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# OUTLINES - CRITICAL PRACTICE STUDIES

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## Editorial

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I am pleased to introduce this new volume of *Outlines – Critical Practice Studies*. The volume includes: **Matthiesen, N. C. L.** (2015) A struggle for equitable partnerships: Somali diaspora mothers' acts of positioning in the practice of home-school partnerships in Danish public schools; **Roth, W.-M.** (2015) Heeding Wittgenstein on “Understanding” and “Meaning”: A Pragmatist and Concrete Human Psychological Approach in/for Education; and **Freeman, S.** (2015) Immersed In Pellet Technology: Motivation Paths of Innovative DIYers. Moreover we present three book reviews by **Kontopodis** (2015), **Breux** (2015) and **Säppänen** (2015). So please enjoy.

Should you as reader feel tempted to continue the dialogue we would like to introduce a new category of texts in *Outlines – Critical Practice Studies*: **the commentary**. A commentary is a continuation of the dialogue with the ideas of the focal text. The goal of a commentary is to advance the field by providing a forum for varying perspectives on the topic under consideration. Commentaries can take the ideas of the focal text further, supply them, apply them to other fields or discuss them. Of course we expect the same standard of propriety and constructiveness in the commentaries as we do in ordinary articles.

If you feel like reading more than the papers in the present volume this editorial aims at reminding you what you might have overlooked in the previous volume. Here, the four papers all investigated their phenomenon in its becoming, its historicity, but in no simple or straightforward way. When following their historical trajectories we are shown multilayered systemic and interdependent patterns of culturally formed practices, weaving into each other and forming the situational base from which the involved subjects experience and act in ways that make existential and personal sense to them. The authors propose concepts and dynamics to explain how their phenomenon came about.

These papers reminds me of the basics of what ideographic research is about, when the founder of the term, Wilhelm Windelband (1894/1998) introduced it in his address as the Rector of the University of Strasburg in 1894 (Hviid & Villadsen, in press; Lamiell,

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1998). In this talk Windelband rejected the division of natural science and humanities, and proposed the concepts of idiographic and nomothetic as distinctive methodological strategies for approaching a phenomenon and for creating general knowledge. He defined the idiographic as a methodological strategy towards the production of knowledge by investigating *what once was*, while the nomothetic was a strategy towards the production of knowledge by investigating *what always is*. To Windelband the general was not a static phenomenon but rather *the unchanging form of changes* (1894/1998, p. 16) whereas what he termed (timeless) research of *passive concreteness* had little scientific importance in studying human life:

This claim will surprise only the one accustomed to limiting, in a materialistic way, the notion of concreteness to the psychic registration of sensed present, and who has forgotten that concreteness, that is, individual aliveness of an imagined present, exists just as well for the eye of the mind as for that of the body (Windelband, 1894/1998, p. 16).

The idiographic methodology thus placed “the historical event” as the analytical heart and is an attempt to uncover the internal logic of a descriptive concept. Based on Windelband’s characterizations of what must be scientific ambitions when that research concerns human life and living, I am happy to introduce the following papers:

Nevanen, Juvonen & Ruismäki’s (2015) search for change and maintenance of collective cultural practices. In their paper *After a decade: What remains of a kindergarten developmental arts education project?* an interesting and surprisingly rare effort to investigate long-term effects of developing pedagogical practice is carried out. Often such attempts to evaluate pedagogical intervention runs aground in a single stranded cause-and-effect relationship that strictly focuses on changes in the singular child, which was once exposed to and involved in the pedagogical intervention (Belsky & Steinberg 1978; Belsky, Steinberg & Walker, 1982; Belsky et al., 2007; Sommer, 2015). But the authors present a much broader analytical frame in order to understand what makes cultural developmental processes sustain and develop - or vanish. The empirical case is a quite comprehensive art-project in kindergartens in Helsinki, Finland, which took its beginning fifteen years ago. The project involved 1500 children and 400 professionals. Based on analysis of a number of interviews with managers of kindergartens, the authors appoint a number of sustainability-promoting dimensions on organizational, social and personal levels.

In de Saint-Laurent’s paper (2014) “*I would rather be hanged than agree with you!*”: *Collective memory and the definition of the nation in parliamentary debates on immigration* the (hi)story of the history is demonstrated elegantly through an analysis of parliamentary argumentation and dialogues referring to the historical becoming and the identity of the nation (and the non-nation). The author shows how narratives of the past are used as potential symbolic resources by the members of the French parliament when negotiating the future of France in light of immigration. Based on this analysis de Saint-Laurent proposes to see collective memory as itself a product of symbolization processes and as a “cultural tool especially powerful to produce meaning about the present” (de Saint-Laurent, 2014, p. 22) – and about the future, I might add. This point of view radically shakes up the idea of memory as something stored and stable that is often depicted (Brockmeier, 2010), an idea that probably would have disappointed Windelband.

From this methodological perspective Saint-Laurent can approach the empirical situation differently: the immigration-talk is not (primarily) about the immigrants.

Moving the analytical lens from the collective to the individual level Jóhansdóttir and Roth (2014) takes us on a veritable exercise through what the authors argue Vygotsky's concept of experiencing (*Pereživanie*) is about. The presentation builds on one multileveled and very rich case in which an Icelandic fisherman is *becoming (as) a Teacher-in-the-village-school* (Jóhansdóttir and Roth 2014, p. 54). In its insistence to maintain interdependency throughout the analysis it presents itself to me as an analytical pearl. On an institutional level, the authors recommend that teacher education would be more adequate to developmental processes if it developed sensitivity towards and incorporated such meaning-making and making-meaningful processes in the educational/pedagogical methodology.

Also the fourth paper deals with historical cultural changes and transitions in which people act and makes sense of their conditions and possibilities. In the paper *Cultural-historical basis of literacy practices in TshiVenda-speaking South Africa's primary classrooms* by Azwihangwisi Edward Muthivhi (2014) the empirical lens is on the cultural practice of a human being living and teaching in a conflictual societal and institutional transition. The empirical case is a teacher's methodology in teaching literacy. The author unfolds multilayered blends of instruction according to (the old) *big book* and/or according to (the new) *reading progression scale*. Muthivhi demonstrates elegantly how teaching can be seen as representing an agentic contribution to cultural transitional forces and how such transition is brought forward.

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