

Childhood perceptions of community: a participatory and arts-based approach

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Kids in Places



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United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

- Art. 12 of the UNCRC states that, “all girls and boys have the right to express their views and opinions on matters that affect them, and to have those views and opinions taken into account”.

Project Overview

- Purpose of the project:
 - To obtain children's views about their community, the physical and social spaces they inhabit.

Question:

- How can we obtain this information from children aged 3 to 6?

Methods

Participatory approach (the process as important as the end product)

- Drawings
- Photographs (Photo voice)
- Descriptions

Procedure & Results

- Participants
 - 74 Canadian and 95 Italian children, aged 3 to 6;
 - 17 Teachers involved in study design and interviews;
- Where?
 - Canada: **Ontario** Central Canada and **British Columbia** on the Pacific Coast;
 - Italy: **Emilia Romagna Region**, northern Italy;

RESULTS

- 264 drawings
- 384 photos
- 122 verbal accounts

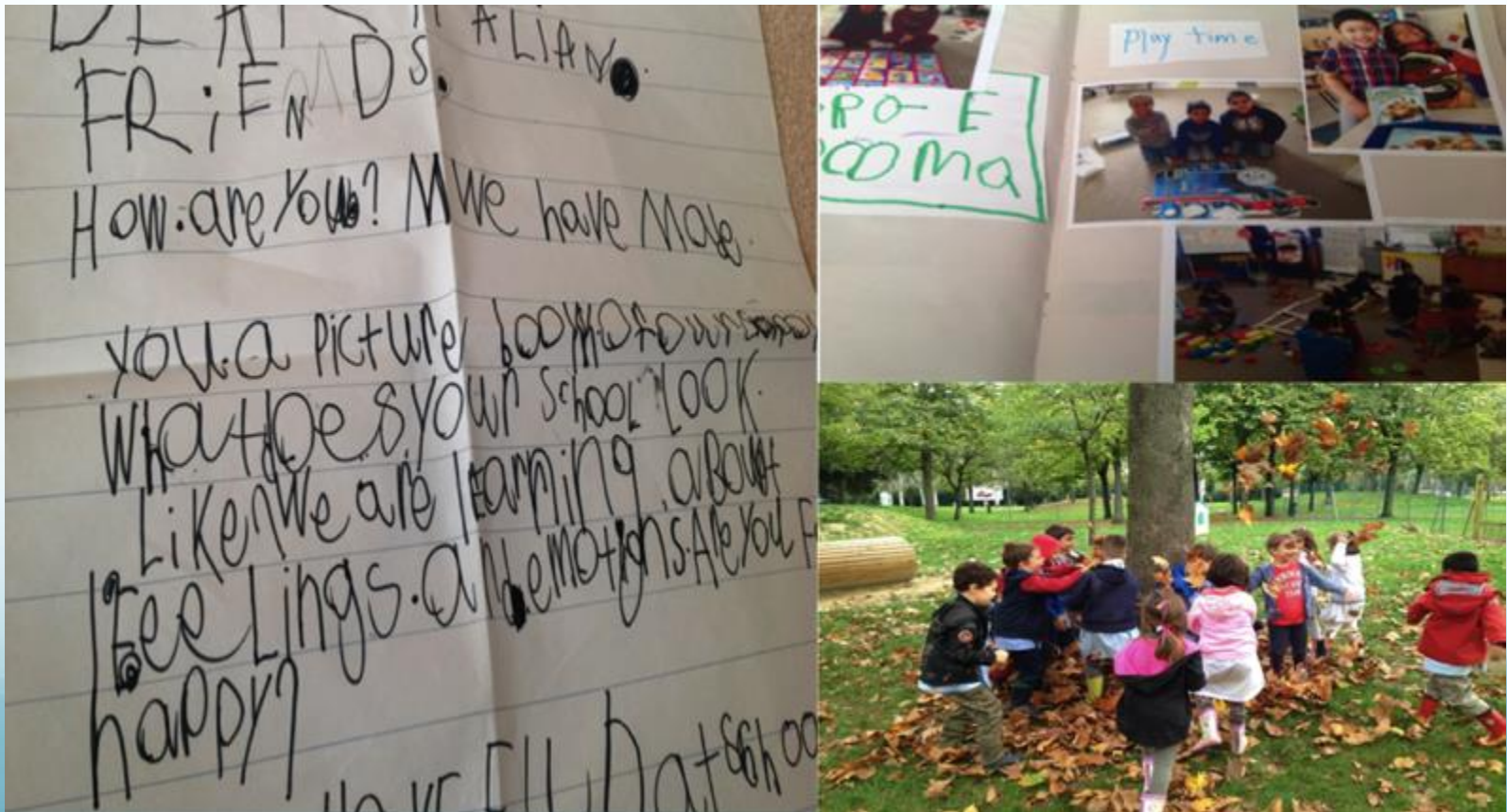
Teachers Preparation

- Meetings with the Teachers



Student Preparation

- Activity #1. Introduce own school to the twin school: Slideshow presentations, collage, videos;



Student Preparation (cont.)

- Activity #2: In-class preparatory activities: What is a community or a neighborhood?



Drawings and Photos Activities

- Question drawing: I would like you to draw a place where you like to spend your time or where you like to go.



Results: Drawings made by 5-6 year old children



Results: Drawings made by 3-4 year-old children

A big boat, a balloon and a dog



A swimming pool and a slide



My house, the mountains, Jamaica



A kite, the water and a rainbow

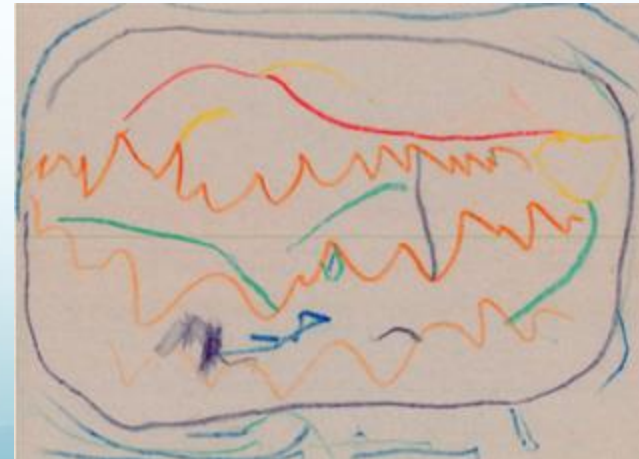


Photo Activity

- Question photos: I would like you to draw a place where you like to spend your time or where you like to go.



Results: Photos taken by the children in Canada



Preliminary Results

- Results of Content Analysis:
 - arena, swimming pool, hockey, at the soccer field, dance home, supermarket, the park, garden, aqua-park, the beach, train, car, my room, in the kitchen, bicycle,, restaurant, in my bedroom
- Popular themes in drawings
 - **3-4 year old Canadian children:** home, my room, my family
 - **5-6 year old Italian and Canadian children :** the beach, the mountains, travel by car, by train, biking organized sports

Preliminary Results (cont.)

- The significant differences in culture and age demonstrate that this research technique is sensitive to both
- An example:
 - In Ottawa children drew shopping malls, the park, home.
 - In Italy and British Columbia where the climate is warmer they drew the beach, the mountains, going camping, playing in the open;

Impact of Participatory Process

- Professional development (teachers' example)
- Inclusion of children with special needs
- Opportunity of open discussion of children personal experiences

Photo taken by a 4 year-old child



Lessons Learned

- The methods used allowed to capture children's views about the physical and social spaces they inhabit;
 - Even children aged 3 and 4 are able to talk about their spaces
 - to understand the drawings of the 3 and 4-year old children description is very important
 - Method also allowed for inclusion of children who would otherwise be excluded

Lessons Learned (cont.)

- Methods allowed cross-cultural comparisons;
 - We adapted the methodology to adjust for cultural differences among early childhood educators in Italy and Canada;
 - Across cultures teachers changed their views about children's capabilities
 - Canadian teachers more hesitant about their own abilities to “act as researchers” in the study

Teacher's account about the photo activity

“...I learned a lot from the photo activity. It allowed me to see the child outside of school. For example, when you ask children what they did on the weekend, they tend to copy each other in responses.... but the photo voice was my first real insight into their lives outside of school. And that was so authentic, where they live or what they do, things that are important to them. It was really eye opening...”

“...I sort of shared it with my colleagues that Photo voice would be a neat way to get to know where children come from...”

Thank you!

