

Preface

This book is a *festschrift* to the respected academics, professors and docents Elina Lahelma and Tuula Gordon whose research, teaching and supervising have fascinated and inspired people in the fields of sociology, education, youth research and women studies. Elina and Tuula introduced feminist thinking into the sociology of education in Finland, which was a new and radical opening in the 1980s. After that they have built up imaginative research methods, and collective ways of working. They have analysed educational policies and practices by using feminist methodologies.

Internationally, they have collaborated especially with colleagues in the Nordic countries, United Kingdom and the United States. This book has been written as a tribute to the inspiring work they have done.

The book is divided into five parts, each reflecting themes central to Elina and Tuula's work. In *Part 1: Methodology*, the authors concentrate on methodological questions. In the 1990s, Elina and Tuula carried out a cross-cultural research project with Janet Holland. Together they conducted collective ethnographical research in Helsinki and in London, moving towards a new way of thinking about methodology in educational research (see Gordon et al., 2000). In the first chapter of the book, Tarja Palmu and Sirpa Lappalainen reflect on the strengths and challenges of collective ethnography. Tuula and Elina have always paid special attention to ethical sensitivity in all the stages of the research process. Ethical issues are discussed in two chapters of the book. Anne-Lise Arnesen problematises the ethnographic gaze in classroom contexts in relation to tensions between reciprocity and objectification. In their chapter, Sanna Aaltonen and Päivi Honkatukia highlight how the relationship between the researcher and young people is regulated and promoted in institutional contexts, such as in youth work, child protection and prison.

Citizenship is a highly theorised concept in social sciences. In their work, Elina and Tuula have brought theoretical sophistication to the empirical research of citizenship in the everyday life of schools. In their ethnographic project *Citizenship, difference and marginality at school—with special reference to gender* (funded by Academy of Finland), they analysed how citizenship is constructed in school. By focusing on differences and hidden inequalities behind the abstract concepts of the pupil and that of citizenship, they challenged the New Right politics as a sufficient framework for democratic education (Gordon,

2006; Gordon, Lahelma and Beach, 2003). This discussion continues in *Part 2*: Dennis Beach, Lisbeth Lundahl and Elisabet Öhrn examine how democracy is lived out in Swedish upper secondary education practices, whereas Thomas S. Popkewitz's interest is in education in the United States. He focuses on the systems of reason which produce the future citizen. Features of the future citizen are also discussed in the chapter written by Hannu Rätty and Katri Komulainen with their colleagues, who focus on the discourse of educability in the era of neoliberalism.

Part 3: Transitions explores transitions in education and in life more broadly. Tuula and Elina have pursued an interest in transitions from school to the labour market; however their interest in the thematic of transitions has also extended beyond this. They have focused, for example, on young people's friendships, gendered identities and growing adults, moving from home and going to the army (Gordon and Lahelma, 2002; Lahelma and Gordon 2003). They see transitions not as a developmental or naturalised and self-evident process, but as intertwined with gender, social class, locality, and ethnicity. In this part, Janet Holland and Rachel Thomson, Sinikka Aapola-Kari, Tarja Tolonen and Beverley Skeggs analyse their empirical data through these traditions. These authors interpret their material from the perspectives of class, locality, age and gender, stressing cultural and social processes.

Gender and embodiment are discussed in the *Part 4: Girlhood*. Tuula Gordon's and Elina Lahelma's research interest in gender and embodiment has interweaved with a wide range of issues related to schooling, but also with hierarchical gender relations and sexuality (Lahelma et al., 2000; Lahelma and Lehtonen, 2002); and with the analysis of different life situations including girlhood (Gordon et al., 2000), adulthood (Gordon and Lahelma, 2002, 2004, Gordon et al., 2005, 2008; Lahelma and Gordon, 2003) and motherhood (Gordon and Lahelma, 2004). In their work—as in recent social and feminist research in general—they approach agency as a critical analytical concept to make sense of the intersectional relations between gender and other cultural and social differences. In this part of the book, Mary Jane Kehily, Elina Paju and Seija Keskiälo-Foley focus on research on girlhood from the perspectives of embodiment and agency, which continue to be highly important themes in feminist research.

Elina and Tuula are both committed and persistent promoters of equality and social justice. In the concluding *Part 5: Equality*, the authors discuss questions of equality in education and interpret/analyse how these intersect with concepts introduced in previous chapters, such as agency and differences connected to

class, gender and ethnicities. Kirsti Lempiäinen explores how agency is negotiated in the context of higher education and how these negotiations can be explained along the axes of class, gender and other intersecting differences. Although like other Nordic countries Finland is often considered a model country in terms of gender equality, both Liisa Tainio's and Jukka Lehtonen's chapters make visible gender biases in the context of education in Finland. In the last concluding chapter, Kristiina Brunila focuses on the very core of the work of Tuula and Elina: she examines equality work from different positions and practises, and thus ends up analysing the meaning of equality itself.

When editing this book, we have had the pleasure to be in touch with many wonderful colleagues of Tuula and Elina; we want to thank all of you. We are grateful to Silja Rajander, Ph. D. for revising the language, and to trainee Kristiina Vainio for editorial assistance. This book has been peer reviewed; therefore, we want to thank our anonymous referees for their important work. The support of the Institute of Behavioural Sciences, University of Helsinki and the Finnish Youth Research Society has made this book possible.

Most importantly, Elina and Tuula, we want to thank you for being academic mothers, inspirers, friends and leaders of several research projects.

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 Tarja, Tarja, Sirpa and Tuuli

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