

## **22. From "Lonely Hero" to Accompanied Research: Professional Expertise and Family Interconnections in Ethnological Fieldwork Settings (Workshop)**

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*AG "Familie im Feld"*

The DGSKA conference will focus on the question of the constructions and legitimations of ethnological knowledge, which is primarily generated by means of field research in participant observation.

The 2023 conference calls for an analysis of the discipline's own contested forms of knowledge generation, so that the consequences arising from privileges and limitations could be assessed. While the lonely-hero pattern (Bundgaard and Rubow 2014) of field research had passed its zenith after 100 years and collaborative research among peers or in training situations has arrived more strongly in the field, the reverse question of the familial entanglements of individual research personalities has still not been addressed much in the field. Not only but especially in the so-called post-doctoral phase, fewer and fewer researchers are "alone" in the field. Although there are isolated reflected reports on the dynamics of family situations in the field (Cassell 1987; Braukmann et al. 2020), a comparative reappraisal of the connection between family and field-specific embedding is still lacking. The silence about the roles of the various 'accompanying persons' (researching or non-researching partners, children,...) in the process of ethnological knowledge generation presents itself as a wasted opportunity for the reflexive generation of empirical knowledge in view of the local differences of normative ideas about family life. The "relational self" of the researchers ultimately formulates the 'contested knowledge' of anthropology.

## **Conducting Fieldwork with Care Responsibilities: Navigating Epistemological and Practical Challenges**

***Julia Koch, Göttingen University***

***Philipp Zehmisch, Heidelberg University***

A growing body of anthropological literature highlights care as an important concept describing "feelings of emotional attachment between the researcher and significant others within the affective settings of fieldwork" (Funk and Thajib 2019: 138). At the same time, conversations "about caring relationships while doing

fieldwork” imply “a moral and sociopolitical dilemma that is widely ignored by academia” (ibid. 139). Our presentation aims to elaborate on the meanings and practices of care responsibilities in and around ethnographic work, with a particular focus on “parenting” in the field (cf. Braukmann et al. 2020). In so doing, it seeks to critically analyze the process of knowledge production evolving out of, along with, and in spite of ethnographers’ involvement in care work and parenting.

Our presentation centers on the slow and incomplete dissolution of the “lonely hero” model for ethnographic fieldwork. Based on our gendered experiences of care responsibilities while conducting research in South Africa and Pakistan, we are asking for the epistemological value of a socially embedded and “relational self” for ethnographic research and writing. Our contribution thus aims to kickstart a process of recognition and normalization of the existential realities that fieldworkers face when confronted with both care and ethnographic responsibilities.

### **Tracing the Genealogy of Accompanied Fieldwork: Reflections on the Role of Embodied Research Experiences in Anthropological Knowledge Production**

***Magdalena Suerbaum, Bielefeld University***

***Inka Stock, Bielefeld University***

Since the 1980s, periods in which children’s presence in the field has received wide attention alternated with phases of silence. A review of the anthropological literature produced over the past forty years suggests that ethnographers engaged with their family’s company during fieldwork to discuss topics, such as childhood, parenting, family life or how academic careers interact with academic knowledge systems. While many of these reflections have grown out of feminist research agendas, their focus was also connected to the pressing social and political questions of the times in which they were written and often engaged with researchers’ changing subjectivities.

Relating these trends to our own experiences of doing fieldwork with children in different contexts, we pay attention to the entanglement of theoretical approaches, political agendas, everyday aspects of combining parenting with research, and embodied forms of knowledge production. We interrogate how the presence of our families did not only affect research encounters and relationships, but also spanned periods of data analysis, writing, teaching, and ultimately how we have come to be part of academic institutions.

## **Starting a Conversation about Motherhood in and around the Field**

***Claudia Howald, Universidade de Coimbra***

The way anthropologists interpret and interact with the field has often been considered through the problematization of their relation to the field. However, we argue that this relation goes beyond the context of the field: it is also linked to the way anthropologists navigate between different academic contexts and daily life settings. For example, anthropologists perform as researchers in the professional context of academia, still being a member of a family and/or a community.

We would like to question the mobility between the academic space, the field, and our intimate personal life.

The status of a mother as a member of the Academia seems to us an interesting starting point to this reflection: responsible for the health and security of other living beings, mother-ethnographers have to deal with daily life organization challenges in the Academia and in the field. Their relations in the field are furthermore influenced by the presence of children.

We think that motherhood has practical and epistemological implications in our research activities. How does our way of living motherhood influence our analysis and our relations to the field?

## **Company in the Field: The Implications of Having a Local Partner for Ethnographic Fieldwork**

***Grete Schönebeck, Goethe-University Frankfurt***

***Gerda Kuiper, University of Cologne***

This paper discusses a specific type of accompanied ethnographic fieldwork, namely in a field site that is implicated in the researcher's family ties. We both conducted fieldwork in the home region of our partners, in China and Tanzania respectively, and we aim to explore the implications of these local family ties. Whereas having a local partner is common among anthropologists, the implications for access and research outcomes and the roles of the partner in research are rarely explicitly discussed in academic papers or presentations. In this paper, we will review the sparse literature on this topic. After that, we take a broader look on the roles of a researcher by analysing how our family ties influenced the different roles (self-assigned or ascribed by the people around us) we assumed during our research. Additionally, we identify which knowledge and understanding we were able to generate due to these different roles. Finally, we discuss the possible roles of the partner in research (for instance as a sounding board or as a

co-researcher in participant observation) and ways of acknowledging their role in our academic environment.