes, i.e. working classes and peasants.

On the whole, the modernisation and mechanisation of the agricultural sector after the Second World War profoundly changed the way of living, social relations and attitudes to work. If work represented the highest value to which all other values were subordinate in the agricultural society, then after the Second World War parents started to believe that their children would be better off if they attended school so they would not have to work (as hard as they had to) (Makarovič 1985; Brumen 2000). Even if schooling became ever more important and work was starting to be valued negatively, in the period of socialist Yugoslavia work at the same time still had a high value by virtue of being incorporated in the state ideology of the building of socialism. Factories were flourishing and good, diligent workers were being promoted. School children started their day with the slogan: 'Happy to work, in work there is happiness!'

Attitudes to work and its value are changing according to the circumstances. Today, the successful Slovenian entrepreneur Ivo Boscarol proposes that entrepreneurship be incorporated in the pre-school curricula, not as marketing, but as the binding of different ideas. Hence, in one Slovenian pre-school children take part in a Young Entrepreneur

project where they practice different roles from joiner and beekeeper to innovator. In this way, they are fostering creativity and successfully developing their own ideas – highly valuable competencies in the current economic system (Mlakar 2011). Nevertheless, according to various ethnotheories, intelligence can also be associated with the qualities like ‘self-sufficiency, obedience, respect toward elders, attention to detail, willingness to work and effective management of younger siblings and livestock’ (Lancy & Grove 2010: 153). This was also the case in Slovenia several decades ago; the agrarian society was deeply hierarchically segregated. Relationships were based on respect for elders; children had to obey and, if they failed to do so, they were punished. The way of living, which was immersed in physical labour, did not allow much time to be dedicated to children. Cuddling, caressing and playing with children were rare. However, the child was rarely alone, he/she was always surrounded by kin or other members of the community. Children realised that they were loved from the time their parents read or told them stories (Žagar 1997: 10; Destovnik 2002: 213). Yet words were rarely used while parents were working in the fields or around the house and children were helping or hanging around. Their time was filled with work and silence. Children were being told: ‘If you want to know how to work, you have to watch, you have to “steal” with the eyes’ (Brumen 2000: 184). Children were thus expected to learn through observation, with very few explanations or verbal instructions. In this respect, Lave and Wenger coined the term “legitimate peripheral participation”. For them ‘learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice’ (Lave & Wenger 1998: 31) and ‘learners are learning to participate in a community of practitioners as well as in a productive activity’ (Lave & Wenger 1998: 110). Participation in the family economy started with observing and smaller tasks, and then gradually continued to more responsible tasks. Tasks that are graded or scaled in difficulty are a core feature of the chore curriculum, for which it can be said that:

Children reliably grow into greater strength, dexterity and intellectual prowess. Second, children eagerly pursue more challenging undertakings without prompting. Third, they spend most of their time in the proximity of slightly older children who act simultaneously as caretakers, role models and teachers. Fourth, the village task environment is sufficiently complex so that a scaling from easier to harder is readily apparent (Lancy & Grove 2010: 156).

When talking about child work and children’s chores, it is important to differentiate child work from child labour. Child labour is associated with the exploitation of poor children via factory work and wage labour, whereas child work takes place within a domestic unit. It represents:

morally desirable and pedagogically sensible activities ... [such as] house-keeping, child minding, helping adults for no pay on the family farm and in small shops, domestic service, street selling, running errands, delivering newspapers, seasonal work on farms (Niewenhuys, cited in Chick 2010: 120).

Child work, for example, entails pedagogical characteristics (Chick 2010), learning about the biophysical environment (Zarger 2010), learning gender and other

social roles (Montgomery 2009) as well as learning responsibility and the yearly cycles of nature (Stanonik 1992–1993), tenacity, diligence and cooperation (Močnik & Turk Niskač 2012). Children in agrarian Slovenia helped with daily chores from an early age onward. Their help was welcomed in the family economy. In this way, they were also learning to take on responsibility, while learning different roles in the community and society at large, and avoiding idleness (Ramšak 2003: 316). Between their third and fourth years, children took on chores such as fetching firewood and water, tidying the house and tending cattle (Ramšak 2003: 237). Girls took care of their younger siblings from the age of five. The work was distributed according to gender and children were gradually given more responsible tasks so that their carefree childhood ended by the age of 10 (Žagar 1997: 13; also see Kremenšek 1970: 23; Stanonik 1992–1993: 138; Brumen 2000: 182; Sereinig 2003: 16). Between the ages of five and seven, most cultures acknowledge an important transition whereby children are expected to begin taking on an increasing amount of work responsibility (Zarger 2010: 357) or cognitive skills. Further, working-class children had some work obligations, but they were very few and so they had lots of time to freely play and roam around the neighbourhood (Kremenšek 1970: 33; Brumen 1995: 149). In contrast, physical work was openly scorned by the highest social classes (Brumen 1995: 152–4). The idea that a child needs to play and needs toys only gradually spread from the higher social classes (Tomažič 1999: 19).

Even though children in agrarian societies had very little time to play, ethnographic data shed light on various plays and games for children: word games, different bodily uses, group games with movement, fantasy games, mental games and riddles, role plays and games with singing (Ramovš 1991; Stanonik 1992–1993). It is true that children had very few purchased toys, but they have found toys and objects to play with in their immediate environment and in nature (Sereinig 2003: 15). As Sutton-Smith suggests, the common wisdom in Western societies that play is children's work is typically adult-centric. He claims that in their first two years children 'are too busy being intelligent (exploring, mastering, imagining and performing) to play most of the time' (Sutton-Smith 1997: 244). The anxiety about the toys that children should have is more clearly a sign of parental anxiety about their children's achievement and progress than they are assurances of child progress (*ibid.*). Children often incorporated the world of adults into their play: children from a baker's family, for example, played in the bakery (Ferlež 2005: 29). Children also played with domestic animals and with marbles, they baked potatoes on an open fire, roamed around nearby forests and fields, sledged, skied, swam in rivers etc. (Kremenšek 1970). Work and play often merged. Children played with home-made miniature tools in the fields and around the house, while their parents were working or were even given their own small piece of field to work on. While mothers were ironing, little girls were folding napkins. As they tended cattle or peeled potatoes children played mental games or told each other funny stories (Stanonik 1992–1993: 133–8). As Gaskins and Paradise note, in a reality-based pretend play, children both practise and interpret what they have observed. Such play is thus complementary to learning through observation. It represents an opportunity to practise culturally organised activities that children have seen. The more children are exposed to a daily activity, the more it appears in their pretend re-

enactments (2010: 106). Thus, in agrarian societies learning was embedded in observing, imitating, examining and experimenting in play as well as in gaining actual experiences by participating in work. Even though work often coincided with play, the work itself did not permit as much improvisation as the play itself (Močnik & Turk Niskač 2012: 171). In their play, children did not simply imitate the world of adults but also creatively and actively rearranged it.

A case study of children's learning in the context of work and play

In this paper, I have thus far outlined childhood in the Slovenian agrarian society in the first half of the 20th century. As we will see, learning in family settings through participation in daily work to some extent still occurs today. In the researched area, children can observe their parents at work in the fields, with domestic animals, in orchards, forests and vineyards. The data for the analysis were collected in 2011/2012 during two months of ethnographic research and fieldwork in a small community in rural Slovenia. Sixteen children aged between two and six years took part in the research. The methodology consisted of participant observation in a pre-school, semi-structured interviews with parents and employees in the pre-school, informal visits to the children's homes and collaborative visual methods in which the parents, educators in the pre-school and children themselves took pictures of how the children's days were unfolding.

The location of the fieldwork is in southern Slovenia, near the Croatian border. It is composed of several small villages with an administrative centre that has 106 inhabitants. The administrative centre includes a post office, shop, primary school, pre-school and two factories. Up until the second half of the 20th century, the area was typically agrarian. In the 1980s, two factories were opened, one for plumbing tools and the other for sewing lingerie, which started to employ men and women, respectively. The lingerie factory closed in 2011. When the factories were flourishing and women started to take jobs there, the informal child care initially organised by the factories later developed into a pre-school. Unemployment in the region is high today. Some inhabitants drive to work every day to bigger towns or make their living from occasional small jobs. Even though very few inhabitants actually live from farming, most of them maintain small gardens, domestic animals, orchards and/or vineyards. All of this represents additional work, but to some extent it also contributes to the self-sufficiency of households. Most children attended pre-school (at the time of the research I only knew of one boy who did not attend pre-school; his family was one of the rare ones to actually live from farming). The pre-school was open from 5.30 a.m. until 3.30 p.m. (note that the working hours were adapted to suit the working hours of the two factories; pre-school in the capital city Ljubljana are, for example, open from 6.00 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Most of the children spent time in the pre-school from breakfast at 7.30 a.m. until shortly after they woke up from their nap, at 2.30 p.m. Yet some of the children had to wake up as early as 5 a.m. in order for their fathers to bring them to the pre-school on their way to work in the factory. Children in this area thus spend much more time at home than, for example, children in urban areas

whose parents come to pick them up as late as 4 or 4.30 p.m. When at home, the children spent most of their time outside, with some of them visiting their grandparents who live nearby. They were rarely left alone, mostly being supervised by a parent, grandparent or older siblings, if they had any. They mainly played with their siblings, alone or with other peers, if available. The area is surrounded by forests, which dictates many of the children's outdoor activities.

Pre-school was for the children predominantly a place where they could play with their peers since they lived in scattered villages and many did not have any peers living nearby. Further, from the parents' point of view, the main reason they opted for their children to be in the pre-school was for them to have company and play with their peers. The pre-school curriculum was pedagogically embedded in play, learning through play, learning social skills in the group, learning of order and preparation for school. Other than an hour or so that was meant for walking in the surroundings or playing in the playground, the children spent most of their time inside. They took part in cleaning the toys after play, cleaning the tables, arranging their cots and occasionally one of them was sent to the kitchen to fetch something. Every day, two children were asked to help with breakfast and lunch. Apart from this, there were not many other chores requiring the children's input in the pre-school. The school and pre-school were taking part in an ecological project and thus had a nice vegetable garden outside, but the pre-school children did not actually work on it, only the school children did. The preschool children were said to be too small and too numerous to organise. On special occasions, children in the pre-school made bread, but their involvement in the kitchen was increasingly limited due to stricter hygiene standards. Another reason the children in the pre-school could not undertake more chores was the employees' preoccupation with safety and the fear that, were something to happen, the parents would not react with understanding.

In the pre-school, the emphasis was thus on play and learning, with very few work obligations or experiences, whereas at home the children often accompanied their parents or grandparents attending to domestic and agricultural work tasks. It cannot be said that at home the children really contributed with their work since it was more up to the children's will whether to cooperate or not, and they did not have any serious obligations or tasks.

However, it seems that the children themselves were eager to participate in various chores. Especially striking was the dichotomy regarding children's capacities between pre-school and home. At home, Jon, a boy aged 5, was making a wooden bin using a battery-powered drill, while in the pre-school he was immediately scolded for picking up a screwdriver, being told that it is dangerous. The parents were mostly keen to include their children in various chores, stating that perhaps in the future it would be useful for them to know some of these things. They also emphasised that the children wanted to be included and that, if they had to make something too dangerous for the children to observe up close, they had to tactically organise the activity so that they were not followed by their children. Parents' ideas that it might be good for the children to help out were common to parents with a low education, working in the factories or in agriculture as well as parents with a university degree.

A young educated couple, for example, had moved into one of the villages from the capital, Ljubljana, in order to give their children a childhood in a more natural setting. At the time of the research they had two sons, Emil aged 2 and a 3-month-old baby. At the age of 2, Emil was cleaning the dishes, hanging up the washing, putting wood on the fire, preparing firewood, cutting grass and picking up apples in the orchard. The father emphasised that this is important: 'These chores have to be close to him. I think these shouldn't be some chores that his parents are doing or someone else, he has to see that these chores are part of our daily life' and the mother added: 'I think he enjoys it, he has fun, he prefers to do something like that than playing with toys ... I think he learns mostly through these chores, I prefer that he is making a mess with me cleaning than him not being included.'

They said that Emil was practically not interested in toys unless they play with them together with him. Outside the house, he had a sandpit, swing, slide, trampoline and climbing wall. Emil's parents believed he was mostly learning spontaneously and by example. Therefore, it was important to let him develop self-initiative. Similarly, Jon's father, who is a mechanical engineer, emphasised that he was brought up in a way to see that work is interesting and you can find satisfaction in creating something and he wanted his son to adopt the same attitude to life. At the age of 5, Jon was making a wooden rubbish bin with a battery-powered drill, he had his own part of the vegetable garden and was occasionally making bread with his father. It was only when questions of safety were in question that Jon's father preferred to make things on his own, for example sawing timber.

Similarly, the father of 2-year-old Lenart preferred to be alone when working with a circular saw or various heavy tractor mechanical parts. He said his son wanted to be constantly present, but was too young to understand that something is dangerous and he must keep away. When he himself was young, he also had to work hard on the farm. He thought that his son had a better childhood since he is going to the seaside, on trips to the mountains, skiing and playing a lot. He hoped he would not be obliged to work on the farm and would pursue a good education. Lenart's father was employed at the local factory and his mother by the municipality. They did not have a farm, only a vegetable garden. However, they had quite some work to do in the surroundings, such as grass cutting, working in the woods and the like. His father noticed that Lenart seemed to enjoy farming: 'He wants to be on the tractor for two hours, he constantly wants to wear a hard hat, he wants to try out everything from the electric saw to the lawnmower.' Lenart's father stated that some villagers had said he should not let Lenart ride in a tractor, but he replied that when he saw how much he enjoyed it, he did not want to take such pleasure away from him (see Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1: Lenart and his father picking up stones; photo by Lenart's mother, May 2011



Figure 2: Lenart playing with a hammer; photo by Lenart's mother, May 2011

However, he was not pushing his son into doing anything. He wanted to show him what is good, but if he saw that he did not want to clean up his toys, for example, he would do it instead of him. Lenart also helped his mother with watering flowers and taking the dishes out from the dishwasher. When she worked in the vegetable garden, Lenart was given his own small rake and shovel to play along.

As for the future, Lenart's mother wanted him to be successful in life, she also wanted him to be honest, kind and sincere. His father similarly wanted him to be honest and to pursue a high education, to learn to do work he will enjoy doing and have a good salary. He added that he would show him what is good for him but, at the end, Lenart would choose by himself and he would not oppose his wishes. He also emphasised that it is good to have working habits.

Not all of the parents, however, enjoyed their children hanging around while working. Some of them preferred to keep their children away from the work so they could do what had to be done in peace. They claimed they would have even more work with the children around or they thought that preschool children were too young to truly help them with real work. The mother of 4-year-old Eva and 3-year-old Enej, for example, said:

We have cows, but they can't take care of them yet. Well, we do also have chickens. We go together and they pick up the eggs and feed them, but I go with them. There's nothing else for them to do, I have to do it by myself.

When asked if they helped her in the vegetable garden, she continued:

Better not. I can say to Eva stay here and she does, but to Enej I say stay here and he is already into the lettuce, come on, better stay away! I prefer to make it when they are not around because, if I go working with them, I can't ... I put more energy into saying don't stay here, move over there (*laughs*).

Contemporary paradigms emphasise doing research *with* children instead of *about* or *on* children (James 2007; Thomson 2008). Despite conceding that children are active subjects, learning and development are still often studied in ways that 'depict children as passive in these processes, as recipients of culture rather than as contributing and vital forces in both individual and cultural development' (Munroe & Gauvain 2010: 51). In this context, a more child-centred approach would be necessary to include children's perspectives and thus describe the full scope of children's learning. I have thus tried to pursue children's perspectives via photography. Photography is often seen as a tool that enables insight into children's perspectives (Mitchell & Reid Walsh 2002; Lutrell 2010). For me, it has given me an insight into children's perceptions of their living environment and the relationships in which they are integrated. Ten children, aged 3–6 years took pictures. First, each of them were given a single-use camera for the weekend, and then each child was given a digital camera for a day. With the digital camera each child took pictures at both the preschool and home. On the next day, the researcher looked at the pictures together with the child and made a photo elicitation interview. The children were not told what specifically to take pictures of, only to take pictures of what was interesting to them. The interview was similarly spontaneous, deriving from the photographs taken. Such an interview is also called an auto-driven photo-elicitation interview

(Dell Clark 1999; Clark Ibáñez 2008). In any event, an interview is needed because the interpretation of the pictures is not readily evident. In the interview, the research participant and researcher discuss their different understandings of the images (Pink 2005). By letting the children take control of the camera and what they will take pictures of, we can presume that the pictures reflect their perspectives and interests. However, we should be aware that the researcher, parents, siblings, peers, educators in the pre-school and others can influence children's photography and their interviews about the pictures (Turk Niskač 2012).

During the research, the children took a total of 1,309 pictures, of which 86 were blank or unrecognisable. Out of all the recognisable pictures, 683 were taken outside and 535 inside. Five hundred and sixteen pictures were taken in the pre-school and 792 at home. Eva and Enej took pictures while they were playing in an improvised sandpit. Instead of a plastic spade they played with a hoe (see Figures 3 and 4). Here is an excerpt from a photo elicitation interview in which Eva said that they were 'making a hole for the little animals':

Eva: Here we are at home, we took pictures, we were digging

Researcher: You were digging?

Eva: Soil

Researcher: I see, what were you digging?

Eva: Soil – everything

Researcher: It was you who were digging, did mummy give you a hoe?

Eva: She gave it to me because we, we, – watch out, come here Enej – you can't give it to him because he doesn't know how to...

Researcher: Is he too young?

Eva: Yes

Enej: No, I am not

Researcher: And you know how to work with the hoe?

Eva: Yes

Researcher: And do you help mummy in the garden?

Eva: Yes, a little

Researcher: A little?

Eva: But mummy doesn't allow me to.

Researcher: She doesn't allow you, but here in the sandpit she allows you to dig with the hoe?

Eva: Yes

In the interview, the researcher and children thus gave meaning to the children's play. If this was not evident from the pictures themselves, Eva stated that they were 'making a hole for little animals.' She also explained that she was not allowed to help her mother in the garden, although she was allowed to play with the hoe in the sandpit. Eva said that her little brother 'doesn't know how to use the hoe' and that 'you can't give it to him.' She agreed with the researcher that he was too young, to which Enej responded that he was not. However, in the next pictures we could see that Enej was also using the hoe. Having in mind the interview with their mother (see above) in which she claimed that her children were too young to be seriously involved in work and that she preferred to do things when she was alone, we can see how Eva



Figure 3: Eva with a hoe in the sandpit; photo by Enej, June 2011



Figure 4: Enej with a hoe in the sandpit; photo by Eva, June 2011

and Enej have incorporated in their play of making a hole for little animals in the sandpit a working tool such as a hoe. Further, we can see how Eva had incorporated her mother's opinion in asserting that her little brother was too young to know how to use the hoe.

As we have seen, even though these children have many opportunities to learn through observation and participate in their own way in adult work activities, they do not live in an isolated or under-privileged community. They are also part of the information society. It is true that they do not have as many opportunities for organised afternoon activities as children in urban areas, but some of them attend English classes, music school or folk classes. They too have an abundance of all sorts of toys, watch cartoons and children's songs on YouTube, draw on a computer etc. However, they do spend a lot of time outside and, compared to those children who are picked up from pre-school as late as 4.30 p.m. every day, they spend more time with their parents and grandparents and have greater opportunities to observe them while working. And as we have seen, their parents have quite a few work obligations at home and in the surroundings in the afternoons. At the time of writing this article, I was continuing fieldwork in another pre-school in the suburbs of Ljubljana. In this article, I have only focused on one research area; however, also in the area of family houses in the suburbs of Ljubljana most parents were incorporating their children in some kind of domestic work – at the age of four, they were peeling potatoes, hanging out the washing, dusting, helping the father in the garage etc. Some parents also emphasised that they would take their children to work sometimes in order for them to see what they do for a living. The children were exposed to these activities to a smaller extent since their parents have longer working days and thus the children spend more time at pre-school. They also attend afternoon organised activities more frequently. Further, the surroundings – urban suburbs – offer fewer possibilities to work in the afternoon. Some families maintained vegetable gardens, but chores were mostly restricted to indoor domestic work. I find it interesting, that parents and employees at the kindergarten believe that learning, play and work interweave in preschool children. Everything a child does is supposed to be guided by play. Even when children are involved at domestic chores, adults believe that they are actually playing, not working. On the contrary 4 years old children already strictly distinguished between work and play. When shown various objects such as a doll, a car, building blocks, a mobile phone, a pair of pliers, a rolling pin, a mixer, a thread and a kitchen sponge, they classified the first three as objects for play and all the rest as objects for work. When asked if we can also play with the objects for work, only one girl said we can use a kitchen sponge also for painting.

Conclusion

Some authors (Lancy & Grove 2010; Maynard & Tovote 2010) make a clear distinction between the chore curriculum, which is said to be characteristic of traditional village societies and which children can observe in their daily life, and the core curriculum, which needs to be taught by certified teachers and is supposed to be typical of information society. However, I disagree with such a strict dichotomy. As we have seen, in the case of our field study we can say that, in certain settings, both core and chore curriculums can also coexist in the information society. What we can do is discuss the extent to which children are exposed to a chore curriculum in various settings and the outcomes of various opportunities they are given to participate in these chores. According to the current theories on socialisation, it is

the learning capability that drives children to be part of the relations which surround them. Humans, even as newborns, are social beings, which is why 'they cannot help but engage others in the process of becoming themselves' (Toren 2002: 188). As Ingold puts it, 'children can learn only because they are fully involved in the world' and 'they begin at once to interact with other people in their surroundings' (Ingold 2007: 113). 'Children learn not to gain entry to the social world but to make their way within it' (ibid.). All our cognitions are mediated by relations with others. If 'all our acts are social' and we also 'reveal ourselves as social beings in all our acts,' then 'everything we do is in some way mediated by our relations with others' (Toren 1993: 462). We can thus also understand children's willingness to participate in the chores that they can observe in their family setting as part of their being and becoming in the world, as part of their social learning, meaning making or (as we could say) socialisation.

In the context of the contemporary paradigm, a more child-centred approach is necessary to include children's perspectives and thus describe the full scope of children's learning. Although I have tried to pursue children's perspectives with visual methods, I believe the full potential remains unexploited in the scope of the research. In Toren's words:

Every child is born into a world in the making whose local features vary as a function of the history of a certain peopled environment. Any given child thus encounters a world whose particular history is made concrete in a specific physical environment and in the specific social relations in which that child is immediately engaged. And each child, by virtue of their autonomy as a living system that is human, has no choice but to make sense of what they encounter. At the same time, because humans make meaning intersubjectively out of meanings that others have made and are making, it follows that literally every idea held by every child has a purchase on reality as it is lived. In other words, a child's ideas – for all that they are uniquely his or hers – do not come out of nowhere; they have everything to do with this same child's inter-subjective engagement in the world (2011: 38).

Toren calls for a focus on children as simultaneous 'subjects and objects of history, and on the processes in and through which they constitute their knowledge of the world' (Toren 1993: 462). Instead of socialisation, anthropologists should therefore perhaps study to understand how people become who they are (Toren 2002: 187) since being and becoming are aspects of one another. As Toren stresses, we are becoming ourselves throughout all our lives, yet we are not 'independently the authors of our own being,' since 'we do not control the conditions of our own existence' (ibid.). Nevertheless, each human being is autonomous in the process of autopoiesis (Toren 2002: 189). Human beings should be understood as at once products and producers of history. This makes the study of children central to the anthropological project (Toren 1993: 461). We should therefore acknowledge that children are simultaneously agents actively engaged in constituting their relations with others and with the environment and conditioned by the relations and the environment in which they live. Children do not choose their environment, their parents' background, their ethno-theories, or place of living. While some children have an opportunity to participate in domestic chores, others simply do not. While some parents approve of their participating, others prefer to do the chores alone. As soon as a child is born, he/she is born into a complex net of social, economic and political obligations and responsibilities (Montgomery 2009: 78). Just like adults, children do not live in a vacuum but are always in relationships with other people: with their parents, relatives, caregivers, educators,

siblings, peers and friends. Born into a world of already existing traditions and semiotic systems, children use their growing interpretative abilities to participate in cultural practices. This process is constructive and necessarily individual and collective at the same time. The meaning making of each child is thus unique. Further, in meaning-making processes, children take a variety of stances in various situations from acceding to, eagerly reaching out for, playfully transforming to actively resisting. Meaning creation thus varies not only from child to child, but also from time to time for a particular child. By responding to and negotiating with caregivers and peers in day-to-day encounters with cultural resources, children shape their developmental experiences and at the same time contribute to the production of social order (Gaskins, Miller & Corsaro 1992: 6–7). In this respect, not all children are eager to participate in domestic chores and each child is on some occasions keen to participate and on others they are not. It is important that learning and socialisation are profoundly social and that, apart from formal educational institutions such as school and pre-school, children also learn at home, by observing adults at work, in the playground, through media, in the neighbourhood – in literally every setting they find themselves.

It is beyond the scope of the presented research to judge the outcomes of learning through observation as presented above for the children themselves. However, longitudinal research focussing on children's perspectives on work, play and learning might shed new light on these learning strategies and opportunities.

Bibliography

- Bock, John. 2010. An Evolutionary Perspective on Learning in Social, Cultural and Ecological Context. In: David Lancy, John Bock & Suzanne Gaskins (eds.), *The Anthropology of Learning in Childhood*. Lanham: Altamira Press, pp. 11–34.
- Brumen, Borut. 1995. *Na robu zgodovine in spomina. Urbana kultura Murske Sobotne med letoma 1919 in 1941 [At the edge of history and memory: Urban culture of Murska Sobota between 1919 and 1941]*. Murska Sobota: Pomurska založba.
- Brumen, Borut. 2000. *Sv. Peter in njegovi časi. Socialni spomini, časi in identitete v istrski vasi Sv. Peter [Sv. Peter and its times. Social memories, times and identities in the Istrian village Sv. Peter]*. Ljubljana: Založba Cf.
- Chick, Garry. 2010. Work, Play, and Learning. In: David Lancy, John Bock & Suzanne Gaskins (eds.), *The Anthropology of Learning in Childhood*. Lanham: Altamira Press, pp. 119–43.
- Christensen, Pia & Alan Prout. 2002. Working with Ethical Symmetry in Social Research with Children. *Childhood* 9(4): 477–497.
- Christensen, Pia & Alan Prout. 2011. Anthropological and Sociological Perspectives on the Study of Children. In: Sheila Green & Diane Hogan (eds.), *Researching Children's Experience*. London: SAGE, pp. 42–60.
- Clark-Ibáñez, Marisol. 2008. Gender and being 'bad': Inner-city students' photographs. In: Pat Thomson (ed.), *Doing Visual Research with Children and Young People*. Routledge. London and New York, pp. 95–113.
- Dell Clark, Cindy. 1999. Autodriven interview: A photographic viewfinder into children's experience. *Visual Studies* 14(1): 39–50.
- Destovnik, Irena. 2002. *Moč šibkih: Ženske v času kmečkega gospodarjenja [The power of the weak: Women in the times of rural economy]*. Celovec: Založba Drava.
- Ferlež, Jerneja. 2005. Igre in igrače v Mariboru med obema vojnama [Games and toys in Maribor between both wars]. *Folkloristik* 1: 28–32.
- Harkness, Sara, Charles M. Super, Moisés Ríos Bermúdez, Ughetta Moscardino, Jong-Hay Rha, Caroline Johnston Mavridis, Sabrina Bonichini, Blanca Huitrón, Barbara Welles-Nyström, Jesús Palacios, On-Kang Hyun, Grace Soriano & Piotr Olaf Zyliz. 2010. Parental Ethnotheories of Children's Learning. In: David Lancy, John Bock & Suzanne Gaskins (eds.), *The Anthropology of Learning in Childhood*. Lanham: Altamira Press, pp. 65–84.
- Gaskins, Suzanne, Peggy Miller & William A. Corsaro. 1992. Theoretical and methodological perspectives in the interpretive study of children. In: Peggy Miller & William A. Corsaro (eds.), *Interpretive Approaches to Children's Socialisation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 5–23.

- Gaskins, Suzanne & Ruth Paradise. 2010. Learning through Observation in Daily Life. In: David Lancy, John Bock & Suzanne Gaskins (eds.), *The Anthropology of Learning in Childhood*. Lanham: Altamira Press, pp. 85–118.
- Ingold, Tim. 2007. The social child. In: Alan Fogel, Barbara King & Stuart Shanker (eds.), *Human Development in the Twenty-First Century: A Dynamic Systems Approach to the Life Sciences*. Cambridge: University Press, pp. 112–8.
- James, Allison. 2007. Giving Voice to Children's Voices: Practices and Problems, Pitfalls and Potentials. *American Anthropologist* 109(2): 261–272.
- James, Allison & Alan Prout. 1997. A new paradigm for the sociology of childhood? Provenance, premise and problems. In: Allison James & Alan Prout (eds.), *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*. London, New York: The Falmer Press, pp. 7–32.
- Kremenšek, Slavko. 1970. *Ljubljansko naselje Zelena Jama kot etnološki problem [Ljubljana settlement Zelena Jama as an ethnological problem]*. Ljubljana: SAZU.
- Lancy, David. 2010. Children's Learning in New Settings. In: David Lancy, John Bock & Suzanne Gaskins (eds.), *The Anthropology of Learning in Childhood*. Lanham: Altamira Press, pp. 443–64.
- Lancy, David & Annette Grove. 2010. The Role of Adults in Children's Learning. In: David Lancy, John Bock & Suzanne Gaskins (eds.), *The Anthropology of Learning in Childhood*. Lanham: Altamira Press, pp. 145–80.
- Lancy, David, John Bock & Suzanne Gaskins. 2010. Putting Learning in Context. In: David Lancy, John Bock & Suzanne Gaskins (eds.), *The Anthropology of Learning in Childhood*. Lanham: Altamira Press, pp. 3–10.
- Lave, Jean & Etienne Wenger. 1998. *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LeVine, Robert A. & Rebecca S. New. 2008. Introduction. In: Robert A. Levine & Rebecca New (eds.), *Anthropology and Child Development: A Cross-Cultural Reader*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 159–64.
- Luttrell, Wendy. 2010. A camera is a big responsibility': A lens for analysing children's visual voices. *Visual Studies* 25(3): 224–237.
- Makarovič, Marija. 1985. Predgrad in Predgrajci: Narodopisna podoba belokranjske vasi [*Predgrad and people of Predgrad: Folkloristic image of the Bela Krajina village*]. Ljubljana: Kresija.
- Maynard, Ashley & Katrin Tovote. 2010. Learning from Other Children. In: David Lancy, John Bock & Suzanne Gaskins (eds.), *The Anthropology of Learning in Childhood*. Lanham: Altamira Press, pp. 181–206.
- Mitchell, Claudia & Jacqueline Reid-Walsh. 2002. *Researching Children's Popular Culture: The Cultural Spaces of Childhood*. London: Routledge.
- Mrakar, Petra (2011). Ivo Boscarol predlaga: Podjetništvo v vrtec! [Ivo Boscarol suggests: Entrepreneurship to kindergartens!] *Dnevnik*, <http://www.dnevnik.si/slovenija/v-ospredju/1042431931>. Accessed on 19 March 2011.
- Močnik, Teja & Barbara Turk Niskač. 2012. "Čas iger in čas dela." Podobe otroštva kot jih je za preteklo stoletje izrisala slovenska etnologija ["Time for play and time for work." Images of childhood of the previous century as written by the Slovenian ethnology]. In: Mateja Jeraj, Matevž Košir, Bojan Balkovec & Aida Škoro Babič, *Zgodovina otroštva, [History of childhood]*, Ljubljana: Zveza zgodovinskih društev Slovenije, pp. 163–73.
- Montgomery, Heather. 2009. *An Introduction to Childhood: Anthropological Perspectives on Children's Lives*. Wes Sussex: Wiley Blackwell.
- Munroe, Robert L. & Mary Gauvain. 2010. The Cross-Cultural Study of Children's Learning and Socialisation: A Short History. In: David Lancy, John Bock & Suzanne Gaskins (eds.), *The Anthropology of Learning in Childhood*. Lanham: Altamira Press, pp. 35–64.
- Pink, Sarah. 2005. *Doing Visual Ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Ramovš, Mirko. 1991. Otroške igre z odvzemanjem in privzemanjem na Slovenskem [Children's games by abstraction and uptake in Slovenia]. *Traditiones* 20: 127–42.
- Ramsak, Mojca. 2003. *Portret glasov: raziskave življenjskih zgodb v etnologiji – na primeru koroških Slovencev [Portraits of voices: resesearch of life histories in ethnology - the case of Carinthian Slovenes]*. Ljubljana: Društvo za proučevanje zgodovine, antropologije in književnosti.
- Ravnik, Mojca. 1981. *Galjevica*. Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga.
- Sereinig, Ursula. 2003. *Križ kraž kralj Matjaž: otroške pesmi, igre in igrače na južnem Koroškem [Criss cross King Matjaž: Children's songs, games and toys in Southern Carinthia]*. Celovec: Slovenski narodopisni inštitut in društvo Urban Jamik.
- Sok, Jasna. 2003. *Družina skozi življenjsko zgodbo: pričevalnost gradiva s Kozjanskega [Family through life history: material evidence from Kozjansko]*. Unpublished MA thesis. Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta, Oddelek za etnologijo in kulturno antropologijo.

- Stanonik, Marija. 1992–1993. Otroštvo med igro in delom [Childhood between play and work]. *Žirovski občasnik* 13/14, 19/20: 105–40.
- Sutton-Smith, Brian. 1997. *The Ambiguity of Play*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.
- Thomson, Pat. 2008. *Doing Visual Research with Children and Young People*. Routledge. London and New York.
- Tomažič, Tanja. 1999. *Igrače: zbirka Slovenskega etnografskega muzeja [Toys: a collection of the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum]*. Ljubljana: Slovenski etnografski muzej.
- Toren, Christina. 1993. Making history: The significance of childhood cognition for a comparative anthropology of mind. *Man* (NS) 28: 461–78.
- Toren, Christina. 1996. Socialisation. In: Alan Barnard & Jonathan Spencer (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 512–4.
- Toren, Christina. 1999. Compassion for one another: Constituting kinship as intentionality in Fiji, 1996 Malinowski Lecture. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 5: 265–80.
- Toren, Christina. 2002. Comparison and Ontogeny. In: Andre Gingrich & Richard G. Fox (eds.), *Anthropology, by Comparison*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 187–203.
- Toren, Christina. 2007. An anthropology of human development: What difference does it make? In: Alan Fogel, Barbara King & Stuart Shanker (eds.), *Human Development in the Twenty-First Century. A Dynamic Systems Approach to the Life Sciences*. Cambridge: University Press, pp. 104–11.
- Toren, Christina. 2011. The Stuff of Imagination: What We Can Learn From Fijian Children's Ideas About Their Lives As Adults. *Social Analysis* 55(1): 23–47.
- Toren, Christina. 2012. Anthropology and Psychology. In: Fardon R. Harris et al. (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Social Anthropology*. Los Angeles, London: SAGE, pp. 27–41.
- Turk Niskač, Barbara. 2012. Predšolski otroci kot soudeleženci v raziskavi: pristop vizualne antropologije [Preschool children as research participants: a visual anthropology approach]. *Časopis za kritiko znanosti* 39(249): 33–44.
- Zarger, Rebecca T. 2010. Learning the Environment. In: David Lancy, John Bock & Suzanne Gaskins (eds.), *The Anthropology of Learning in Childhood*. Lanham: Altamira Press, pp. 341–70.
- Zelizer, Viviana. 1985. *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Zidar, Marija. 2003. Nove – stare reprezentacije otrok in otroštva: Dekonstrukcija 'protektivnega' otroštva [New - old representation of children and childhood: Deconstruction of 'protective' childhood]. *Teorija in praksa* 40(2): 357–74.
- Žagar, Janja. 1997. *Vrata kroga: o rojstvu in zgodnjem otroštvu na Slovenskem [Doors to the circle: about birth and early childhood in Slovenia]*. Ljubljana: Slovenski etnografski muzej.

Povzetek

Prispevek na podlagi etnografskih del analizira otroštvo v slovenski kmečki družbi v prvi polovici 20. stoletja. Izkaže se, da so bili otroci organsko vključeni v vsakodnevno življenje, delo ter odnose, kar jim je omogočalo, da so se iz njih neposredno učili skozi opazovanje in postopno vključevanje. Prispevek dalje na podlagi avtoričine etnografske raziskave iz leta 2011/2012 v južni Sloveniji predstavi, kako se tudi dandanes otroci učijo skozi opazovanje ter vključevanje v vsakodnevna opravila. Avtorica s tem preizprašuje dihotomijo med "tradicionalno" družbo, kjer so se (oziroma se) otroci lahko učijo skozi opazovanje ter med "informacijsko" družbo, kjer naj bi otroštvo postalo institucionalizirano ter so zatorej za uspešno socializacijo otrok v sodobno družbo potrebne bolj formalne strategije učenja. Teoretsko se prispevek naslanja na sodobna antropološka dela o socializaciji in učenju.

CORRESPONDENCE: BARBARA TURK NISKAČ, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana. E-mail: barbara.turkniskac@ff.uni-lj.si.