

## Ethnography as a Research Tool in a Small Rural School

**Thursday 5 August 2021 - Parallel Session 4 - 11.30am to 12.30pm (GMT+1)**

**FRASER - Building Enduring Partnerships**

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Scottish rural schools are embedded in their communities core to research in the rural school is the relationship between human beings and their environment (place). Ethnography is concerned with how people make sense of their everyday world (Cohen, et al., 2007) and this presentation will look at developing ethnography as a methodology for undertaking rural education research. The researcher is part of the rural community and has been exploring ethnography and autoethnography as a method for developing meaningful and collaborative research. It “is a method of inquiry that works from the actualities of people’s everyday lives and experiences to discover the social as it extends beyond experience” (Smith, 2005, p.10) and takes a cultural lens to the study of people’s lives within their communities. The researcher will share how rich qualitative data which has been collected from semi-structured interviews in the field and analysed to assign codes connected to the rural contexts. The data accessed in the field will provide learning about people’s lives (or aspects of their lives) from their own perspective and from within the rural education context. This involves moving beyond the interviews and asking questions (as we do in surveys and interviews) to becoming “part spy, part voyeur, part fan, part member” (Van Maanene, 2011). Rural Education is under researched in Scotland and ethnography provides a method for ensuring the importance of people, place and culture and “fuels the sense of possibility” (Bruner, 1997, p.42)