



Wednesday Seminars

SOMMERSEMESTER 2017

Cindy Dell Clark

Two-eyed seeing: How age relativism adds to our understanding of ritual and enculturation

Mittwoch 10.05.2017, 17.00, HS C, IKSA, NIG, Universitätsstraße 7, 1010 Wien, 4. Stock



Cindy Dell Clark is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Rutgers University in Camden New Jersey, USA. She has studied children's participation in culture both as an applied research consultant and, for the past twenty-five years, as a scholar. She is the

author of „In A Younger Voice: Doing Child-centered Qualitative Research“ (2010), „In Sickness and In Play: Children Coping with Chronic Illness“ (2003), and „Flights of Fancy, Leaps of Faith: Children's Myths in Contemporary America“ (1998). She holds a Ph.D. in Human Development from the University of Chicago.

...kommende Termine

17.05.2017 **Elena Trubina**

Comparing the cities across the global regions: between the Global South and the Global East

DI 23.05.2017 **Pamila Gupta**

Blue Johannesburg

24.05.2017 **Patrick Plattet**

31.05.2017 **Sveta Yamin-Pasternak**

Gastronomy at Higher Latitudes: Lessons and Conversations with the Bering Strait Epicures

Prior to the 1970s, most anthropologists and sociologists treated children as the “have-nots” of culture. Understanding cultural processes (such as ritual) was based on ethnographic research privileging the actions of adults. It was assumed that children learned culture based on black-box, unidirectional adult-to-child socialization.

Recently, anthropologists have begun to make use of child-centered research, a school of child anthropology that regards age relativism as an important lens for understanding cultural topics. I have studied American family ritual, including Easter, Christmas, the tooth fairy ritual, Hannukah, Halloween, and U.S. patriotic holidays (Memorial Day and Independence Day), through a “two-eyed” lens: one eye on children, and one eye on adults. This two-eyed lens allowed an analytical approach to understand and interrelate both children's and adults' vantage points and interpretations.

This lecture will review four principles emanating from “two-eyed” ethnographic research, drawing on ethnographic findings to illustrate and document each principle:

- 1) Ritual is experienced largely through sensory aesthetics and embodied action; children take substantial meaning from ritual through sensory metaphors, not necessarily through adult-intended didactics or explanation.
- 2) Rituals do not represent adult-to-child transfers of cultural content, but rather dialogic and multidirectional influences that involve reciprocal transfers of meaning, from old to young and from young to old.
- 3) Children hold symbolic power during ritual by virtue of the fact that the life stage of childhood holds systematic cultural associations for adults including (in the US context) carefree innocence, hope for the future, growth and fertility, and nostalgia for prior stages of life. Adult interpretations of ritual make selective use of these sorts of symbolic meanings, thus granting children considerable indirect semiotic leverage during ritual.
- 4) Children's and adults' meanings during ritual are not mirror images nor are they duplicative. Rather, the vantage points of children and adults lend contrapuntal dynamics to ritual, in which expectations and interpretations are set in contrast between the mature and young. Festive family ritual proceeds generation-by-generation, but not in unison. As adults and children engage, ritual allows for intricate polyphonism and multivocality across age groups.