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In my current capacity as a university lecturer on early childhood education and care (ECEC) I apply cultural historical activity theory both in my research and in the courses in teach courses at the University of Helsinki. In terms of research, I lead two lines of active investigation. The first focuses on children's own projects and the second on sleep in early childhood. Children's projects refer to children's short- or long-term engagement with self-made or self-invented activities. In addition to being a less studied phenomenon with the educational sciences altogether, what makes these projects especially interesting from a CHAT perspective is what they can teach us about emerging activity systems, their development and children's agency and learning in relation to them (see Hilppö & Rajala 2023). Then, in terms of sleep, my work has thus far been more aspirational and conceptual rather than actual (yet see Hilppö 2023, in Finnish). However, I am currently engaged in analyzing the troubles, tension, and contradictions in relation to sleep or nap time in Finnish ECEC as well as reviewing current educational research on nap time from a CHAT perspective. In the future, I hope to expand this work to include active collaboration with kindergartens in the form of formative interventions and related partnership networks. Both lines, as well as how I employ CHAT in my courses, center around understanding the personal, social, institutional, and societal complexities around children's learning and development and especially how children's agency (and environments formative to it) can be fostered.

My journey with cultural historical activity theory started without me realizing it. In high school, my first psychology course book had a small text box at the corner of a page explaining Vygotsky's take on symbolic mediation and its impact on human cognition. I was immediately intrigued but did not read more about it before my first year at our class teacher education program at University of Helsinki when I picked up a copy of "Thought and Language" at our library. Reading that started me a winding path that did not land me in CHAT immediately but rather through broader socio-cultural frameworks which me and my colleagues employed in our work (see Hilppö 2016). The more I read, the more I wanted to understand and engage with, and this still characterizes my approach to CHAT. While dialogue with other theories (see Hilppö & Stevens, in review; Ramey, Hilppö & Stevens,

2023) brings both depth and breadth to my understanding of CHAT, I also enjoy going back to older publications and understanding the various interpretative lines existing with CHAT and cultural historical theorizing more broadly. In addition to the work I'm doing on children's projects and sleep, at the moment I'm intrigued to read more about curricular frameworks based on Davydov's work and understanding the deeper philosophical relationship between dialectics and various post-theories and methodologies.

Along with my research work, I'm also serving the CHAT community through positions in scientific communities. At the American Educational Research Association (AERA), I'm the program co-chair along with Dr. Megan Lynch, at ISCAR, I'm the country representative for Finland and lastly at the Finnish Educational Research Association (FERA), I'm the secretary of the CHAT SIG run by professor Annalisa Sannino. At the University of Helsinki, I'm a member of our CHiLD research hub and the LECI expert community. My vocal range is that of a lazy high baritone and I know how to open the prime radiant. Please don't hesitate to reach out!

References

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- Hilppö, J. (2016). Children's Sense of Agency: a Co-Participatory Approach. Doctoral thesis. University of Helsinki.
- Hilppö, J. & Rajaja, A. (2023). Children's and Youth's Civic Projects and Responsible Agency. In N. Hopwood & A. Sannino (Eds.) *Agency and Transformation: Motives, mediation and motion*. Cambridge University Press
- Hilppö, J. (2023) Nukkumaan oppimassa. Lasten unikäytännöt kulttuurisena ja historiallisena toimintana. *Kasvatus*, *Kasvatus* 54 (3), 272-282. (Title in english: Learning to Sleep. Children's sleep practices, a cultural historical activity theory interpretation)
- Ramey, K., Hilppö, J., & Stevens, R. (2023). Getting in, getting rooted, and spread: A comparative Actor Network analysis of the spread of an educational innovation in Finland and the United States. *American Educational Research Journal*.

Websites:

CHiLD: <https://www.helsinki.fi/en/researchgroups/cultural-historical-approaches-to-childrens-learning-and-development>

LECI: <https://www.helsinki.fi/en/researchgroups/learning-culture-and-interventions>