

## Abstract

### Pirjo Korvela: Together and Individually – The Dynamics of Family Members' Gatherings at Home

The aim of this research is to study the activity of family members at home and the dynamics of these gatherings. What is the nature of family members' being and doing things together at home? How are their individual and shared actions and discussions intertwined and how do they construct the home?

The study is theoretically based on the cultural-historical activity theory, and the analysis on the video-recorded data from three families. The research questions are the following: 1) what is a holistic unit of analysis that captures the intertwined nature of the everyday activity at home? 2) what are the actions that construct the homes of these families? 3) how is the home interpreted as a culturally and historically changing activity?

After analysing the transcribed data, the unit of analysis for studying the dynamics of family members' gatherings started to evolve. These units are called the episodes of activity. The episodes are holistic units of analysis as they carry the complexity of the activity: 1) every family member's actions and the material artifacts used, 2) social interaction between family members: who is talking to whom and what is talked about, 3) what family members do together, and what they do individually, 4) who are focused on a shared object, and 5) how family members use space in the home.

In addition to holism, the dynamics of the activity is the focus of this research. Analysis of the tensions in the activity is a method of analysing dynamic processes, and a way to analyse the nature of the dynamic activity at home. I focus on tensions in the family members' being together and doing together. There are three levels of tensions: tensions in matching family members' individual actions at the level of episodes, heterochronicity in transitional phases between the sequences, and tensions between home and other activity systems, such as work.

"Home constructing activity" consists of matching family members' individual actions, schedules, and the home chores with the demands of other activity systems, such as home, work and day-care. Matching actions is taken place through negotiations. Family members negotiate by talking, but also in other ways. An individual is able to join another individual's action while he or she has other things on his or her mind. Family members also negotiate by expressing emotions through touching each other, through the tone of the voice, or through intermingling actions from two distinct sequences. Analysis reveals the holistic nature of home constructing action, its practical, mental and emotional features.

Video-recorded data of a family member's daily living provides a researcher with unprecedented opportunities to distinguish the dynamics of the family members' gatherings at home. It also makes it possible to follow the preceding events of an evolving conflict between family members. The main contribution of the study is the holistic unit of analysis in analysing activity at home. The unit preserves of the complex, intertwined, and interwoven nature of the home constructing activity of a family.

#### Keywords:

family, everyday life, family life, interaction between family members, activity for constructing the home, home, household activities, holism, dynamics, developmental work research, cultural-historical activity theory, video-recorded data