Elena Davydova

From Care to Knowledge

Parenting, Emotions and Accompanied Autoethnography

Paper proposal for the planned handbook "Accompanied Fieldwork in Anthropology", edited by Julia Koch-Tshirangwana, Judit Tavakoli & Sophia Thubauville, cp. GAA Working Group „Family in the Field" & Handbook Project "Accompanied Fieldwork in Anthropology"

This chapter explores the methodological and epistemological implications of accompanied ethnography through a feminist autoethography lens. Building on critical engagements with ethnographic method, particularly feminist and decolonial critiques of the "Malinowskian" tradition, it examines how the personal, autobiographical experience of parenting in the field not only shapes the logistics of fieldwork but also informs the epistemological stance of the whole research process. Autoethnography is generally defined as "research, writing, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social" (Ellis 2004: xix). Accompanied autoethnography, as part of the broader move toward patchwork and reflexive methodologies, foregrounds the entanglements of the personal and professional, questioning the Cartesian separation of emotion and rationality (Ellis 1999; Ettorre 2016; Tsolidis 2024: 285). This chapter argues that anthropologist's children enhance the importance of the autoethnographical component of the research methodology because "autobiographical selves become a source of information" (Cupples and Kindon 2003: 217). It contemplates the contribution of accompanied filedwork methodologies to feminist autoethnography approach by discussing how emotional entanglement, caregiving, and embodied presence of children generate rigorous, situated knowledge, and how the ostensibly private realm of parenting offers critical insight into many anthropological topics and concepts including food sovereignty, infrastructure, and supply chains.

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