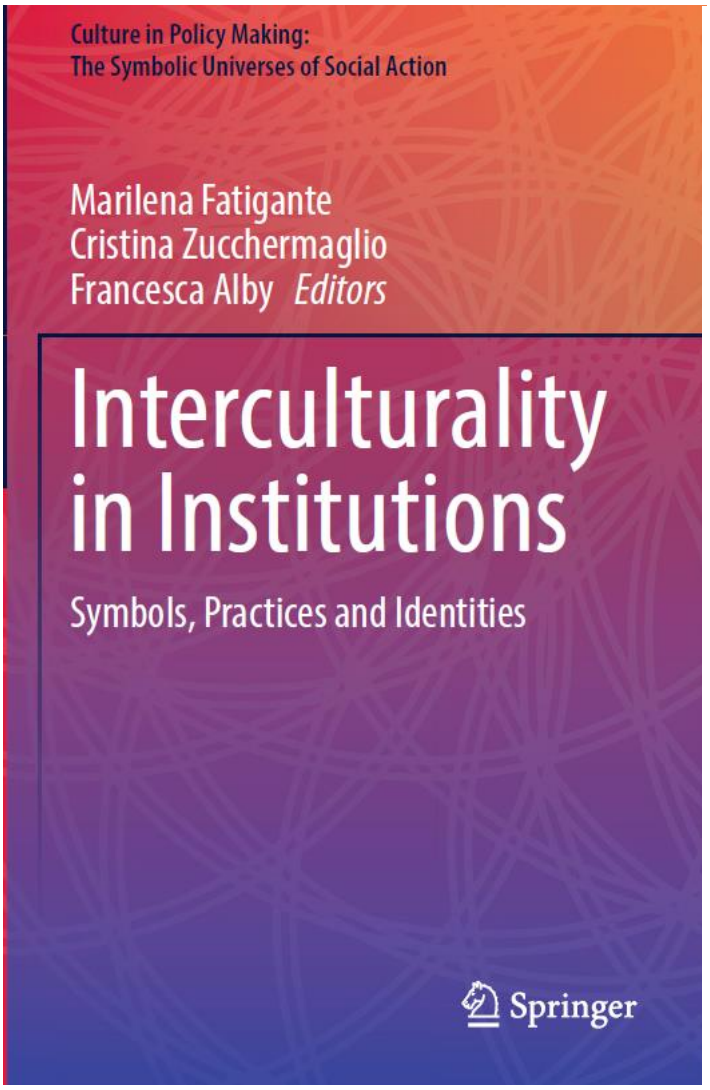

Chapter 13 – pp. 265-294

Interculturality in the making: Out-of-home children *familiarizing* with ethnographic research in Italian residential care

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Abstract

From its early beginning, anthropology has dealt with the unavoidably necessity of understanding the research experience as one (within many) intercultural occurrence. Particularly, the ethnographic line within children's studies has depicted the research experience in methodological and epistemological terms, promoting the adoption of an age- and culture-sensitive approach. Far from being inconsequential, this intercultural reflexive competence is required to research agents as well. Drawing on my Ph.D ethnographic research and focusing on two Italian residential care facilities, in this chapter I analyze children's repertoire of (discursive and behavioral) activities when dealing with research – its practices and tools – as locus of intercultural knowledge negotiation and co-construction. Within ethnographic pen-to-paper fieldnotes and conversational transcripts coming from video-recorded dinnertime interaction, children's repertoire emerges as an overall activity of "familiarization", i.e., aimed at "making the Other familiar", as in any intercultural encounter. Particularly, with this

repertoire children display to intertwine their multiple cultural assumptions – relying on their peer cultures as well as on their common home cultures shared with adults –, and personal concerns – reflecting over the boundaries between public and private spheres. In so doing, they co-construct the research as an intercultural environment relying on discursive and material artifacts that need to be "talked into being", enlarging its aims and processes.

13.1 Introduction

From its early beginning, anthropology has dealt with the unavoidably necessity of understanding the research experience as one – within many – intercultural occurrence. Particularly, the ethnographic line of researching cultures (Geertz, 1973; Agar, 1980) together with the sociology of knowledge (Merton, 1973; Lynch & Woolgar, 1990) and the organizational reflexive research (Yanow et al., 2009) has depicted the research experience in methodological and epistemological terms, suggesting researchers to know and adopt a reflexive and culturally sensitive approach. From these reflections on, a great amount of reflexive research has been produced, illuminating methodological implications and suggesting necessary attentions in collecting and analyzing data (Giorgi et al., 2021).

Most critical and ethical reflections have been done also in the field of children's studies (James, 2007; Komulaines, 2007; Spyrou, 2001; Meloni et al., 2015). Following the New Sociology of Children (Jenks, 1982; James & Prout, 1990a, b; James, 2007) and a renewed interest for the practices of socialization in the psychological and socio-anthropological domains (Ochs & Schiefflin, 1983; Corsaro, 1992, 1997; Ochs & Capps, 2001; Rogoff, et al., 2001; Rogoff, 2003; Goodwin, 2006; Tannen, 2007), in recent decades many lines of ethnographic research devoted attention to *children's cultures*, their symbols, practices and identities in everyday life, adopting also what are known as "creative methods[1]" (Clark & Moss, 2011; Chawla-Duggan, et a., 2018; Lems, 2019; Wernesjö, 2019; Giorgi et al., 2021). Following Corsaro's claim (1997:4) that «children are active, creative social agents who produce their own unique children's cultures while simultaneously contributing to the production of adult societies» we nevertheless assume that their knowledge, identities and practices are intercultural, navigating between different cultures and social institutions.

However, little attention[2] has been given to the *intercultural experience of doing research with children*, i.e., confronting peer cultures, adults' cultures, institutional cultures, and *the research culture* itself. How children interpret research symbols and practices? Which repertoire do they rely on – either their discursive, semiotic and/or behavioral – when trying to make sense out of the research they decide/accept/are forced to participate[3]? How children talk and act within these encounters,

[1] One of the most frequently used is the Mosaic Approach (Clark & Moss, 2011), a visual method aimed at listening children voices and gaining greater insights about their world perspectives.

[2] Compared to other social science – and reflexive – domains, a relatively scarce number of publications can be found on the subject. A search on the APA PsychInfo linking the terms "ethnography" with "children" and "interculture", yields only 10 results (books, dissertations, and journal peer-reviewed articles), while, for instance, when linking the terms "ethnography" with "children" and "reflexivity", more results arise (23 papers). Strikingly, the first combination "ethnography" and "children" produces by itself more than 2000 results, documenting an ongoing international debate. Of course, this does not mean that ethnographers have never reflected on the intercultural side of doing research with children, yet I argue that there has been little debate over the issue, privileging ethical and methodological issues, i.e., a reflexive approach. This has meant a greater number of publications recalling the ethnographic experience from the researcher's point of view – her acts, emotions, and thoughts –, that is, her 'counter-transference', following a brilliant psychoanalytic juxtaposition by Price (2006). Adopting this analogy, very few papers are instead dedicated to the 'transference', i.e., the research subjects' more or less unconscious affective stance toward the researcher, her symbols, practices and instruments. As to my knowledge, notable exceptions in the field of children's studies are: the studies of Corsaro on preschool children and pre-adolescents at Head Start community (Corsaro, 1992, 1997), Gobbo's and her colleagues' fieldworks with nomadic and immigrant children in Northern Italy (Gobbo, 2004), and the ethnographic work of Meloni and her colleagues with undocumented unaccompanied minors in Canada (Meloni et al., 2015; Chase et al., 2020; Haile et al., 2020; Lems, 2020; Wernesjö, 2020).

[3] On the paradoxes and tensions implied in children's participation in the research process, see Cooke and Kothari (2001), and Kapoor (2002). On the children's role in deciding whether (or not) participating in research – and its consequences –, see Hopkins (2008) and Fernqvist (2010).

contributing to the local construction of relevant, meaningful actions? As children are at the same time *active members of their peer cultures*, *institutional agents* dealing with adults' cultures, and *mundane research agents*, their repertoire of (discursive and behavioral) activities when interpreting research symbols, practices and instruments can better illuminate the research experience as an unavoidable intercultural encounter as well as a locus of knowledge co-construction[4], renewed partnership and negotiation.

Starting from this point, this chapter draws on my Ph.D ethnographic research in two Italian group homes, i.e., small residential care facilities hosting out-of-home children[5], and illustrates that children's occasions of "doing things with research" constitute an intercultural arena that illuminates children's peer cultures and their social institutions as well.

The chapter is organized as follows. In the section "Children's peer cultures in research," a concise review of children's peer cultures implied in their encounters with social institutions (family, economic, social, religious, etc.) will be presented. In the same section, I will briefly explain what kind of social institutions group homes are, and the many implications of doing research with children thereby. In "Methods," the methodology on which the present study is based on will be described: the overall research project and data collection, the selected settings and participants, the data analysis procedure, and excerpt selection. Children's talk and actions as loci of intercultural interpretative reproduction in research are discussed in "Results," followed by "Discussion and conclusions," which summarizes children's discursive and behavioral activities detected in the study, compares the two settings and accounts for children's intercultural references.

13.2 Children's peer cultures in research

From Margaret Mead (1929) on, the ethnographic line of research in families, schools and within different cultures (Ochs & Schiefflin, 1983; Rogoff, et al., 2001; Rogoff, 2003; Ochs & Capps, 2001; Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2002; Aronsson, 2006; Pontecorvo & Arcidiacono, 2007; Tannen, 2007; Ochs & Kremer-Sadlik, 2013) recalls the active role of children in society and, particularly, in contributing to their peer cultures, i.e., the local stable set of activities and routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers (Corsaro & Eder, 1990). As children's cultures «are not pre-existing structures that children encounter or confront» (Corsaro, 1997, p. 26), but rather «innovative and creative collective productions» (*Ivi*), peer cultures – and children themselves – are in constant interaction with adults' cultures, i.e., their symbols, practices, and implied identities, becoming *intercultural agents* from their early days. This interaction takes place notably by means of children's activity of interpretative reproduction, that stands as their creative appropriation in the production of cultural routines and meanings (Corsaro, 1992). As Corsaro's Orb Web Model in fact illustrates (see Figure 1), children's interpretative reproduction can be considered a spiral «in which children produce and participate in a series of embedded peer cultures» (*Ivi*, p. 24), in constant dialogue with social institutions (family, economic, social, educational, occupational, religious) and their development in time and space.

[4] In this light, with this contribution I would like to go beyond the dichotomies between the insider's *vs* outsider's knowledge (Merton, 1972; Geertz, 1973; Agar, 1980; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Caronia, 2018) and embrace a view where the Other is the ethnographer, with her symbols, practices and instruments.

[5] I am well aware that, following Gobbo (2004, p. 6), «a "field" is never totally coincident with the group, the context or the institutions from which a question to be asked or a problem to be understood (and hopefully solved) arose». At the same time, as out-of-home children – coming from hard experience such as family maltreatment, abandon and neglect – are frequently qualified as a vulnerable population, I cannot avoid but reflect over this issue whilst doing research, taking agency and vulnerability as interactive performances that cannot be considered mutually exclusive (Chase et al., 2020) nor taken for granted.

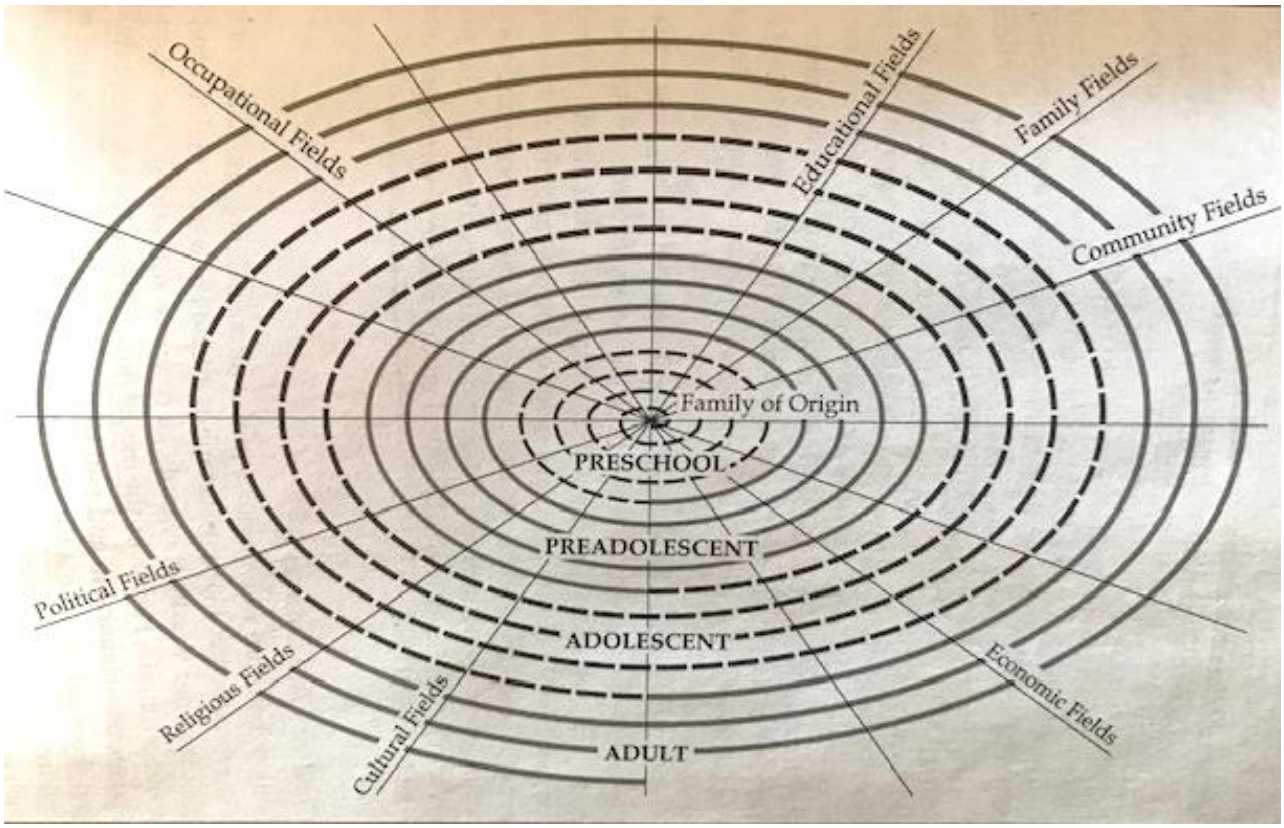


Figure 1: Corsaro's (1997, p. 25) Orb Web Model

Starting from the center of the web (see Figure 1), children learn to negotiate their interpretative repertoire within their family of origin and, followingly – most of them at an early age – they meet other different social institutions – adults and children that are not their family members. Growing up, «children's experience in peer cultures are not left behind (…); rather, they remain part of their live histories as active members of a given culture. Thus, individual development is embedded in the collective production of a series of peer cultures which in turn contribute to reproduction and change in wider adult society or cultures». (Corsaro, 1997, p. 26).

For out of home children, i.e., children that have been separated from their parents in order to protect them from their families' multiple disadvantaged conditions (such as neglect, abandon, maltreatment, abuse, and general instability), additional social institutions become involved in their web orb (Figure 1) and temporarily substitute their family of origin: mainly, local social services, jurisdictional units, and psychological services. Once children have been taken under the public custody, they are in fact placed in alternative care, either with foster families or in residential care. Once considered "the last resort" solution and still today under a constant political debate[6], residential care for children has been primarily studied for investigating children's psycho-social and clinical issues (Rutter 2000; Rutter et al. 2007), privileging a perspective of a deprived and disempowered child thereby hosted. A long-lasting literature also devotes attention to the institutional aspects and long-term effects of residential care in children's lives (Bloom, 1964; Arieli et al., 2001). To sum up, «the lesson learnt might be that ambivalence belongs to research on residential life as well as to residential life itself» Pösö (2004: 212-215), opening up for a peculiar interest in doing (ethnographic) research within these social institutions and with children temporarily living there. As «children are always participating in and part of two cultures – children's and adults' – and these cultures are intricately interwoven» (Corsaro, 1997, p. 26), children living in residential care are not only mundane *members of their peer cultures*,

[6] For instance, in Italy a long-lasting public debate originating from several judicial probes over potential mis-practices and abuses from social workers leads to the institution of a Parliament commission on residential care for children (2020).

but also *intercultural agents* and *institutional agents* of residential care as well. If and when we enter these social institutions with research purposes, we therefore inevitably add an additional culture with which they interact – i.e., the culture of research – that frames participants as *research agents*[7]. In this light, it becomes particularly interesting to investigate how children living in residential care use their intercultural repertoire – mediating between different peer and adults' cultures – to make sense out of the research experience as unavoidable intercultural encounter.

13.3 Method

13.3.1 The research project

The study is part of a larger Ph.D ethnographic research project aimed at analyzing the everyday talk and work of three Italian residential care facilities based in Rome (Saglietti 2012, 2019; Zucchermaglio et al. 2013) and it has been carried on from May 2007 to May 2009, with a follow up in 2010. The research received approval from the University Ethics Committee, from the local Social Services of the Municipality of Rome (IT) and from the deputy public prosecutor of the local juvenile court. The researcher's access was negotiated with the local Social Services manager as well as with all involved professionals and volunteers. During these meetings, I illustrated the aims and methods of the study as well as the practices to ensure confidentiality, privacy and anonymity. Professionals and children's tutors signed a written informed consent prior to data collection, according to the Italian Law concerning data protection and privacy. For the purpose of the study, a mixed-method approach was used: participant pen-to-paper observations of daily activities, shadowing of social educators and managers, audio-recordings of the staff's weekly meetings (from 4 to 10 h for each facility), video-recordings of dinnertime interactions (around 7 h for each facility), in-depth ethnographic interviews and informal conversations with professionals (around 3 h for each facility).

15.3.2 Contexts and participants

For the purpose of this article, we selected two out of the three group homes – i.e., small residential care facilities hosting no more than 8 children (see Lee & Barth, 2011) – of the entire study[8]: "Staff Home" and "Family Home" (all names of settings and involved participants are fictional). They have been chosen as to their similarities in terms of: (a) *location*, being located both in the suburbs of Rome, in independent units (see Figure 1 and 2); (b) *population density of living unit*, hosting no more than 6 children at the time of the research; (c) *age of children*, hosting mainly pre-adolescents and adolescent at the time of research; (d) *staffing*, being mainly organized around a staff of social educators; (e) *management*, being run by a local association whose president is at the same time educator and staff coordinator.

[7] Usually known as research participants/subjects – or, in recent cases, as informants (Nielsen, 2005) and research partners (Chase et al., 2020) as well – in order to render their active role in co-constructing the research culture, in this contribution I adopt the term "research agents". Following Ogbu as in Francesca Gobbo's words (2004: 4), "others are *agents*, namely, (..) they interpret the world and act in it according to their cultural and personal categories". This lexical choice – connected with this contribution's analytical aim – clearly epitomizes children's (and adults') agency, focusing on their capacity to act *over* and *with* the research experience. This must be accompanied, though, with the awareness that children (and adults) have also less agentic ways of dealing with research.

[8] The third setting, a group home run by a religious order, has been excluded from this contribution as it host little children, and a completely different interactive environment (see Saglietti & Zucchermaglio, 2021).

Figure 2: Staff Home.

Figure 3: Family Home.

The first setting – "Staff Home" (see Figure 2) – is a non-resident staffing group home, where 7 educators (see Figure 4) are organized along two shifts: the "long shift" (from 3pm to 10am of the following day) and the "short" one (from lunch to dinner). At the time of the research, Staff Home hosted 5 children: 3 boys – Aldo and Aziz, both 17 years old and Claudio, 14 years old – and 2 girls – Ilaria, 14, and Giada, 13 (see Figure 5). At the time of research, they were hosted there from an average two years. They were separated from their families due to multiple vulnerabilities: for instance, their parents being incarcerated (as in Aldo's case), or having psychiatric diseases (as Ilaria's single mother), or being unaccompanied minor (Aziz, coming from Afghanistan). Most of their placement projects are finalized to establish the conditions for a family reunification and/or an autonomous life once at 18 years old, i.e., when being legally independent. At the time of the research, all children were provided with external psychological public support.

Figure 4: Staff Home's educators during a weekly meeting.

Figure 5: From left to right: Giada and Ilaria.

The second setting – "Family Home" (see Figure 3) – is a family-staffing group home in which a resident family (Chiara and Francisco, with their daughter Daniela, aged 4 at the time of the research) is supported by a non-resident staff (4 educators) and a great number of volunteers (Figure 6). Staff at Family Home was organized by means of two shifts: the "5-day shift" (organized weekly, with one educator sleeping there from Monday to Friday) and the "afternoon" one (with other colleagues being present from lunch to dinner). At the time of the research, Family Home hosted 6 children: 4 boys – Silvano, 16 years old, Tommaso, 13 years old, Roberto, 12, and Ivo, 10 – and 2 girls – Marta, 14, and Nadia, 13 (see Figure 7). Placed at Family Home from an average time of one year, they suffered from multiple family problems, such as geographical distance from their caregivers and neglect (Roberto), severe psychiatric problems of their single caregiver (Nadia, Marta), familial economic impossibility to take care of them (Tommaso), and psycho-social problems linked to parents' drug addiction

(Ivo). Particularly, three of them come from foreign families: Marta is the only child of a Nigerian single mother, Roberto migrates from Romania, and Tommaso belongs to a Pakistani family living nearby. At the time of the research, only Marta and Nadia were provided with external psychological support (Nadia with psychiatric assistance as well), while the great majority of them had individual support at school.

Figure 6: Family Home educators, volunteers, and children during a celebration of their local association.

Figure 7: From left to right: Tommaso, educator Diletta, Ivo, Marta, Marco the volunteer, Roberto, Nadia and Chiara, the resident.

13.3.3 Analytic procedure

For the purpose of this work, i.e., identifying children's repertoire of (discursive and behavioral) activities toward research (its practices, symbols and tools), I scrutinized the two setting's data corpus with respect to children's direct presence[9]. Consequently, I focused on the ethnographic notes taken (two books of participant pen-to-paper observations of daily activities) and on the 14 hours of video-recordings of dinnertime interactions[10]. I excluded from this dataset the interaction in which the research experience was commented/confronted/"talked into being" *only* by adults – either if educators, residents or volunteers. Within this circumscribed dataset, I took into consideration any specific episode in which:

a) children *act* with reference to the research experience at hand (e.g., when they hide my ethnographic notebook, and/or used the video-camera);

b) children *talk* about the research experience (e.g., the stories they tell about the research and the researcher, their comments over research tools and practices).

These episodes[11] were selected as they dealt with research practices, tools, and people, and occurred either with or without the presence of adults, in single interaction, and/or in prolonged ones, with one child or with groups of children. I consequently "locate" each episode taking into consideration if was present within ethnographic notes – both recorded by myself or by children – or within dinnertime interaction. In this last respect, I took into consideration the conversational transcripts of my data corpus, that were previously used for my Conversation Analysis-oriented work on group homes (Saglietti, 2010, 2012; Saglietti & Zucchermaglio, 2021) and look for any instance in which their actions were: a) directed to the camera (i.e., considering the camera or myself as recipients of their speech), b) connected to the presence of the camera (e.g., complaining for its presence, making funny

[9] The rest of data corpus implied other research activities (see above) that mainly involved group homes' educators and managers (e.g., shadowing of social educators and managers, audio-recordings of the staff's weekly meetings, in-depth ethnographic interviews and informal conversations with professionals). With making that analytical choice, I do not disconfirm adults' important role of mediator with children, but rather considered their role with reference to children's initiatives.

[10] Three-consecutive weekday dinnertime interaction were video-recorded by educators without the presence of the researcher.

[11] With considering only the episodes that I been traced in my data, I am also aware of the fact that many other episodes could have been eluded from my dataset.

jokes in front of it), c) connected to the research experience at hand (e.g., commenting research phases, instruments and actions).
Once the collection was established, I finally detected and consequently counted children's discursive and behavioral activities toward research for each and any data source and setting. Each selected episode has been firstly analyzed with an ethnographical perspective (Serranò & Fasulo, 2011), accounting for the "emic" perspective taken by children toward research, i.e., recognizing the subjective reality constituting children's social worlds. Followingly, it has been analyzed in thematical terms (Wetherell, 2001), focusing on children's activity taking places, either if discursive or behavioral. Finally, the data collection has been analyzed with reference to the reflexive literature on children's studies – known also as children's reflexivity (Nielsen, 2005; Meloni et al., 2015; Chawla-Duggan et al., 2018).

13.4 Children *familiarizing* with ethnographic research

Data analysis revealed that with respect to the "location" of children's (discursive and behavioral) activities towards research seven episodes were recorded within ethnographic notes – four recorded by me and three by children themselves (both at Family Home) – and nine in the video-recorded dinnertime interaction.
These documented activities were found to be the following ones: a) associating research with other activities (2); b) asking (1); c) teasing (2); d) taking notes (3); e) anthropomorphizing research instruments (3); f) complaining (3); g) showing things to the camera (1) (see Table 1).

Children's activities towards research	Staff Home	Family Home	Total
Associating research to other activities	1	1	2
Asking	0	1	1
Teasing	1	1	2
Taking notes	0	3	3
Anthropomorphizing research instruments	1	2	3
Complaining	2	1	3
Showing things to the camera	1	0	1

Table 1: List and relative frequency of children's repertoire of discursive and behavioral activities toward research within Staff and Family Home dataset.

For the purpose of this work, in the following lines I present the most representative excerpts for the traced activity, irrespectively of the "data location" and setting in which they originated[12]. Overall, I consider these activities as aimed at "making the Other familiar", echoing – and, at the same time, reversing – the anthropological analytical tradition of "making the familiar strange" that is required to ethnographers when dealing with potential taken-for-granted cultural assumptions (Gobbo, 2004; Caronia, 2018). That's why I qualified them as "familiarizing" activities, explicitly claiming children's intercultural competence in "making the Other familiar".

15.4.1 Associating research to other activities

Excerpt #1 took place during my first meeting with children at Family Home. After according with managers and educators – and collected all the implied requirements to involve children in my research –, we decided that my first occasion to meet them and gain their explicit research consent

[12] Notwithstanding the fact that this analysis does not consist in a cross-cultural research, it is still unavoidable to compare how children talk and act in the above-mentioned group homes, making some distinctions over children's interpretative repertoires and group homes' cultures thereby available (see "Discussion and conclusions").

should take place during a weekday lunch. Excerpt #1 illustrates part of my ethnographic fieldnotes of the meeting.

EXCERPT #1: "SO YOU'RE A COACH!" [ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES, FAMILY HOME, 6/11/2007]

When I arrive at Family Home, all children are already sitting at the table, waiting for me. Our introduction sounds bizarre, as they look attentively at me, without speaking. Diletta and Filippo, both educators that I already know, introduce me to the kids. I then begin to explain the research process – what will going on the following days, the general research aims, my instruments – when Ivo interrupts me. "Are you a *coach*[13] [in English]?", he asks me. I reply by asking him what he intent with the term. "Are you a coach for adults? Will you train them [looking at educators] to explain how to behave?". I reply by saying that, in effect, yes, after the data collection I will followingly work with educators to give them back the results of my work. "But I'm not here for judging people". Ivo nods.

In associating the ethnographer to a sport "coach", in Excerpt #1 Ivo evokes his personal and cultural experience of being a soccer team player, and negotiates over the research process and utility, requesting the researcher to explicitly account over the "real" purpose of the study. His association – framing myself as "coach" and, consequently, educators as players that need to be trained – transforms the research access negotiation into a discursive arena in which practical implications need to be explicitly recalled. As this excerpt reminds us, the research process – its intrusion over children's cultural routines and private lives – needs to be accounted.

The following association made by children has been traced within dinnertime video-recordings at Staff Home. As a rule of the home, during the weekday evenings, a volunteer participates at dinner[14]. In the following excerpt, Aldo – the oldest boy – introduces the video-research to Simona, a volunteer, framing her participation as being "Big Brother's special guest".

EXCERPT #2: "YOU'RE BIG BROTHER'S SPECIAL GUEST" [DINNERTIME VIDEO-RECORDINGS, STAFF HOME, 06/05/2008, 3:30]

((Aldo, Ilaria, Giada and Claudio are already sat at the table with their educators Rachele (at the top right corner) and Attilio (in the bottom left corner) and Simona, the volunteer))

1.	Aldo:	*stasera sei ospit- sei ospite speciale del grande fratello*
		tonight you're big brother's sp- special guest
2.	(0.8)	
3.	Volunteer:	*e lo so.*
		yes i know.
4.	Aldo:	( )?

[13] In Italian, the word commonly implied for a sport trainer is "allenatore". "Coach" is typically used for professional help at work and/or for counselling. It can also be used in specific sports, such as baseball or soccer. As I will followingly find out, Ivo used this term with his soccer trainer.

[14] Coming from a group of trained and well-known volunteers, Simona – an employee in her thirties – was already informed of the video-based research, as she previously signed the research consent.

5.	(1.5)	*((The volunteer nods. Giada turns towards the camera))*
6.	( ):	hh
7.	Volontaria:	*dopo: (.) [do: po::]* *facciamo le votazioni per chi eliminare.* the:n (.) [the:n] we'll vote to decide who's out.
8.	Ed Rachele:	[*le (sfide)esterne*] [the external (challenges)]
9.	(1.5)	
10.	Ed Rachele:	ah *((smiling))*
11.	(1)	
12.	Ed Rachele:	*in privato.* privately.
13.	(1)	
14.	Claudio:	*quella: è: (.) il confessio[nale ((pointing at the door of the studio))* that one is the confession [room
15.	Volontaria:	[*là dentro.* [inside it.

Even if already informed by the presence of the video-camera (as her reaction shows in line 3), Simona is introduced by Aldo to the video-research by announcing her: «Tonight you're Big Brother's special guest» (line 1). In so doing, Aldo initiates an association that will be collectively carried on by adults and children (see the involvement of Claudio as well, line 14) for the rest of this episode in an ironical atmosphere (lines 1-15). In associating the video-research to the tv reality show[15] they necessarily evoke their being spied in their everyday life at home. As also ethnographic observations confirmed[16], children and adults show to be active tv spectators – as they employ several specific tv show's terms (as in lines 7, 8 and 14) –, relying on a common cultural media knowledge. Particularly, when collectively looking over the experience of being "eliminated" and "challenged" (lines 7-12) and when spatially shaping the house and its rooms to be in line with the tv show's architectural setting (see lines 14-15), they at the same time reflect over their participation in alternative care, that in effect implies their being temporary living into surveilled spaces, i.e., somewhere beyond the private and public spheres[17], as the Big Brother "home" is. In so doing, video-based research appears to represent a discursive arena in which adults and children – by means of their common cultural tv culture – can reflect over their experience of living and being video-studied. In meta-communicating over the research experience as in this case occurred, children show to gain control over the situation at hand and contribute to peer and adults' cultures. The result is a collective linguistic joke opened to adults' participation and enrichment.

13.4.2 Asking

In the same meeting of Excerpt#1, children perform another activity dealing with the research negotiation, i.e., asking (Excerpt #3).

EXCERPT #3: "YOU WANNA ENTER INTO MY ROOM?" [ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES, FAMILY HOME, 6/11/2007]

After Ivo has spoken, educator Diletta asks me if she can interrupt us. She introduces Marta and anticipates that the girl wants to ask me a question over the research process. "Go ahead" I assure her. "Well, I was wondering if you want to enter my room with your camera".

[15] Coming from Orwell's 1984 novel, the Big Brother tv reality show represents a frequent association with video-based research. On participants' associations of video-researching in families, see Padiglione & Giorgi (2010).

[16] In this group home, in fact, at dinner the tv is frequently on.

[17] In effect, group homes are at the same time a private life space for those inhabiting there, and a public alternative care setting serving the society to recover maltreated minors.

In asking about the spatial regulation of my (and the video-camera's) positionality, Marta – the tallest and most robust adolescent of the group – opens a frequently evoked dimension of social research, that is the boundaries between public and private (see also Excerpt #2), and the necessary local agreements that researcher and researched need to stipulate over research's aims and protocols. Helped by an educator – with whom she already discussed the issue (see Excerpt #3) – Marta appears to be preoccupied by the researcher potential intrusion of her personal space. As I will followingly "discover" during the ethnographic observations, her room – positioned just in front of the common dining room – is in fact frequently "invaded" by the boys, as to tease her. In this light, her activity of asking accounts for her dilemma concerning how to conduct oneself in an ethically responsible way in private spaces (Aarsand & Forsberg, 2010) while at the same time voicing about a cohabitation problem, that is typical of intercultural occurrences.

13.4.3 Teasing

During the first days of ethnographic observations at Family Home, another children's activity emerged, the activity of teasing me, frequently carried on by the boys (see Excerpt #4).

EXCERPT #4: HIDING MY NOTEBOOK [ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES, FAMILY HOME, 10/12/2007]

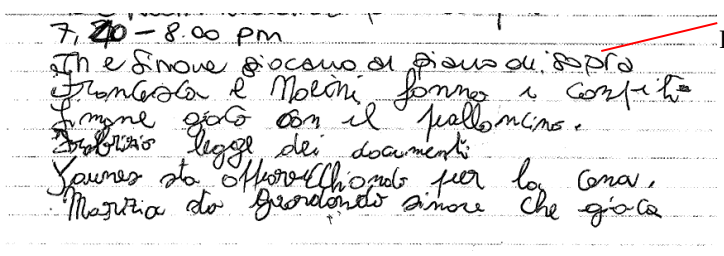
The first day of ethnographic observations has been particularly hard for me. Within the many things that I need to focus, that I do not understand, there's also another situation that I don't know how to handle. Boys – Tommaso and Ivo, particularly, but also Simone – twice hided my notebook when I left it on the sofa while in bathroom. The first time I ask them to give it back to me. The second time I involve their educators. Also, they frequently come and see what I'm writing down and continuously ask me what's going on. I'm very frustrated but need to find a solution.

With the category of "teasing" I collected here children's behavioral activities that Family Home children – boys, in particular – put in place to monitor, control and challenge me as an observer: their actions of hiding my notebook (as it is the case in Excerpt #4), using it without permission, and/or looking at what was I writing down. In so doing, they express they their attempts at controlling the research process while at the same time communicating their agency and involvement. This situation completely changed when I propose them to take notes at my place (see Excerpts #5 and #6).

13.4.3 Taking notes

Excerpt #5 originates during an afternoon of ethnographic observations at Family Home, where Tommaso – one of the most curious boys of the group (see Excerpt 4) – after having saw multiple times what I was writing down, continues to ask me about my notes. After being teased multiple times, when I proposed him to observe and write down the ethnographic observations he promptly accepts (Excerpt #5).

EXCERPT #5: TOMMASO TAKING NOTES [ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES, FAMILY HOME, 12/12/2007]

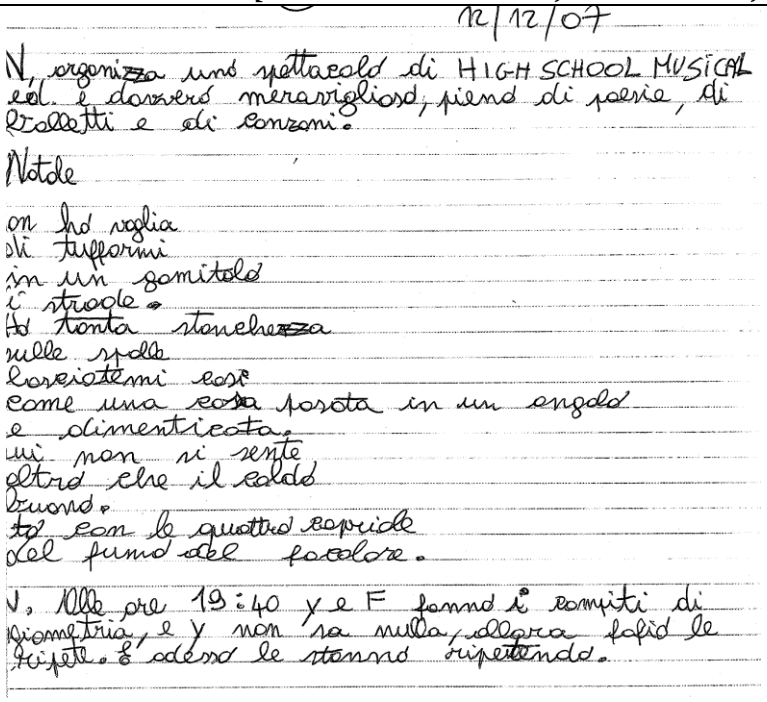


7:40 – 8 pm
Tommaso and Silvano are playing at the top floor [myself]
Federica and Nadia are studying.
Silvano plays with a little ball.
Francisco [the manager] *is reading some documents*

Ivo is preparing for dinner.
Marzia [myself] *is looking at Silvano while he is playing.* [Tommaso]

Excerpt #5 illustrates the outcome of Tommaso's involvement in taking notes. The result is two-folded: on one side, he provides to be an acute observer, depicting all the activities taking places (involving the researcher as object of observation as well, see last line), and on the other side, he immediately stops teasing me. Overall, in "doing the ethnographer" he follows what I already traced (see the first line), reporting every single action of the people involved. What this activity can suggest is that in "copying" the approach of the researcher, he is following the route traced by adults, as at schools or in any other official learning activity students usually do.
In a completely different way from him, Nadia interprets the task of taking notes in Excerpt #6.

EXCERPT #6: NADIA TAKING NOTES [ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES, FAMILY HOME, 12/12/2007]


12/12/07

N, organizza uno spettacolo di HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL
ed è davvero meraviglioso, pieno di poesie, di
balletti e di canzoni.

Natale

Non ho voglia
di tuffarmi
in un gomitolo
di strade.
Ho tanta stanchezza
sulle spalle
lasciatemi così
come una cosa posata in un angolo
e dimenticata.
Qui non si sente
altro che il caldo
buono.
Fuori con le quattro ragazze
del fumo del focolare.

N. Alle ore 19:40 y e F fanno i compiti di
geometria, e y non sa nulla, allora fabio le
ripete. E adesso le stanno ripetendo.

N, [she is writing on herself, NdA] organizes a HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL and it is beautiful, full of poetry, dances and songs.

Christmas

I don't want
to dive
in a skein
of streets

I have so much
weariness
on my shoulders

Leave me like this
as a
thing
rested
in a
corner
and forgotten about

Here

is nothing
else
than the good warmth

I'll stay
with the four
puffs
of smoke
from the fireplace.

N. at 19:40 I [stands for Ivo, NdA] and F [Federica the educator] are doing giometry[18] howework, and I doesn't know anything, so Filippo [another educator] repeats. And now they are studying again.

Nadia's activity of taking notes (Excerpt #6) is structured into three different parts. In her initial phase, she writes down her involvement in a musical production, explaining the (potential)[19] organization of High School Musical, that is a Broadway musical production and a popular tv serial at the moment of my research. In recalling it, she qualifies this media performance as «beautiful, full of poetry, dances and songs». Probably in order to connect with the poetical experience previously qualified, she then initiates a second activity: writing down "Christmas" a poem by Giuseppe Ungaretti[20]. Since the ethnographic observations took place some week before Christmas, it is possible that it has to do with some sort of school assignment, or play. Still, it is strikingly moving recalling such a poem from a girl that suffered from family maltreatments and shows important psychological issues. When she reproduces the following words – «I have so much weariness on my shoulders. Leave me like this as a thing rested in a corner and forgotten about» – we cannot help but imagine that it's not only about a poetical declaiming, but something different, something more[21]. In the third part of Excerpt #6 she finally writes down what she observes. Interestingly, in doing so, she cannot help but use her personal interest – i.e., observing only one part of the scene: her school mate, Ivo, with whom she is frequently arguing – and personal voice, making a grammatical mistake (see the term "geometry") and using her irresistible ironical tones[22] ("Ivo doesn't know anything"). To sum up, Excerpt #6 shows Nadia's capacity to exploit the – material and metaphorical – "blank page" offered by the research to intertwine her different personal interests and cultural assumptions: from her being a (potential) performer of a Broadway musical and student declaiming poetry, to the one of being a research agent, ironically observing other people's reactions. In this case, her intercultural competence to intertwine her different cultural worlds – potential and real ones – is used as a means to express herself with her unavoidably bittersweet voice.

13.4.4 Anthropomorphizing research instruments

Within this analytical category, I consider children's activities used to refer to the camera as it was an interlocutor, i.e., with talking to it as if I was there or in a specific anthropomorphic way, as it is in the following case (see Excerpt #7).

[18] In her Italian text, geometry is written incorrectly: "giometria" instead of "geometria". For coherence, we translate her text by reporting Nadia's mistake.
[19] As I will followingly discover, this musical is not something that she is really preparing with some group, but an activity that she is doing by herself, without an outcome in reality.
[20] In Italian elementary schools, it is often proposed to children to learn Italian poems by heart.
[21] Unfortunately, however, I did not dare to ask her why she chose that specific poem and what she wanted to say with including it within her notes.
[22] During the ethnographic observations, Nadia frequently used funny expressions.

EXCERPT #7: SONIA, THE CAMERA [DINNERTIME VIDEO-RECORDINGS, FAMILY HOME, 20/05/2008, 31:02]
((This night at dinner there are: Ivo (10 years old), Marta (14), Tommaso (13), Nadia (13), Silvano (16), Marco, the volunteer, Diletta the educator, Chiara and Francisco, managers, and their little daughter Daniela (4). Silvano and Tommaso with Francisco are discussing over the camera))

1.	Marta:	*LEI ci sta <filmando>? ((looking at the video-camera))*
		is SHE <filming> us?
2.	Nadia:	*guarda?*
		look?
3.	Volunteer:	*°si°*
		°yes°
4.	Nadia:	*silvano? (.) guarda. ((touching Silvano's arm))*
		silvano? (.) look.
5.	(0.5)	*((Nadia makes a funny expression towards the camera while Silvano is looking at her))*
6.	Francisco:	*lei chi? ((smiling towards Marta))*
		who is she?
7.	(1)	*((While Francisco keeps smiling at Mart, she turns herself and looks toward the camera))*
8.	Marta:	*SONIA.*
9.	Silvano:	*salut[a:?*
		say [hello:?
10.	Chiara:	*[a:!! la chiamiamo sonia? [(.) va bene.*
		ha:!! We call her Sonia? [(.) all right.
11.	Marta:	[u: u? *((nodding))*
12.	Silvano:	*sonia [(super tre)?*
		sonia [(super three)?
13.	Chiara:	[sonia?
14.		[*((Roberto waves towards the camera))*
15.	Silvano:	*ce sta [(pure birillo?)*
		is there [(birillo too?)
16.	Daniela:	*[DOV'E' [LA SONIA::?*
		[WHERE IS [THE SONIA::?
17.	Tommaso:	*[cia-ciao! ((turning towards the camera and waving))*
18.		[hi-hi!
19.	Chiara:	*↑sonia è (.) ↓lei. ((pointing at the camera while turning herself in order to make Daniela see the camera))*
		↑sonia is (.)↓her.

In anthropomorphizing the camera and transforming it into "Sonia" (line 9) – a feminine (see also her remark at line 1) proper name probably linked to the Italian noun of the tool (i.e., "telecamera" in Italian) – Marta shows to discursively manufacture the research apparatus (Aarsand & Forsberg, 2010) and meta-communicate over the research process. This activity is discursively sustained firstly by Francisco (the group home manager) – asking her to whom she is talking about (line 6) – and, secondly, by Chiara, who ratifies the given name (line 10) and opens for collective enrichment. From line 10 on, in fact, children and adults concur in co-constructing a collective negotiation and joyful experience connected to their being filmed by "Sonia". Particularly, Silvano's engagement in recalling a tv show[23] ("Sonia super three", line 12) and its fictional characters ("Birillo", line 15) corroborates Marta's discursive proposal, enriching it with (additional) media culture elements. On the whole, everyone is part of this linguistic joke (even the little Daniela, which is included by her mum to understand the association, see lines 16-19).
This strategy of "making the unfamiliar familiar" – in this case, "genderizing", "agentifying" and "mediatizing" a research tool – is particularly revealing of the many collective cultural assumptions thereby available. First, as in Family Home it is very frequent to host someone new at dinner – a volunteer, a friend, Chiara and Francisco's other family members – the activity of naming the camera

[23] "Sonia Super Three" stands for a children tv show available in the Nineties in a local tv of Rome. Sonia was the name of the tv host, while "Birillo" stands for a robot with which Sonia interacted during the show.

could rely on their group home's peculiar culture. Secondly, in recalling a tv show, children illustrate to appropriately adapt their media culture to make new associations and interpretations. Thirdly, in collectively participating to this discursive joke children and adults together display to enrich their cultural assumptions as well as constructing their collective playful "family environment".

13.4.5 Complaining

The presence of the video-camera, however, not only constitutes an arena for discursive negotiation and collective meaning-making, but also serves for children as a platform to complain over their educators as well as over the research process itself. We took into consideration only this last aspect, as it renders best children's cultural assumptions and concerns over the research process (Excerpt #8).

EXCERPT #8: WITH THIS FUCKING CAMERA WE AIN'T DO NOTHING [DINNERTIME VIDEO-RECORDINGS, STAFF HOME, 08/05/2008, 05:43]

((The scene is occurring before dinner in the dining room. All children - Ilaria, Giada, Aldo, Claudio and Aziz – are preparing the table and waiting for educator Attilio to complete cooking. Tv is loudly on. Chiara, the educator, walks towards the tv where there are Ilaria and Giada. While other boys went to the kitchen, Aziz, Giada and Ilaria are in the room))

1.	Chiara:	*( ) il televiso: [re?*
		( ) the televisio:[n?
2.	TV:	*[FA:BIO:::? [(0.5) cosa [fai ancora a letto?*
		[FA:BIO:::? [(0.5) what [are you doing still in bed?
3.	Chiara:	*[( )*
4.	Ilaria:	*[m:?*
5.	TV:	*SBRIGATI [che mi devi accompagnare*
		HURRY UP [you must take me at
6.	Chiara:	*[( )*
7.	TV:	*in uffic[io::?*
		the offi[ce::?
8.	Ilaria:	*[(che palle o:.)*
		[(you're breaking my balls hey:.)
9.		(2) *((Someone turns the tv off))*
10.	Ilaria:	*↑MO PER QUELLA CAZZO DI TELECAMERA: NON SE PO- FA- GNENTE (più)*
		NOW FOR THIS FUCKING CAMERA: WE AIN'T DO NOTHING (more)
11.		(8) *((Chiara walks by and enters the kitchen while Aziz walks towards the camera))*
12.	(Giada):	*°( )°*
13.	Ilaria:	*e: perché::? (0.5) perché ce sta- sta cazzo di telecamera (.) e:: allora non se po' accendere la tv. ((crying))*
		a:nd why::? (0.5) because there's th- this fucking camera (.) a::nd we ain't turn the tv on *((crying))*
14.		(20) *((Giada wishers something to Ilaria, while the educator Antonio in the kitchen chat to someone else)) ((Continues in Excerpt #9))*

In Excerpt #8 Ilaria explicitly complains about the presence of the camera and accounts for the restrictions that this implies in the everyday life of Staff Home. Particularly, the girl cries for the fact that presumably Chiara, the educator, asked her to turn the tv off before dinner. With her intervention in line 10 – "now for this fucking camera we ain't do nothing (more)", Ilaria loudly accuses the research process to impede everything that they usually do, i.e., watching tv while taking dinner. In so doing, she explains their cultural routines and accounts for a more in-depth negotiation space over the research protocols and interests.

13.4.6 Showing things to the camera

Another discursive material practice put off by children concerns the use of material (such as, journals) put in front of the camera. In the following example, occurring right after Excerpt #8, the most silent boy of the group – Aziz, un unaccompanied asylum-seeking boy that does not speak fluent Italian – reacts to Ilaria's claim and co-constructs a new activity, i.e., showing the camera a furniture catalogue with a child on its cover (see Excerpt #9).

EXCERPT #9: AZIZ SHOWING MAGAZINES [DINNERTIME VIDEO-RECORDINGS, STAFF HOME, 08/05/2008, 06:13]

15.	Aziz:	*((Continues from Excerpt #8))*
		
		((Aziz shows this furniture catalogue to the camera))
16.	Ilaria:	he he [he!
17.	Aziz:	[h:: *((laughing))*
18.		(1)
19.	Ilaria:	he he!
20.		(0.5)
21.	Ilaria:	*fa vede-?*
		let me se-? *((running towards the camera))*
22.		(2)
23.	Ilaria:	*fa vede-?*
		let me se-? *((Going back to see the camera filming))*
24.		(5) *((Ilaria took the image and leans it to the camera. Educators and other children are chatting in the other room))*
25.	Ilaria:	he he he he *((laughing))*
26.	Ilaria	*he::::y ciao::?* *((She leans the image of the child towards the camera and makes it oscillating as the child is speaking)).*
		hey hello::? *((with a childish voice))*
27.		(1)
28.	Ilaria:	hey u:: u::?
29.		(2) *((Claudio enters the room while talking to Chiara, the educator, which is in the kitchen))*
30.	Ilaria:	*Claudio guarda: (.) vieni.*
		Claudio look: (.) come here.
31.		(2) *((Claudio approaches))*
32.	Ilaria:	*m?* (0.5) *sembra ve:ro::?* *((oscillating the image of the child in front of the camera))*
33.		m? (0.5) it looks re:a::l?
34.	Claudio:	*cioè te me prendi sta cosa*
		so you took m- that thing
35.		*s- s- s- sei proprio [una::*
		y- y- y- y're really [a::
36.	Ilaria:	*[l'ha fatto A:zi:z(.) veramente*
		[Aziz did it (.) actually
37.	Claudio:	*embè? te però lo stai a rifà*
		so what? ya did it again
38.		*(ei proprio).*
		(ya- really).

39.	Ilaria:	*perché è bello.* because it's nice *((going back to the sofa with taking the catalogue with her))*
40.		*((Claudio and Aziz go away from the camera. Claudio direct himself to the kitchen, while Aziz stands up in the dining room))*

In Excerpt #9, Aziz and Ilaria collaboratively co-construct a "divergent" practice in front of the camera: while firstly showing an image (line 15), they followingly put in place a drama scene, in which a little child says hi to his audience (lines 26-28). Ilaria tries to involve Claudio as well (lines 30, 32), without success. As he frequently does in the whole corpus of video-recordings (see Saglietti, 2010), Claudio not only disaligns from the "research-divergent" activity, but also disaffiliates[24] and blames Ilaria for her initiative (lines 34-35). Particularly, with giving the responsibility to Ilaria herself – even if she attempts to share it with Aziz (line 36) – he constructs Ilaria as the most accountable between the two. In so doing, Claudio exploits a typical strategy of educators' behavior, that is stressing the allocation of individual responsibility (see Saglietti, 2010). From her part, the girl interrupts this activity – even if she accounts it as "nice" (line 39) –, steps back, and goes to the sofa where she was lying before Aziz's initiation.

During this encounter, children's interactive participation illustrates that peer cultures have magmatic features, in line with their personal and cultural positionalities, aims, power and affective stances. For instance, Aziz's effort to affiliate with Ilaria's concerns over the camera (see Excerpt #8) offers the girl an interactive space to go on with complaining and contesting the camera's presence. In fact, by co-constructing their "oppositional" activity, children appear to reestablish their control over the research filming process by amplifying the activity, that passes from a showing off (line 15) to an interactive play with a main character reciting in front of the camera (lines 26-28). It is only when Ilaria tries to enlarge the play community, asking Claudio to come over, that this activity stops. In disaligning and disaffiliating from what the two are doing, Claudio shows his power to change their alliance and reestablish the "research mode" environment, with the video-camera recording their "usual" everyday life. In so doing, he seems to voice both adults' culture – attributing individual responsibility, stopping divergent activities, and challenging children's attempts to gain control over their common life – and research's culture – re-establishing an expected "non-divergent" behavior.

13.5 Discussion and conclusions

While I am particularly aware of my role (age, identity, past, sensitivity, and so forth) as contributor to the ways in which this research experience has been collected, presented, and analyzed, in this contribution I focused on children's repertoire of activities – i.e., their talk and actions – in framing the above-mentioned ethnographic research, its symbols, practices and instruments.

Following Herbert (2001), rather than being occasional accidents or obstacles, all the above-analyzed activities of *familiarizing* with research disclose much about children's – and adults' – cultural assumptions, «and their relationship with the outside world, i.e., external professionals and, as in my case, external professional cultures» (*Ivi*, p. 305). I named these activities "familiarizing" ones, as they oscillate between the two poles defining any intercultural encounter, that is navigating from the Other to the Self, from the Unknown to the Already-Known, from the Unfamiliar to the Familiar. In so doing, children's repertoire constitutes an important feature of their active manufacturing cultural work, voicing their interpretative worlds and distinctive perspectives over the research encounters, encapsulating it as an experience that is close to what they already know. Not only this repertoire "familiarizes" us with their visions and voices, but also it constitutes an important signal for researchers to consider, explore and expand.

Differently from other children's social institutions (e.g., schools, day care centers, even families) and due to the sensitivity of the topic and the need for multiple research permissions, group homes have been rarely investigated by ethnographic research[25] (see Poso, 2004; Anglin, 2002; Tan 2010;

[24] On the differences between affiliation and alignment, see Clayman (1997) and DuBois (2007).

[25] Access, video-research and child data protection requirements are very restricted, due to National privacy Laws and regulations.

van Es et al. 2019; Smith 2020), resulting particularly "unfamiliar" settings for ethnographic research, and viceversa.

In this analysis, I illustrated that children as intercultural agents – i.e., members of their peer cultures as shared universe of discourses (Fine, 1987), interlocutors of adult's cultures, institutional agents of residential care, and research agents – deployed different "vocabularies" and associations in order to "familiarize" with the research experience. When, for instance, they take notes and contemporary write down poetry (as in Excerpt #6), or when they associate research with their sport (Excerpt #1), school (Excerpts #1, #5, #6) and media (real or potential) experiences (Excerpt #2, #6, #7, #8 #9), or again when they complain over the research (Excerpt #8) for breaking their cultural home routine, they display their peer cultures' focal concerns, i.e., their «specific set of values, interests, and problems central to their peer culture» (Corsaro, 1997, p. 167), such as their concerns of being students, athletes, tv spectators, musical performers, children in custody, mundane home members, and research agents. One of their most prominent focal concerns, i.e., their interest in understanding the boundaries between public and private spheres (see #Excerpts #2, #3 and #8), stresses a culture- and age-sensitive topic of any research, requiring additional space for local negotiation and collective interpretation.

At the same time, children display to be capable of innovating, contesting, and changing their cultural assumptions and the research experience on its whole – its symbols, practices and instruments (as in Excerpts #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #7, #9) – that appeared to be enlarged by their cultural innovation. Following Corsaro, these familiarizing activities can be considered "secondary adjustments", firstly defined by Goffman (1961, 189) as «any habitual arrangements by which a member of a [group] employs unauthorized means, or obtains unauthorized ends, or both, thus getting around the organization's assumptions as to what he should do and get and hence what he should be».

Particularly, the activities of teasing (see Excerpts #4), complaining (as in #8) and using the camera to do something else than recording their everyday life (as in #9) account also for children's "oppositional talk" – frequently used by pre-adolescent and adolescent group interaction when specifying their group contribution (as it resulted in Corsaro, 1997 and Goodwin, 2006). In this light, all the above-analyzed children's activities succeed in gaining a certain amount of control over the research process. As Tarja Pösö claims (2004), research – particularly within residential care – always implies an intervention in the identities of children, modifying their perspectives and assumptions not only over research, but also over themselves as cultural agents within their peer, familial, institutional and media cultures too.

As I illustrated, this ethnographic reconstruction accounts for the two specific group homes cultures too. Both settings appear to be spaces for collective interpretative reproduction, most of the time by means of an ironical and creative atmosphere (as in #2, #7 and #9), even if loudly complaints (as in #8), resistances (#9), and challenges (#4 and #7) occurred too. Interestingly, all members – even the most silent amongst (as, for instance, Aziz in #9) – take part in this collective interpretative repertoire, showing to acutely intertwine their cultural assumptions and expectations. Particularly, at Family Home children appear to be very active in associating research with their other cultural experiences (e.g., sport, school, media cultures), while at the same time negotiating both the action of research (see in particular Excerpts #5 and #6) and the interpretation of research's actions (Hymes, 1996) (see #7). Children's intercultural competence reconfigures and amplifies their multiple belongings, echoing (real or potential) experiences and amplifying their interpretative repertiore. Conversely, at Staff Home, children appear to resist the research, by ironically commenting it (as in #2), explicitly contesting it (as Ilaria does in #8 and Aziz in #9) or creatively transforming it (as the playful experience in #9), with difference in power alliances and affiliations amongst them (see Ilaria and Aziz vs Claudio in #9).

In this light, research as intercultural encounter not only requires an «indispensable cooperation between informants and researcher (…) resulting from the mutual efforts to explain, to understand each other and to be understood» (Gobbo, 2004, p. 6), but also constitutes a negotiation and innovation arena for the setting under study itself, and its cultural members. As in this case, with their

intercultural interpretative reproduction framing alternative research meanings, children not only participate to research, but largely enrich it. Paraphrasing Herbert (2001, p. 310), «it is never easy to understand and access an alternative worldwide, but that challenge lies at the heart of [our disciplines]; it enlarges the discipline[s] as it enlarges ourselves».

To conclude, children's stances toward research constitute interesting epistemic loci as well as intercultural assumptions dealing with their "Other/s" (in this case, the researcher and her tools). As I tried to demonstrate through all this chapter, children interpreting our fieldwork – as inevitably is for each and any informant we involve – challenge us to be aware of the discursive and material enterprise we are carrying on within their everyday encounters. In this light, the research encounter constitutes a "third space" (Gobbo 2004; Meloni, 2015), where we cannot take for granted anything, but we rather can exploit as interactive arena to negotiate personal and cultural assumptions and expectations, as in any intercultural encounter.

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