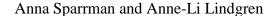
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Article

Visual Documentation as a Normalizing Practice:A New Discourse of Visibility in Preschool

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Abstract

The visual documentation of education for pedagogical purposes focuses on preschool children's activities and is used by educators to improve their understanding of children while strengthening their own professionalism. By analysing three educational TV programmes concerning visual documentation in preschools, this paper challenges the positivistic way visual documentation is portrayed. Moreover, it questions political documents and the TV programmes' unproblematic description of children as always ready to be visually documented. Applying a child perspective and children's perspectives, the paper demonstrates that there is a fine line between being documented and surveilled using visual technologies. The paper describes how doing on-looking-ness (onlooker) versus being looked-at-ness (looked at) can be understood as specific discursive formations.

Introduction

Everyone has a "pictorial biography" (Johannesson 1997: 14), containing, for example, one's first remembered picture, product labels, logos, collector cards, works of art, kitsch, photography, and wedding pictures. A pictorial biography is an individual pictorial life story comprising pictures from various life phases, starting with childhood. The abundance of pictures - including moving ones - involved in a person's life lets us make, what we here call, visual biographies organized in terms of various technologies; for example, a video biography is a subsection of a visual biography. Today, most western children can be said to have their own video biographies - individual stories mainly about the individual child, beginning with moving images of the foetus. These are followed by video recordings from birth clinics, then by video recordings mainly in the family sphere, of the first bath, first tooth, and first step. At the age of 12-24 months, children begin to spend increasing amounts of time outside the family sphere, for example, in preschools, schools, after-school centres, evening activities, public places, and on public transportation. In these various social and public or semi-public settings, video cameras are used in various ways for various purposes: for education, self-evaluation, surveillance, and creating memorabilia. Children today are thus repeatedly video recorded for various purposes, by various people, in various contexts, and using different technologies (e.g., cell phones, digital video cameras, and fixed surveillance cameras). What might it mean to be brought up in an environment where being repeatedly looked at and monitored by video lenses is regarded as normal? Could the visual documentation practices used in everyday childhood institutions be regarded as training children to uncritical acceptance of surveillance techniques that are used with increasing frequency in western societies?

To reflect on these broad questions, we have chosen to focus on visual documentation of education for pedagogical purposes in preschool settings. Research into visual documentation is part of a growing field identifying the importance of visual documentation, being governed by curricula (Buckingham and Jones 2001: 1-14; New 1999; Edwards, Gandini, and Forman 1998; Faccini and Combes 1998). In Sweden, visual documentation is promoted as a means for further developing preschool teachers' skills by focusing on children's activities. It is described as a method that allows teachers to reflect on how they act and react in various preschool situations, whether in activities initiated by teachers or in free play. As such, visual documentation is framed as a tool for developing preschool teachers' professionalism, strengthening preschool practices, and making explicit and visible the political goals concerning children's learning. Moreover, it is presented as a means for visually describing and reporting children's everyday activities to parents and politicians (Skolverket 2001: 15-9; SOU 1997:157, 87-100). The governmental inquiry in preparation for introducing the preschool curriculum (1998) takes for granted that preschool children of all ages want to participate in visual documentation. The advantage for children is that visual documentation offers them "opportunities to remember, re-visit, recognize, and reflect on their own learning processes. In doing so, they become visible and seen as subjects" (SOU 1997:157, 99). Being looked at and making visible are in this way always promoted as having positive outcomes; documentation is a way to accomplish this, since it can "make visible things that otherwise would have remained invisible: knowledge, learning processes, ideas, relationships and expressions" (SOU 1997:157, 99). It is also emphasized that visual documentation gives children - and teachers - "a visible identity and history" (SOU 1997:157, 99). In these documents, visual documentation is presented as a pedagogical tool for enhancing children's abilities to learn, and also – and this is noteworthy – as a means for them to become subjects in society. Moreover, it is argued that a necessary part of becoming a subject is being looked at, i.e., being seen. Having a visual history is then, like the visual biography, said to be valuable to both the individual subject and society. In contrast to the statement that visual documentation per definition is always good for children, and that children always gain from being visually documented, we argue that this assumption must be seriously questioned and even reconsidered.

We approach these issues by analysing a series of three educational TV programmes, *Children – with a right to learn* (2000), produced by the publicly funded Swedish Educational Broadcasting (SEB); this series treats visual documentation in preschools and was produced mainly for preschool teachers. SEB is commissioned to disseminate state authorities' guidelines, governmental aims, and curricula via educational programmes shown on public mass media and distributed to libraries. Our interest in educational programmes is based on their specific position as a link between state bureaucracy and civil society, where the programmes are being used in the further education of professionals about visual documentation. Educational programmes play a role in distributing ideas and discourses in society, not least because they are conceived as educational and distributed via public television and libraries, and thus exist in a discursive field commonly regarded as objective and related to science (Lindgren 2003: 23-31; 2006: 10-12; cf. Goldfarb 2002: 25-56). Although educational TV programmes have so far been underexamined in social science and media research, we argue they are important in formulating and disseminating norms and values.

We also compare the visual documentation approach with how visual ethnography and video recording were conducted by a researcher at an after-school centre for children aged 6-8. Comparing these two slightly different approaches and contexts raises ethical questions and considerations in relation to visibility, children, and childhood. By ethical considerations we mean the guiding research principles that should serve as a foundation for research, the information about the purpose of the recordings, consent, confidentiality (e.g., children's rights to anonymity), and the collected data should only be used for research (Aarsand and Forsberg 2010: 17). Additionally, we discuss the implications for childhood arising from such visual documentation, our aim being to challenge the adult-centred educational perspective

¹ From here on, "visual documentation of education for pedagogical purposes" is referred to as simply "visual documentation".

manifested in the method. We address the issue of what kind of childhood adults create by promoting visual documentation, and how one can understand these practices from alternate standpoints, i.e., a *child perspective* and *children's perspectives*. To be clear, the paper has a double aim: first, to analyse how visual documentation is done and, second, to argue that visual documentation might teach children to adapt to life in a surveillance society.

Theoretical perspectives

In theories of visual culture understandings of technology and what it does to peoples' subjectivities are always embedded in particular social and cultural contexts, as is the gaze (Crary 1990; Brennan and Jay 1996). Michel Foucault (1979) presents theories about the power of gaze and how it has been used for inspection and normalizing in institutional settings. He cites the example of Jeremy Bentham's prison, organized as a so-called panopticon where prisoners were guarded through windows in a tower at the centre of the prison. The prisoners could not see whether anyone was actually sitting behind the tower windows watching them, so the mere suspicion that someone might be watching them would make them self-regulate their behaviour. Foucault referred to this form of visibility, in which one subject is seen without seeing, while the other sees without being seen, as surveillance (Foucault 1979; Rose 2001: 166). When applied to cameras, the camera does not even have to be turned on: the mere presence of the technology is enough to affect the actions of the observed (Sturken and Cartwright 2009: 111), for example, in the case of traffic monitoring cameras. Accordingly, apparatuses (e.g., architecture and morals) and technologies (e.g., windows) (Rose 2001: 166) are saturated with meaning and play a part in strategies with which to handle looking and being looked at. Since seeing and looking always involve aspects of control, one cannot disregard power and resistance implications when dealing with such issues (Rose 2001: 137; Friedberg 1993: 19). There is always asymmetry to visibility, and one aspect of that is the effects of imagined "permanent visibility" and scrutiny on the observed (Friedberg 1993: 17, 20). The act of looking, as Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright (2009: 111) puts it, is commonly regarded as assigning more power to the onlooker than to the person being looked at - what we would like to call doing on-looking-ness (onlooker) versus being looked-at-ness (looked at), when acting in an institutional setting including children and adults.

Since visual documentation is described as making each child seen and heard, it is also related to the discourse on the need to implement what can be called a child perspective according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Gunilla Halldén (2003: 13-14) points to the fact that a "child perspective" is an ambiguous concept with strong rhetorical force. In Halldén's interpretation, conducting research from a child perspective offers a way to examine how children are positioned in policy documents and in activities ostensibly organized for their wellbeing. The concept of child perspective simultaneously encompasses political aims and guidelines for local professional practice (Halldén 2003: 13-15, 21). This indicates that the concept is assigned various meanings and interpretations at many levels in both research and welfare systems. Moreover, research can also be conducted bearing "children's perspectives" in mind, meaning doing research into children's own day-to-day meaning making using qualitative methods adapted for this specific purpose (Halldén 2003: 14; Sparrman 2002: 41-66). In both cases, the aim is to take account of what are referred to as children's views (Hill et al. 2004: 87), that is, taking the point of departure from children in research (Sparrman and Aarsand 2009). Regardless of these distinctions, what is common to both perspectives is that childhood is understood as a situated practice and children are perceived as active agents in society in need of care and possessing specific competences that depend on social and cultural contexts (James and Prout 1990; James, Jenks, and Prout 1998; Jenks 1996). Accordingly, when studying the TV programmes, we analyse the positions they put children in, and whether and how children are given verbal and visual voices. In the discussions, we also cite research that applies children's perspectives, i.e., children's own meaning making about the experience of being looked at or looking at others. In this way, we combine both a child perspective and children's perspectives.

Methodology

Empirical material: A TV series about visual documentation

Our empirical analyses and discussions are based on a series of educational TV programmes produced by the Swedish Educational Broadcasting (SEB). The series is entitled *Children – with a right to learn* (2000) and comprises three 30-minute programmes whose individual titles highlight the importance of visibility: 1) *A way of seeing*, 2) *To make visible*, and 3) *With an open gaze*. All three programmes have been broadcast by the public Swedish Broadcasting Corporation and distributed on VCR tapes to libraries and audio–visual resource centres serving teachers and other educators. They can also be borrowed via the SEB website.

The three programmes all focus on how visual documentation can be a tool to improve learning. Beyond that, they have slightly different agendas in relation to visual documentation: A way of seeing focuses on what visual documentation is and how it is created, To make visible is about learning by seeing, while With an open gaze deals with children's competences and the teacher's openness to taking these into consideration. The programmes are organized according to the same logic and principles, including interviews with preschool teachers and researchers, together with examples of how visual documentation is created by preschool teachers in educational practices involving children.

According to the programmes, visual documentation can use various techniques: note taking, photographing, video recording, collecting items children produce, and (video) interviewing children about their creations. All these data collection methods can be compared with the research strategies used when compiling a visual ethnography (Pink 2001).

Analysis

We study how *Children – with a right to learn* constitute a discursive formation built on a series of discursive orders (cf. Rose 2001: 141). The analysis focuses on all programmes at the same time and on how key themes (cf. Rose 2001: 141) are established. Close readings identified four themes focused on in the analysis: 1) visual strategies in programme production and visual documentation, 2) professionalization efforts, 3) positioning of children in visual documentation, and 4) the lack of ethical considerations. In the concluding discussion, we examine the themes in relation to each other and reflect on further implications of the results. Moreover, the analysis of the various themes also focuses on the effects of truths, the occurrence of complexity and contradiction, the invisible versus the visible, and visual details (Rose 2001: 158), as well as on a child perspective and children's perspectives.

Consequently, the programmes have been analysed in accordance with a visual discourse method, i.e., visuality is understood as discourse, meaning that a specific visuality will make certain things visible – or invisible – in particular ways (Rose 2001: 137). Subjects are produced and enacted in a discursive field of vision. This means, as mentioned above, that doing on-looking-ness (onlooker) versus being looked-atness (looked at) can be understood as specific discursive formations. The educational TV programmes are analysed in accordance with how specific visual accounts are constructed as real, truthful, and/or natural by adhering to particular regimes of visually constructed truths. Persuasion strategies are central features to be studied, along with the visual – in addition to the verbal – rhetorical organization of a discourse.

Analysis of Pedagogical Visual Documentation

The to-see-is-to-know perspective

Holding the programmes together and connecting them to each other as a series is done using titles explicitly referring to aspects of visuality: A way of seeing, To make visible, and With an open gaze (2000). In all programmes, a key unifying visual motif is the appearance of disembodied floating eyes.

This is not simply a minor detail of the programmes' visual presentation but is, as will be demonstrated, important in relation to, among other matters, the theme of vision as a device for knowledge.

Four different pictures of pencil-sketched eyes are presented at the beginning of all three programmes, accompanied by the soft harmonious tones of a clarinet. The style of the images indicates that the sketches were made by young children. One of these eyes is taken from a drawing by a preschool girl named Fanny (Figure 1) and is repeated throughout the series (Figure 2).



gy Fanny Stogh-Larssott fa Livysta. förskola, Stockholm.



Figure 1: Self-portrait of Fanny cited from the book *Barn med rätt att lära* (Jonstoij 2000)

Figure 2: An enlargement of the eye of the girl in Figure 1 (Children – with a right to learn 2000)

This eye (Figure 2) is a motif that recurs before the names of the various preschool teachers and researchers appearing in the programmes. On the one hand, the eye serves as a visual communicator signalling that the teachers are applying a child perspective; on the other hand, it legitimizes adults as knowledgeable and able, and as having the right to speak on behalf of children. Moreover, this motif levels out differences between teachers and researchers in the programmes, presenting them as equal in status. The child drawing also makes it seem as though the adults were spokespeople authorized by the children themselves.

Another reoccurring eye motif (Figure 3) is an enlarged close-up of a realistic, photographic eye: the iris is blue and black and the pupil in the centre of the image is replaced with a yellow circle. This serves as the background for quotations from the preschool curriculum.



Figure 3: From Children – with a right to learn 2000

This eye is presented throughout the series, preceded and followed by interviews with professors and preschool teachers as well as overview pictures of preschools showing young children in action. The eye fills the TV screen and appears between six to ten times in each programme while a voice-over reads the quotations. It is a decontextualized, disembodied eye, which floats around like an Orwellian "Big Brother" eye. The yellow and blue Swedish national colours, in combination with the request that the audience return the gaze of the eye (which accompanies the curriculum quotations), implies that the state is

confronting its citizens with a message that education and learning constitute new ways to be engaged as citizens (cf. Jans 2004: 32, 40). The disembodied eye demands that audiences open their eyes to understand how visuality confers knowledge. It makes people feel seen, and makes them see others. It is a discourse that emphasizes both the *idea of vision* and the *idea as vision* (Jenks 1996: 1). The eye is associated with cultural values concerning the gaze as a scientific tool for exploration, objectivity, and truth (Winston 1993: 37-57); it refers to a discourse on seeing and science that started in the early 1700s. By putting exotic and strange natural objects on display, the joy of seeing was supposed to awaken an interest in learning (Baird 2008: 531-47). In the series, the eye serves to frame texts produced to implement specific ideologies, i.e., preschool as part of an educational as opposed to childcare system (as it was in Sweden before 1998) and preschool education as part of the discourse on lifelong learning (Lindgren 2006: 99-101). Visual documentation and, we argue, visuality as such become important tools with which to accomplish this. The use of eye symbols exemplifies how the truth claims of visual documentation are established as something purely positive: it is presented as a natural matter of fact according to a positivistic view of the visual, i.e., as though the naked eye was speaking for itself.

Another way the TV programmes make truth claims is when the camera documents teachers in action as they collect, transform, and discuss documentation. A new feature of this series, compared with earlier programmes in the same genre, is that teachers can also present their own video material to the TV audience, fast-forwarding in the recordings and commenting on what children are doing and thinking. Preschool activities are thus presented as documentary scenes possessing specific truth claims (cf. Arthur 1993: 108-34; Winston 1993: 37-57), giving the impression that visual documentation is a widespread practice in preschool settings. Moreover, when showing active children, the programmes adhere to a tradition of visualizing progressive education, using an "active documentary genre", as something inherently good, especially for children (cf. Holland 1992: 67-69; 2004: 75-89, 97-99).

Learning and interpreting visual documentation

Two categories of teachers are presented in the programmes, preschool teachers and researchers. The researcher's teaching role is to convince preschool teachers and TV audiences that visual documentation is productive in preschools, and to show them how to master the practice of visual documentation. Researchers deliver historically grounded and theoretical arguments while the preschool teachers are interested, attentive listeners. For example, one sequence starts by zooming in on a preschool teacher surrounded by small children in preschool. The sequence then cuts to the face of the same teacher, wearing different clothes and bathed in different light; the camera then zooms out, making it clear that the teacher is now part of an audience listening to a professor talking about the importance of using visual documentation. The professor talks about how the new preschool curriculum can be interpreted and understood. She is pointing out that the new curriculum (the first for Swedish preschool) needs the cooperation of preschool teachers, the "real experts on preschool", to be implemented in a positive way (A way of seeing 2000). The preschool teacher's teaching role is then presented to demonstrate how visual documentation is performed in an everyday preschool environment. This includes giving examples of how teachers approach children and "involve children's perspectives" when creating visual documentation (A way of seeing 2000). Accordingly, preschool teachers serve as intermediaries between a more public expert society and the everyday hands-on environment in preschools. Visual strategies are used by the producers to present the researchers and preschool teachers as equally important: they are both doing onlooking-ness; the researchers watch the preschool teachers and instruct children, while the teachers watch the children and instruct them, i.e., all adults are positioned as onlookers while the children are the ones being looked at.

When addressing issues of visual documentation in the programmes, the preschool teachers talk about seeing in at least four different ways: as a collaborative project, as a learning project, as the reflexive look, and not least, as seeing oneself through others' eyes. They stress the importance of returning to the documented visual material to initiate reflection in the teacher groups. It is assumed that reflection based

on visual documentation will make the teachers aware of when they are acting according to old or new modes. This is a discourse in which seeing is depicted as a way to approach what actually happens between teachers and children, i.e., to come closer to the truth. It is mentioned that the various teachers, in their groups, might not see exactly the same things, but that together they can see more. The TV programmes thus support a discourse emphasizing the positive value of increased visuality, at the same time as issues of interpretation and contradictions pertaining to the very same visual material are excluded, as can be seen in the following example:

Example 1

Two teachers are standing in front of a notice board at a preschool talking about pictures on display from a documentation project about water. They talk about the pictures of children putting a piece of wood and a key into a tub of water. The teachers point to and read aloud from the accompanying transcript of what the children said about why the key sinks and the wood floats (*To make visible 2000*).

Even though the two teachers emphasize different aspects of what the children say, in the programmes they never go on to interpret or reflect on what this might actually mean to the children or to themselves as educators. The children's statements are treated as simultaneously normal and exotic, and taken at face value by the teachers. The programmes never distinguish between what Miriam Gamoran Sherin (2007: 387-390) calls *selective attention* and *knowledge-based-reasoning* when educational recordings are being viewed. Sherin talks about how teachers, through group discussions with a facilitator, develop from being selective lookers to becoming more educated in their looking, i.e., developing a professional vision (Sherin 2007: 384-385, based on Goodwin 1994). She argues that video recordings help teachers learn about themselves and understand their pupils' learning habits. However, she applies the same teacher perspective and positivistic view of visual documentation as do the educational programs, and never reflects on what such documentation might mean to the pupils.

Focusing on knowledge-based-reasoning concerning children's aims and intentions is not easy, even if you are a teacher with a facilitator (Sherin 2007: 387-390). This can be seen when the researcher acts as a facilitator in one of the programmes:

Example 2

One preschool teacher is sitting with a researcher talking about drawings made by children in a project about maps. Together they interpret the design and content of the pictures in relation to the task given to the children. They talk about the drawing perspectives used by the children and how one's adult expectations can influence one's interpretations (*To make visible 2000*).

When talking about the pictures, the teacher and the researcher mention that some of the pictures make no sense to them. Accordingly, interpretation becomes a strategy for actually asking children about their pictures; however, throughout the sequence, the main concern is to satisfy the teacher and the researcher, i.e., to ensure that the children have accomplished the assigned task. They do not consider that children may sometimes choose to deviate from assigned projects and do something completely different from what was expected by the teachers (Bendroth Karlsson 1996: 69-93). This does not necessarily mean they have misunderstood the project, but rather that they are not interested in it or are absorbed by their own ideas (Bendroth Karlsson 1996: 284-286). It should also be recalled that preschool children are not always fully competent to express themselves visually or verbally in the way they want to. Asking a child to explain a drawing might also prompt the child to construct a story accompanying the picture to please the teacher. This does not make the story either true or false; it only indicates that children understand what is expected of them or that the story told may be true to them right there and then. These possibilities are

never reflected on by the teacher or/and the researcher, i.e., their attention is selective (Sherin 2007), focusing more on their own project than on the dynamics and complexities of the individual child.

In the programmes, visual documentation is presented as a method supporting reflection, learning processes, and in-depth understanding of children. The overarching message, however, is that one should learn how to apply a professional vision that includes seeing and interpreting according to specific values and norms associated with the profession (cf. Goodwin 1994). In this way, visual documentation focuses on the importance of teachers' doing on-looking-ness if they are to obtain new knowledge, not only about themselves as educators but even more about children. Despite the programmes' references to reflection and improved strategies for being an onlooker, the message conveyed is that visual documentation is based on a vision that is objective, power free, and inherently good. By not mentioning potential problems in the programmes, one could argue that the teachers are unprepared if they run into trouble while documenting. Issues of power relations and what it means to be an onlooker and to be looked at are, as demonstrated here, carefully left out of the discourse, as well as possible outcomes for children.

Visual documentation of preschool children

Children are seen throughout the series. Swedish Educational Broadcasting (SEB) usually depicts children interacting with preschool teachers; close-ups are common, and the camera's point of view is at the same level as the children's heads. When preschool teachers present their visual documentation in the programmes, one can see, in documentary scenes, how they have recorded what children say and do. In these scenes, the teachers are onlookers of the children's activities. Children are seen either on their own or interacting with peers and the camera angle is a bird's-eye view, i.e., from above the children's heads, causing the viewers to look down on the children and the children to look up at the viewers. In several cases, still photographs from visual documentation projects are presented at a child's level, but no teachers are present in these pictures (cf. Lindgren 2006: 109-123). Teachers choose to remove themselves from the position of being looked at when documenting in the preschool, taking the same position as the SEB camera. The adult perspective means being an onlooker of children and their activities.

This strengthens the perception that children, throughout the series, are only visually present as the ones being looked at and exposed visually, and are not given audible voice. In scenes filmed by SEB, undifferentiated children's voices are heard as part of the preschool sound environment. In a teacher's visual documentation, when a group of boys wants to attract the documenting teacher's attention, the teacher gives no visible or audible response (*A way of seeing* 2000). The only response given is the attention of the camera gaze or of teachers writing down what the children say. Nowhere in the programmes are children interviewed, asked their opinions, given the opportunity to describe events, or allowed to comment on the visual documentation.

In contrast to the children, the teachers are given voice in various interview scenes. One example is a sequence in one TV programme in which a teacher shows bits and pieces of her own documentation recordings. She presses play on her video camera, to show three preschool boys playing but not talking, and says: "And then Felix continues to find and search for stuff, explores something he wants them to measure now. He has started to comprehend and therefore holds things up to be measured" (A way of seeing 2000). This exemplifies how, when talking about the visual recordings, the teachers speak on behalf of the children and do not hesitate to describe how the children interpret what they are doing or on what grounds they make decisions. This is the case even though the purpose of the teacher's verbal description of the recordings is to focus on children's opportunities to make their own choices and influence the environment in which they spend time. In certain ways, visual documentation does give voice to children, since teachers are constantly taking notes on what the children are saying as well as continuously asking them to describe what they have drawn in their pictures and to post these comments on notice boards. However, even though the programmes claim to be child oriented, by seeing and

visualizing each child, this is contradicted by the fact that the children's self-reflection and verbal discourse is either muted or completely framed by the teachers.

Several critical issues can be raised about power relations and who is given visual and verbal voice in visual documentations. In the above sequences, the teachers are cast in the position of expert, showing how skilled they have become in using their professional vision (Goodwin 1994), i.e., performing the role of the onlooker commenting on and verbalizing the children's actions. Being a preschool child means, frankly, being trained to attract attention by subordinating oneself to the practice of being looked at. Children never get the opportunity to be in, or to be trained to be in, the position of onlooker, a position children are given in research projects focusing on children as participant researchers (Christensen 2004). Berry Mayall (2001), who has interviewed nine-year-old schoolchildren about how they experience childhood, argues that, even though children are perceived as and indeed are active, they tend to understand themselves as being of "inferior moral status" compared with adults (2001: 124). In accordance with Mayall's research, it can be argued that there is a risk that a child's understanding of childhood as a specific subordinated social position is strengthened by visual documentation. This contradicts the aims set out by the governmental inquiry (SOU 1997:157), state authorities (Skolverket 2001), the preschool curriculum (1998), and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), where children's rights to be equal members in society are key features. It is problematic if visual documentation counteracts vital aspects of basic democratic rights of children at the same time as it uses rhetoric casting the method as a means to develop children's perspectives and rights.

Visual documentation putting children on display

The various documentation techniques presented in the programmes generate various types of visual material that the teachers are encouraged to display. Several sequences show teachers transforming children's verbal explanations of, for example, drawings into words and then into posters. All the visual materials, including children's creations, computerized notes, and enlarged printouts are displayed on the preschool walls for everyone to view. This strategy is used because both teachers and children should, according to the method and principles of visual documentation, return to the documentation to reflect on what was said by whom and why (Children - with a right to learn 2000). The intent is that both teachers and children should learn something about themselves, to improve their abilities to communicate and be social. A consequence of displaying the visual documentation material at the preschools is that children can see and look at one another, which means they are put in positions in which they can evaluate one another or be asked to evaluate themselves before each other. We mention this as a consequence and not a possibility, since this might create a discourse in preschools allowing children to comment on each other for a range of purposes. This in turn creates asymmetry between children generated by the visual documentation project. Visual documentation is also used to show the work of the preschools to politicians and, not least, to parents at parental meetings (Skolverket 2001: 15-19; SOU 1997: 157, 87-100). Video clips, photos, and drawings used to present daily practices might simultaneously identify individual children, make parents compare children, or make one child stand out from the group. This becomes a problem, since ethical considerations are ignored.

Given the positivistic rhetoric of the studied TV programmes and policy documents, being put on display is something good. Children are never presented as having the option to resist visuality or visual documentation projects. In a sequence in one programme, in which a group of children is seated on the floor before a notice board with pictures from a visual documentation project, it is obvious that the teachers feel good performing their roles; the children, however, seem bored and uninterested. This impression is strengthened by the children's reaction to another teacher who interrupts the session to bring a message to the group: all of a sudden, the children perk up and look excited.

Pedagogical visual documentation versus visual research methodologies

Visual surveillance is nothing new when it comes to children, and there is a fine line between the need for protection, caregiving, and surveillance (Jenks 1996). What is new (in addition to access to technology) in visual documentation is that children are now primarily being documented, as opposed to observed, by teachers who are simultaneously caregivers, using visual methods as parts of normal, everyday preschool practices. Traditional observation strategies were used not by teachers in everyday practice but by student teachers, i.e., by students in preschool teacher-training programmes. This shift from observation being used by adults other than everyday teachers who are also caregivers to being used by these same teachers, and from being an occasional practice to becoming part of everyday experience, is worth noting.

Regardless of ideological or scientific influences, the main reason why visual documentation has become an educational method is the development of convenient technology. Video cameras, computers, and digital cameras have become less expensive and more compact and powerful. A huge amount of data can be stored at relatively low cost. Researchers conducting ethnographies tend to use video recording to observe and analyse children's everyday lives (cf. Sparrman 2005: 242-243). In visual documentation, research trends are co-located with professionalization efforts. However, there are some important differences between using video recording as a researcher, and as a teacher developing one's profession, especially since the video documentation in the programmes never focuses on the teachers themselves, although they do talk about how visual documentation can improve their performance as teachers. Most of the differences concern issues of ethics; one such difference is that children's participation in documentation is taken for granted by teachers, while researchers need written consent from parents and children (Powell and Smith 2009: 125-126, 135-136, 139).

In a visual research ethnography of an after-school centre, Anna Sparrman (2002: 57-62; 2005) identifies the various ways children between six and eight years of age interpreted the fact that they were being video recorded daily for six months by a researcher. When the video camera was first introduced at the centre, children reflected on what it would be like to be on television and started talking about surveillance cameras. Moreover, the children also talked about how video-recorded data could be used as proof, usually in connection with delicate situations concerning either sexuality or the evaluation of teachers they felt were unjust or when they had broken the centre's rules. The children also used the camera for their own purposes, addressing it as someone who could share a secret or using it to record their own performances (Sparrman 2002: 62; 2005: 247-8). This does not mean the children resisted or reflected on the camera every day or week, or that they did so only at the beginning or end of the study. Sometimes the researcher was even specifically invited to video record, indicating that negotiating about participation should always be considered in video ethnographies and in visual documentations.

In the educational programmes, children are younger than in the research project; i.e., aged one to six years versus aged six to eight in the research project. When children are talked about in the programmes, no distinctions are made between one- and six-year-olds. However, if age is to be considered seriously, we argue that the younger the child, the more important it is to reflect on consent. For example, how should consent given by a one-year-old be understood and obtained? What counts as "yes" or "no"? The strategies used by the children in Sparrman's research project indicate that the older children can still negotiate their participation, even after agreeing to participate in the project. The visual documentation programmes, however, lack ethical considerations on behalf of the individual child, all power being assigned to adults.

Another surveillance principle applied in Sparrman's study at the after-school centre was the panopticonlike architecture. At the centre of the department was a large room surrounded by five smaller rooms with glass doors, and one side with windows facing an outdoor area. A teacher standing at the centre of the large room could, by turning around, see all the activities going on in the after-school centre and thereby keep track of all the children. Such "permanent visibility" (Friedberg 1993: 20) prompted the children to create strategies with which to resist being looked at by both adults and other children. Blankets were used to cover the door windows, sometimes with the help of the teachers. This exemplifies the ambivalent positions of children and adults in childcare institutions (Sparrman 2002: 73-75) and the fact that children do not always want to be watched.

Taken together, the strategies mentioned above indicate that, while some children are ignorant of being video recorded, others are aware of being observed; in addition, they could also use the camera for their own purposes. Importantly, the researcher accommodated all these approaches and negotiated with the children repeatedly over the six months at the after-school centre. Moreover, the researcher also asked whether she could participate in various activities, even though consent had already been given in advance, resulting in permission sometimes being denied. Another difference from the visual documentation of education is that the visual material collected for research was never shown to anyone at the centre, neither teachers nor children. In doing video ethnography on family life in private homes, Pål Aarsand and Lucas Forsberg (2009: 158-163) identified the ethical dilemmas faced when using visual recording devices. As researchers, they were put in situations where they needed to make ethical decisions concerning the limits of individual privacy and of private and public display, i.e., doing what we call onlooking-ness in a personal sphere. Educational and care institutions are part of children's everyday lives and thus personal spheres, and that calls for attention when using visual documentation. In the programmes analysed here, children are regarded as accessible to be looked at while acting, no matter how they themselves define an activity. We want to emphasize that, even though the aim of visual documentation is not to control children, there is no guarantee that the technologies used will not be perceived as controlling or as surveillance by the children. Regardless of the adults' supposedly good motives - as researcher, teacher, or caregiver - children can interpret visual documentation as surveillance.

When researchers video record children, their own roles as participants in and creators of the video recordings become increasingly important in the analysis. In the educational TV programmes, teachers and researchers never talk about their own participation when the documentation of educational practices is the focus. Even though teachers and children are conceptualized as "co-researchers" in the programmes, vital ethical considerations are excluded (*With an open gaze* 2000). Using the above examples, we argue that participation in visual documentation always ought to be explicitly considered, regardless of how often children express compliance or resistance. We also want to highlight the importance of incorporating children's perspectives, i.e., giving them a position from which to influence their own participation in being looked-at or doing on-looking-ness.

Concluding discussion: Visual documentation as emancipation and/or surveillance?

From a historical comparative perspective, it is plausible to understand the *visual documentation of education for pedagogical purposes* as a continuation of the observation techniques used to describe and research children's behaviour in preschool teacher training programmes since the 1930s. It also represents a method for teacher professionalization. However, viewing documentation as a kind of observation was contested by the governmental inquiry in preparation for introducing the preschool curriculum in 1998 (SOU 1997:157, 87-100) and in the educational TV programmes (*Children – with a right to learn* 2000) studied here. Instead of describing visual documentation as observation aiming at evaluating children's development according to developmental psychology, visual documentation is presented as a way to identify children's social and verbal competences and abilities to reflect and give peer support and evaluation. It is emphasized that visual documentation relates to a "new" child perspective, acknowledging what children can do instead of focusing on what they cannot. The shift to visual documentation is framed in the programmes as a shift in scientific interest from developmental psychology to socio–cultural theories of play and learning, a diverse field of knowledge encompassing sociological and anthropological perspectives and including the work ranging from Lev Vygotskij to Reggio Emilia (Lindgren 2006: 139-142, 145-149). Moreover, the programmes also invoke

psychoanalysis: in psychoanalytical theory to be seen is to exist, and we can only exist in relationships by being seen by others (Silverman 1996: 133; Sturken and Cartwright 2009: 122). Therefore, while sidestepping one psychological theory, the policy documents and TV programmes actually touch on two others. The new proposed truth or understanding is that visual documentation serves solely emancipatory purposes for children and adults. Our point is that, in this process, little attention is paid to how children are treated with regard to how new visual techniques are used to communicate professionalization efforts and scientific theories in everyday practices.

The analysis of the programmes implies that visual documentation, often via video recordings and photos, uses the strategy of showing the material to other teacher teams, parents at parental meetings, politicians, and child peers. The video-recorded children are easy to recognize, have no rights to anonymity, and have few if any options to resist participation.

Moreover, no parental consent is required for such documentation to take place, at the same time as the practice is prescribed by a state body. Although children in contemporary societies are used to being video recorded, for example, by their parents, such films are shown in entirely different settings from the ones where the visual documentation of preschool children is shown. In the private sphere of home and family, video recordings are used to build children's visual biographies. The strategies used by researchers also differ from those used in the preschool. As indicated by contrasting visual documentation with (visual) ethnographic research strategies, the researchers' video recordings are viewed by few, seldom by the children themselves or their peers, the documented children are guaranteed anonymity, and they can resist participation. The researchers also reflect on their own positions as participant observers.

An added complication is that, unlike researchers, the teachers who create visual documentation in preschools are also responsible for the children's daily care. As repeatedly stated here, reflections on and problematizations of ethical considerations were lacking in the analysed educational TV programmes. The same goes for reflections on how the relationship between caring and documenting should be organized and maintained in preschools. The fact is that the educational programmes focus more on the visual documentation of children than on the teachers. In the studied programmes, the children are never seen as agents, but are constantly presented in positions where they are being looked at. It seems that the children's main function is to be there for teachers, who look on them as necessary for their professionalization efforts. In our opinion, this means children are not just being documented and evaluated but are also being observed and surveilled. Children are never allowed to reflect on the fact that they are being video recorded, and this constructs an unequal power relationship between teacher and child based on visual documentation in everyday care. To some extent, the teacher-child relationship implies that children are at preschool for the sake of the teachers, rather than the other way around. We do not want to be misunderstood: if the result of visual documentation is that children are actually seen and considered more profoundly, that is good. We argue that, from a child perspective, focusing on children in visual documentation calls for the same ethical standards and reflections as researchers use in ethnographic child studies.

By promoting visual documentation, Swedish Educational Broadcasting is constructing a new conception of childhood: a childhood in which being looked at, and wanting to be looked at, is a good childhood, and where good children do not resist being looked at. This means that everyday monitoring, evaluation, and surveillance are becoming part of what it means to be a child in a preschool setting, and that children must get used to being under scrutiny and surveillance. As the analysis makes clear, this is supported by the fact that cameras and other documentation techniques are perceived and used as neutral and objective devices. There are no calls for critical perspectives about how such devices effect the participants or, for that matter, everyday care practices. Consequently, the analysis implies that being a child means being in the subordinate position of being looked at, whereas being an adult means being in the superior position of onlooker. To be seen is to exist, and that is what it means to have a good childhood.

Applying a child perspective means not just observing children and displaying visual artefacts concerning them on notice boards, but also talking with children about how they perceive visual documentation, i.e., applying both a *child perspective* in analysing what is said about children and *children's perspectives* capturing children's own meaning making. Rather than framing this as emancipation, as is done in policy documents, guidelines, and educational programmes, one can understand this as a technique in line with what Nikolas Rose (1999) calls a self-regulating device, and relate it to what Kenneth Hultqvist (1995: 156-158) sees as part of a new mode of governing, namely decentrism. When individualism is highlighted as a key characteristic of society, new techniques are required to make individuals conform to the collective. Visual documentation serves such purposes well, and the major outcome of visual documentation could well be to bring up a generation accepting of surveillance.

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