

Takeaway thoughts from Chris Martin, PhD

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IPA World webinar <https://ipaworld.org/>

The usual disclaimer is as follows: these are highlights from notes I took while the presenter was talking and some thoughts I had in response. This overview is for your own general info and should not be used, considered or referenced as any kind of source material. Rather let it serve as a jumping off point for your own research if any of the comments pique your interest!

Here is a link to the presenter's LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/in/dr-chris-martin/?originalSubdomain=uk> and just a reminder that all the noted SIDEBARS are from me. Additionally, I added the few pics I took of the presentation slides to the post.

HIS DISSERTATION TOPIC: Everyday Assemblages, Affect and Agency: Children's intra-actions with smart phones in outdoor play

assemblage = **ad hoc** groups (perhaps within a play frame?) of diverse elements which come together and then drift apart and might lead to change

**ad hoc** = a group that comes together for an immediate, possibly unplanned, reason

Q1: How do combinations of environment and tech support playful moments?

Q2: Is there tension between being a researcher and a play worker?

play isn't just for humans

tech isn't just for "an other"

therefore, our *attitudes* towards the device (tech) become important

In reference to Article 31, (his words) the right to play overrides my (his) desire to gather research.

Children could quit at any time. Smart phones are respected as a part of their play culture.

SIDEBAR: we can't escape this but we can learn how to deal with it!

Sometimes (his words) children will start with a phone because it is familiar - like a touchpoint from which they venture out. SIDEBAR: like toddlers!

The statement, "playing with phones" has the potential to mean different things and is quite contextual.

He, Martin, was using a GoPro but mentioned he kept stopping. SIDEBAR: I have the word

QUALITATIVE written all in caps in my notes and while I know what the word means, I do not recall the context. What follows is that the subject group consisted of children aged 10 - 13 years old, he made 600+ visits to the playground and made (only) 45 observations of children using cell phones. What follows is from me: I like to think that it's hard to compete with mud, rope swings, trees, a zipline, jumping and running! Dare I say (dare! dare!) adventure playgrounds are a secret ingredient?!? From him: the children were well rounded inside and outside and didn't appear to be attached "at the hip" to their phones.

Q3: Did (does) the presence of an adventure playground influence this observation?

PLAY is anything the kids say is play (from me: I like this)

When he asked the kids what they did at the park they described it, didn't define it. SIDEBAR: we can learn from this!

At the end of the day, play can be with phones and can be disrupted by them too.

The children who were most often on their phones actually had a rich play repertoire - the phone almost appeared as a prop/loose part as opposed to BEING the experience. He offered that there was almost a seamless incorporation of the device and the play.

All from me: At this juncture someone in the zoom chat asked if a cell phone was a loose part... needless to say this caused a little bit of a distraction! And depending on your school of thought, it might or might not cause some debate with who you banter about these things with! Some will say that a phone is a phone is a phone and therefore is "limited" as to what it adds to play, as opposed to say (using the oft cited example) a *stick* which can be 999999 things while a phone is a phone is a phone. If you are new, just as an FYI, there can be much division among the ranks when the subject of "good" and/or "true" and/or "real" loose parts comes up, thus speaking to the implied, if not directly stated, *hierarchy* of loose parts, but more on this another time!

The presenter, Chris Martin, shared an anecdote about the "tree phone girls" who were playing in the tree and their phones added to the play scenario. The following comments were interesting to me and made me curious: when the children digitized the moment, (took pics) was it to revisit it? to share it? to play with time and have it contribute to a future play episode? to incorporate friends not present in the moment and as such, does this "count" as expanding the play frame?

### **A Story A Story**

Chris Martin (CM), our presenter, approached some children near the zipline and said, as he started to get on the line, "Here, hold my phone."

Child 1 took the phone and CM did the zipline. When he was done he went back to Child 1 and said, "Can I have my phone back?"

One child had now morphed into a group of girls who said, "No!"

They all ran away, **sending** a play cue, which was **returned** as CM gave chase!

And now we have tag and keep away!

SIDEBAR and EXTRA CREDIT from me: What if this was just two kids at a park? How might an adult observer accidentally or intentionally interrupt the play cycle? Discuss.

Respectfully Submitted,

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