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Phd Student. Anniqa Lagergren
Academy of Music and Drama
University of Gothenburg
Anniqa.Lagergren@hsm.gu.se

Who designs video documentations in research with children; the researchers or the children themselves?

Introduction

The usage of video documentation in research has become more and more common, especially when children are the focus of interest. Video documentations provide researchers with a material rich in detail, which can be viewed over and over again in order to analyze subtle dimensions in human interaction. With “new” techniques to produce research information, new methodological “problems” arise.

Research is important and beneficial both for society and for individuals' development, that research is of high quality and focused on substantive issues is therefore of highest concern. Similarly, as a researcher to ensure that the impact of research design approach and the application is not in an improper manner with adverse consequences for informants and survey participants involved in research. Therefore, the research ethical considerations are always keen to consider throughout the research process and especially when the research is mainly targeted at children, as is the case here.

Pring (2004) problematize the concept ethics, stating that it is often used synonymously with the word morality, in educational research. Pring believe that morality is about what is right or wrong to do according to many philosophers, while ethics is about the search for rules of implementation in order to defend the research in the political context. What is interesting I think, is how Pring lifts the whole discussion to a moral plane where it is not just about following a few ethical principles, but also to act right and proper as a researcher. The problems Pring highlights can be said to be the dilemma between ethics and science. These two do not always go hand in hand, and then one must sometimes draw the short straw in relation to the other. According to Pring the researcher have to conduct research and evaluate the situation based on good principles, which in turn rests on the researcher's attitudes and

values. In my understanding of Pring's reasoning, the discussion concerns moral virtues and intellectual virtues. Moral virtues concerns for example courage, goodness, honesty and intellectual virtues concerns for example to find out the truth and be open for criticism.

Much of the research conducted on children has assumed a great research on children. More recently it has become clear that a change is taking place, from research on children to research not only about but also with children where also the children's voices are heard. One of the reasons for this new approach is the UN Convention on the rights of the child and the document from UNESCO, Education for All (Qvarsell, 2003; Halldén, 2003).

The perception of children in research has changed, where the collection of empirical evidence previously was gathered by for example observations and tests of other adults in the child's environment, to a view of children as active subjects with their own experiences, knowledge and skills (Nilsson, 2002). With a child's perspective in mind, an ethical approach is to see children as co researchers and not as research subjects. Lawthorn, (Goodley, Lawthorn & Moore, 2004) has in here research had an emancipatory approach, of the sentence to see the interview as a researcher in the interview. This means that allow the interviewee to create the story, have full ownership of the materials and the opportunity to present a first person narrative. According to Lawthorn, this approach is ethically a way to give the interviewee an opportunity to win something in the research study. Furthermore, she believes that it is about giving the interviewees a voice in all stages of the research process. This leads according to Lawthorn to a greater interest and involvement from the interview site, which can lead to useful benefits for the participant. In this way, be researched on a more equal role in the research process.

Fritzdorf & Fors (2009) discuss their video documentations of children and teenagers. The informants in their studies, surprisingly to the researchers, took control over the camera and some interesting shifts took place. They refer to this as a "mutiny". They write: "the video camera itself were assigned new meaning both by the researcher and informants". These new meanings call for innovation in the analysis of the material, and also reflection about the assumptions of the qualities of the video registrations.

I have experienced similar events in my own video documentations of children's actions in a music composition task. My ambition in this presentation is to discuss some of these results and open up for a discussion about what these results means from a methodological and ethical perspective?

Method & Results

Two studies were performed, study 1 in a community music school and study 2 in a compulsory school. The aim of the studies was to investigate children when they compose music together. The participants were children age 9-12 years old. In study 1 the children were divided into 3 groups, each group consisted of 3-6 children. In study 2 the children were divided into 5 groups, each group consisted of 3-6 children. In study 1, a hand camera was used besides one camera on tripod in each of the three rooms. The hand camera was introduced to the participating children to use whenever they wanted. In study 2 a hand camera was not available for the children to use, only cameras on tripod in each of the five rooms were used. My intention was that the children in study 1 would use the hand camera to document important actions from their perspective. The results show that only two children used the camera on one occasion each of limited extent. However, in the second study many children took control over the camera at several occasions, even though the intention here was not that the children would use the cameras in the setting. For example they changed the setting of the camera, moved the camera and designed their own scene to be video documented. This participatory approach provided the research project with new ways to understand the complexity of video documentation as a research method, especially when children are the informants.

In this presentation I will show examples of children taking over the camera and discuss the ethical and scientific consequences due to this participatory approach.

Examples:

Ex, 1:

Eva sits behind the keyboard, Elin walks back and forth, Erik sits behind a drum set, Ebba sits behind another drum set, Emanuel sits on a chair with an electric guitar in his hands.

Eva: *"the camera is only filming Ebba all the time"*, turns the camera so that Ebba, Emanuel and the keyboard is in the lens and says, *"like that"*, goes back to the keyboard again.

The consequences for me as a researcher was that I could no longer observe all of the children, Elin and Erik wasn't visible.

Ex, 2:

All the children plays their instrument, Erik says, *"give me the guitar and I'll play Heaven's on fire, YEAH"*, pretends to play. He gets his hands on a guitar and places himself in front of the video camera and shows off to the camera singing Heaven's on fire and pretends to play,

direct the camera towards himself, changes the angle of the camera again and places himself on front of the camera and plays again.

Ex, 3:

The D group has agreed to record their composition on the computer. They are not pleased with the how the recorded composition sounds so they decide to make a new recording. The children then decide to move the computer backwards in the room and also to change the angle of the camera so that the lens captures them while playing.

Dora stands behind the camera and changes the direction toward Daniel and says, “*this is Daniel*”, redirects the camera towards Disa and says, “*she’s the one that sings with a pink shirt, her name is Disa*”, Disa says, “*you are not suppose to tell our names*”, David, “*no, it’s not allowed to say our names*”, Dora then directs the camera towards Disa again and says, “*her name isn’t Disa*”, redirects the camera towards Daniella and says, “*and she plays the guitar*”, directs the camera towards Daniel and says, “*this person plays the keyboard*”, directs the camera towards David and says, “*and he plays the guitar*”, directs the camera towards herself and says, “*and I play drums*”, she then directs the camera in different angles. Daniella puts herself behind the camera, Dora stand in front of the camera, Daniella now directs the camera at different angles, then directs it towards Disa, who is moving the table with the computer, Disa, “*well, I will record one time when you are all playing*”, she starts to sing into the microphone, Daniella directs the camera in different angles, Daniel gets behind the camera, Daniella walks towards the computer with a guitar, Dora is handled the microphone and Disa is managing the computer, Daniel directs the camera towards the girls and says, “*like that*”.

Ex, 4:

Dora stands behind the camera and directs the camera towards different angles in the room. Disa puts her head in front of the camera and makes a face, Dora says, “*Oh, that was a good one*”, puts her head in front of the lens and says, “*and, that was our band*”, makes the V-sign with her fingers, then walks out the door.

Discussion

Lawthorn (Goodley, Lawthorn & Moore, 2004) argue for a research design where the informants are given space to create the story and the opportunity to present a first person

narrative. Based on the results presented, it is obvious that the children take the liberty to create their own story. In all four examples, the children is not content to be only observed, they also organizes and directs the actions that will be possible for me as a researcher to analyze. This participatory approach assumes there's an audience, as becomes clear when Eric is doing a performance in front of the camera (in example two). In this case the audience is the video camera. As can be noted in example four, the children themselves are directing the situation by relocating themselves, the camera and the computer; they are setting up a scene to perform their composition for the audience - the video camera. In example four, Dora wants to make sure that they are interpreted as a band with her finishing statement, "*and, that was our band*", makes the V-sign, as a symbol for having a successful achievement.

In relation to Nilsson's (2002) discussion concerning the change in perception of children in research, the results presented can be interpreted as a matter of not only a change in the perception of children in research that has happened; but also the children themselves have changed their approach to be documented in research. Towards a view of themselves as active subjects in their own environment with both knowledge and skills to be a part of research that concerns them.

This change in children's participation in research is also interesting to discuss in regard to Pring's (2004) discussion about the dichotomy between ethics and science. As a researcher, validity in research is of great concern and when using video observations to collect empirical data to capture as much as possible of the event in a setting. The problem that arises for the researcher when the children practice their agency is that the researchers intent to capture a setting on video is overturned by the children. In the meaning of changing the direction or the view of the video camera, (as in all of the presented examples) making it difficult for the researcher to be able to see the whole situation which was the purpose of the research design.

To summon up this discussion, the first study presented in this session started out with a research design that assumed participant-controlled video camera. In the second study the research design assumed researcher-controlled video cameras. However, in the first study the children were not interested in using the video camera to any large extent. In the second study the children surprisingly took control over the video camera. Why is that? What consequences does this approach have from a scientific and ethical point of view? With these questions I want to invite you to this discussion, and hope the outcome can make a contribution to extend the understanding of this phenomenon. And in extension become a meaningful part of the methodological discussion in my dissertation.

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