EDITORIAL

Kay Margetts
Melbourne Graduate School of Education
The University of Melbourne

The key focus of the papers in the eighth edition of the *International Journal of Transitions in Childhood* is the role of objects/artefacts as boundary or border objects in papers from Nordic countries. This focus extends the perspective of transitions as border crossings during the period children make the move from familiar into unfamiliar settings. We are reminded of the importance of previous experiences for current and future experiences and for building the bridges between borders and, that social experiences include not just people, but also objects and environments. The current papers challenge early childhood and school educators to observe and reflect on children’s interactions with and use of objects as they move into new settings and how the objects can provide agency through providing comfort and function as tools for establishing relationships and understanding rules and processes; educators need to recognise the signs. Educators should understand children’s previous experiences and familiar objects to build transition bridges that support and scaffold adjustment; meaningful communication between and amongst parents and educators is critical.

Hilde Dehnes Hogsnes’ paper explains the concept of ‘boundary objects’ as both tools and signs, emanating from the work of Dewey (1974) and Vygotsky (1978) among others, and how the objects that exist in and between settings can increase continuity for children as they transition between settings. Similar to Simonsson, Hogsnes notes the use of boundary objects in supporting friendship and play. Hogsnes’ research applies the concept of boundary objects as tools and identifies the use of picture books as tools that support children’s active participation in constructing continuity as they move from preschool to school. Through analyses and open-coding of photograph’s taken by children and discussions with the researcher, the role of picture books emerged and this paper reports a particular example.

The paper by Maria Simonsson investigates the use of artefacts as cultural tools/boundary objects by infants and toddlers to support and create relationships with peers during the transition from home to early childhood setting. It is important to note in reading this paper that the term ‘preschool’ is applied to early childhood settings for children from 1- to 5-years of age in Sweden where the research occurred. The theoretical framework acknowledges children’s agency and the material components of social life and communication. Simonsson briefly and usefully addresses the role/influence of material components on the lives of children and human’s in general and the role of adults in the construction of a materiality of childhood. She links these two ideas and emphasises through reference to the work of Corsaro (1997) and Prout (2005) that artefacts, as well as helping produce a peer culture, also enable individual agency. Using an ethnographic approach involving discourse analyses of video observations, Simonsson reveals through a number of examples, the use of artefacts by young children in transition for creating comfort, learning the rules about using artefacts and, to facilitate involvement in ongoing activities.

These papers remind us of the importance of familiarity in supporting agency and continuity during transition periods. In seeking information about children before and during transition, educators are reminded of the importance not just of familiar people and practices but the importance of familiar objects and artefacts.