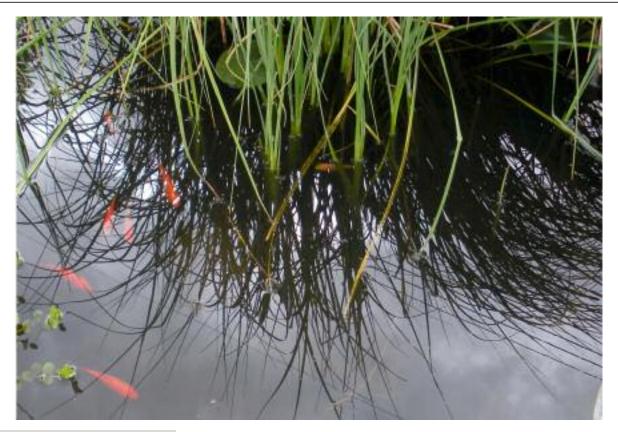# Reflections and Shadows:
Ethical Issues in Pedagogical Documentation

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Abstract
Drawing on literature from visual sociology, research ethics, children's rights and literature on pedagogical documentation, this paper explores the ethical issues that arise for teachers as they become teacher-researchers of and with children through the process of pedagogical documentation, a form of making children's learning visible through the use of photographic images and texts.

Reflections and Shadows: A Metaphor

The surface of the small pond in my backyard reflects the clouds and sky, and the plants and rocks that surround its banks. The grasses growing in the pond create reflections and shadows that probe deep into its depths. Just below the surface are other reflections as light filters down; a fish darts from the shadows while others hang, orange-gold, just below the surface, waiting.

My pond is a metaphor for the ethical dilemmas that play out and confront me in my work as educator and researcher. They are multilayered, going deep into my history, connecting and re-connecting past to present, flickering across the surface of my current work, emerging, changing, waiting, darting, moving. They are both reflections and shadows.

Historical Shadows

The foreshadowing of this paper began for me in the late 1980s when I was

doing my doctoral studies and working as teacher in a university lab preschool. At the time, I was undertaking research in my own classroom of 2-year-olds and concurrently an educational television program was being filmed at the centre about observing children and children's development. Both projects met the ethical criteria of the time, with parents giving consent for their children to be participants in research, and to be filmed as part of this documentary series. One episode focused on "critical incidents" in the classroom. I was seated on the floor reading with a small group of children when I noticed the cameraman, whose presence on a large boom camera could not be ignored, moving towards the water table where two boys were playing. I quickly followed to see these boys hitting each other with wet sponges in an escalating manner. The parents of the children at the centre were eager to see the series as it aired on television. Although, the incident was debriefed as part of the program content, I imagined the feelings of the parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents as they observed their children engaged in acts of aggression made public on television, and so I forewarned the parents by describing this incident before they saw it soggy blow by soggy blow on their television screen. Fortunately, they did not seem overly concerned because they knew the children, but still something had nagged at me.

The classes that I taught were part of the Anchor Project, a program designed for parents and 2-year-olds, with the parents meeting together in another room with a parent facilitator and observing the activities in the classroom on closed circuit video. The intent was not to tell parents how to be good parents based on a particular model, but to help them understand children better and to open up possibilities for them based on their observations and discussions. In this, the program was unique from many other parenting programs popular at the time. This context of lab school/demonstration

centre, research site and parent–child project in which I taught meant that having video cameras and observers were an unquestioned part of classroom life.

The shadows of silence, surveillance, objectivity, research subjects as objects, flicker across my past.

We operated in accordance with a understanding of the criteria for good and ethical research, and of appropriate educational practices that included a solid foundation in child study grounded in developmental psychology where observing children, and in this case, teachers as well, was an accepted part of the lives we led as educators. We believed in the tenets of scientific objective observation, developmental stage theory, and parental responsibility for informed consent.. The shadows of silence, surveillance, objectivity, research subjects as objects, flicker across my past.formed consent-. The shadows of silence, surveillance, objectivity, research subjects as objects, flicker across my past.

Reggio Emilia and Reconceptualist Perspectives

In the 1990s, I became influenced by the educational philosophy coming from the municipal infant-toddler and preprimary schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy, where children are considered to have rights of citizenship from birth, are seen as competent meaning-makers, and as co-constructors of culture, rather than recipients of a pre-existing culture. I have been highly influenced by early childhood reconceptualists (e.g., Canella, 1997; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999/2007; Jipson & Johnson, 2001; Soto & Swadener, 2005, and others) who have challenged the hegemony of developmental psychology as a lens through which to view children, and who have opened up questions of voice, power,

and children's rights in adult relationships with children. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified in 1989, and its articles that support children as having a right to expression of ideas and the right to have voice in those things that concern them are consistent with the Reggio philosophy. It had not yet entered into our conversations in the early 1990s in Alberta but now plays a major role in how researchers, in other parts of the world, especially, consider children's rights.

I was grappling with the ethical issues that are re-emerging for me as an educator and researcher in my current work with pedagogical documentation by questioning the responsibility that I had as an educator for how we represent young children publicly.

When I reflect back on my experience in a lab/demonstration school, I realize that in the documentary I was grappling with the ethical issues that are re-emerging for me as an educator and researcher in my current work with pedagogical documentation by questioning the responsibility that I had as an educator for how we represent young children publicly. What is our responsibility as educators and researchers to represent others in ways that are ethical and respectful? This is particularly powerful when we work with visual images and I want to explore some of these issues as they have arisen for me through the process of pedagogical documentation as a means of making children's lives in classrooms visible to others. I will draw on the literature from sociology of childhood and educational research with children to explore questions and issues that may be

helpful to teachers engaged in pedagogical documentation as part of their praxis.

I will explore issues of representation, informed consent, bringing children's voices into the research (Soto & Swadener, 2005), the use of photographs of children, and interpretation of visual data (Rose, 2007). It is not within this scope of this paper to examine in depth issues of power between children and educators, or a philosophical exploration coming to a definition of ethics. My definition of ethics comes from Dahlberg, Moss and Pence's (1999/2007) discussion of ethics "which emanates from respect for each child and cognition of difference and multiplicity, and which struggles to avoid making the Other into the same as oneself (p. 156). They continue, "The art of listening and hearing what the Other is saying, and taking it seriously, is related to the ethics of the encounter" (p. 156). Pedagogical documentation holds, at its core, this ethics of the encounter.

Reflections: Pedagogical Documentation

Pedagogical documentation undertaken by classroom teachers and others working closely with children in classrooms (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999/ 2007) is a process for understanding children's thinking and intentions in educational contexts as a way for teachers and children to construct their educational lives together. It originated in the infant-toddler and preprimary schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Pedagogical documentation is grounded in a "pedagogy of listening"-- that is listening with all of your senses (Rinaldi, 2006), through collecting visual data (photographs, videotapes), audio data, and written notes for the purpose of understanding children's thinking in order to plan educational experiences for them, and as a reflective process for educators to understand their own role in the teaching/learning dialogue. In this way the educator is working much as a sociologist to understand the lives of children and their experi-

ences from the children's perspective. The intention is vastly different from the child study approach that informed my work in the 1980s. The intent is not to identify where children are in the developmental process, and where they might be seen as deficit, but to remove those lenses that tend to blind educators from seeing the unique ways in which children construct their understanding of the world and ways in which they are actors in creating culture (Dahlberg et al., 1999/2007; Tarr, 2010). Pedagogical documentation is not an easy task. Olsson (2009) cautions, "there is a risk that we document that which we already know about children and learning and by doing that we immobilize and close down the event" (p.113).

Turner and Wilson (2010) concur:

One of the most common misinterpretations is to understand documentation as a strategy to teach better what we as teachers already know. Instead, documentation needs to be a way to get to know better what the children, in their own way, already know. (p. 8)

> *The act of pedagogical documentation becomes a dialogue*

The process of pedagogical documentation involves returning to the children, their images and their words to gather their insights, their confirmation, or their disagreement, in a shared dialogue so that the children's interests can be supported. The process also means that teachers are deeply implicated in the process through the choices they make in selecting events to document and what they do not select to document (Dahlberg, et al., 1999/2007, p. 147).

Carlina Rinaldi (2006), President of Reggio Children, and former pedagogical consultant for the municipality of Reggio Emilia, writes:

When you take a picture or you make a document, in reality you don't document the child but your knowledge, your concept, your idea…. You don't show the child, but the relationship and the quality of your relationship, and the quality of your looking at him or her. (p. 196)

The act of pedagogical documentation becomes a dialogue. As Rinaldi (2006) writes, "Thanks to documentation the child also becomes aware about the teacher's perspective…. I see what you see about my doing, my thinking" (p. 196).

As documenters we have an ethical responsibility to carefully consider the "temporal and spatial editing" (Goldstein, 2007, p. 72) we do as we select, crop and sequence the photos we use in documentation and share with others. These decisions impact the kind of interpretations that others may make when they view the documentation. Goldstein (2007), in his chapter All Photos Lie, reminds us that a photo is not the "truth" but always a selection or partial view of an event (p.72). Photos and texts are a construction with a particular history and context and subject to interpretation by those viewing them (Thomson, 2008, p. 9). Tiziana Filippini, Coordinator of the Documentation and Educational Research Center in Reggio Emilia, states

The use of various images makes visible the context and allows the audience to enter into that moment; it allows each of us to enter into that situation and examine our assumptions. Images enable us to have different opinions about the situation, what it means, and what then we can know about the children in it, about who children are. (Turner & Wilson, 2010, p. 7)

Documentation in the Reggio schools is a collaborative process, with teachers and pedagogistas (curriculum consultants) analyzing the texts and images

from different perspectives to decide on possible courses of action. These are also shared with the parents, thus bringing them into the dialogue with teachers and children about life in the school. Pedagogical documentation serves as a reflection, or mirror, for both the teacher and the children, as well as for others as participants in the process. Documentation is thus seen as a way to open up possibilities rather than to provide answers.

Shadows
The shadows that background this landscape of pedagogical documentation are the ethical issues that largely have remained unarticulated. For teachers engaged in pedagogical documentation the process places them in the role of teacher-researcher and thus presents them with many of the ethical issues confronting sociologists, and others researching in educational settings. I teach a graduate course, Inquiry through Documentation, and have also been involved in a research project with teachers interested in learning to document in their elementary classrooms. The impetus for this investigation into ethical issues has grown from the questions and dilemmas that have emerged when students begin to bring in photos and to create documentation panels. These include questions of choice of image: Why choose this one over that to represent learning? What should I do when images are selected that may show one child in less than a positive light? If I represent this child's struggle to solve a problem (and this child often has difficulties), does this place this child in position as Other or does it bring this child into the group? These are children with special needs/rights and I want others to see their strengths – do these images and text do that? How will others interpret these documentation panels? Not only is there the decision about photo and text selection, there is also the issue of privacy (FOIP: Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy) and who may view images of children in schools that

also emerge in the literature on visual research.

Out of the Shadows: Difficulties in Making Images Visible
Pink (2007), writing about visual ethnographic work, acknowledges challenges in the use of images because it is difficult to provide anonymity for participants and loss of control of the images by the participants or researcher once they are published (p. 56). This concern also arises in contemporary literature on research on young children. For example, Olsson (2009) considered whether children's photos should be published and whether the expressions on children's faces were important enough to the research for their faces to be recognizable (p. 127). She and her research group also recognized that once published they had no control over the use of the material. They also wondered how these young children would feel about these images when they were older. Dockett, Einarsdottir and Perry (2011) faced a similar question in reflecting how children would view their responses in the future. They ask, "How do we work with children to emphasize the value of their own interpretive frames and perspectives in ways that are respected as citizens within their communities – now and in the future?" (p. 77).

Flewitt (2005), in discussing ethical issues that emerged from her work with 3-year-olds, shares similar concerns:

> Although participants' names may be changed in written accounts and erased from audio recordings, visual images make them easily recognisable not only whilst in the public sphere of work but also in the privacy of their homes. This puts children at particular risk and renders parents and practitioners vulnerable to criticism, anxiety and self-doubt. (p. 558)

Flewitt suggests that in addition to blurring faces, drawings from photographic images may serve as substitutes for rec-

ognizable photographs. In my work teaching preservice teachers to document as part of their practicum experience, we look at taking photos in which children are not identifiable, so that not only can they use these as a part of their own and the children's learning but so these images also might become part of the preservice teacher's electronic portfolio - but we recognize the loss of expression and identity.

Flickering Shadows: Voice
Social science and educational researchers have made strides in giving 'voice to children' as co-participants in research about their lives. As documenters of children's lives we have also been engaged in giving voice to children, to be visible and to be heard. The question of who can hear their voice can be problematic. Issues of privacy (FOIP) serve to silence children, as well as to protect them. It silences us as well from being their advocates through documentation. Just as my graduate students could not bring their documentation into the university class without parental consent, we could not share this information beyond the class although it might have served to advocate for children and as a powerful pedagogical tool for student teachers and others. Had it had a larger audience, it would have required additional consent and this may have excluded some children. Documentation panels may not be shared outside of school contexts, without parental consent and, even then, use of names can be problematic. Some researchers (e.g., Dockett et al., 2011) found that children may want not to be anonymous but given credit for their ideas.

Emerging from the Shadows: Ethics and Informed Consent
I have been required by my university to treat the Inquiry through Documentation course as a research project and so a standard ethics protocol was filed and all of the parents in each of the teacher's classrooms received formal consent

forms. The ethics protocol and consent form required did not suggest that I, or the teachers, might need children's consent to have their photos shared in the university context; nor do local school boards, whose consent is also required for research in classrooms, suggest that elementary age children might give consent in their own right.

What it means for children to give informed consent is shifting as researchers devise ways to make their research objectives, the use of the data collected, the specifics of what is required of the children, and their right to withdraw at any time understandable - even to very young children. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) has had an impact on legislation and on research practices for some researchers (eg., Flewitt, 2005; Soto & Swadener, 2005; Harcourt & Conroy 2005, 2011; Thomson, 2008). UK researchers Bitou and Waller (2011) state that, "in the UK, the Children Act (2004) and Every Child Matters (DfES 2004) established the right of the child to be listened to" (p. 53). Flewitt (2005), also from the UK, writes:

With regard to child consent, Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child (United Nations, 1989) clearly states children's rights to express their views on all matters that affect them. Some researchers prefer to use the term 'assent' rather than 'consent', arguing that minors are unable to give legal consent. However, as Alderson and Morrow point out (2004, pp. 98–99), in English law, 'competent minors' under 16 can give valid consent, with 'competence' defined as having sufficient understanding and intelligence to understand what is proposed. (p. 555)

In 2005, Harcourt and Conroy published a paper titled "Informed assent: ethics and processes when researching with young children, but in 2011 they use only the term consent, which I see as

placing a greater emphasis on the capabilities of young children to fully participate in the process of giving consent, provided that researchers take responsibility for making the ideas fully accessible in terms that children can understand. Their research demonstrates ways in which this can occur. Harcourt and Conroy (2011) argue that "children have the right to be spoken to as co-researchers, in language that makes connections to their prior experience" (p. 42). They stress that researchers must be aware of the phrasing of language they use so that it is not implied as a predetermined agreement (p. 43).

Flewitt (2005) was careful to offer the three-year-olds in her research study opportunities to understand her research and to involve them in decisions about participation. She describes her experience as follows:

When I talked with the case-study children about the processes of their involvement, and as the children handled the equipment, they asked many highly appropriate questions, such as whether their voices would be on the audio and video recordings, whether they could watch/listen to them, who else would watch/listen to them. These responses indicated strongly that although only three years old, they were 'competent' and confident enough to grant or withdraw consent—with some more outspoken and enquiring than their parents. (p. 555)

Flewitt also reminds us that consent must be negotiated on an on-going basis.

An Unexplored Shadow
Researchers must negotiate with gate-keepers, school boards, administrators, teachers and parents to undertake research with children. Whether or not they seek consent from the children. they must negotiate a relationship with the children in order to proceed. This is a shadow lurking in the background of research but which is largely unexplored by educators. Classroom teachers, on the

other hand, are already in a relationship with the children, or at the beginning of the school year, are in the process of building relationships and establishing classroom procedures and expectations, and pedagogical documentation is a taken-for-granted part of this educational context.

Australian educator Sandra Cheeseman (2006), in writing about documentation in classrooms, raises the question about children's consent:

We are tempted to make assumptions that children don't mind this, that it is part of being in an early childhood center. We have always listened into children's conversations and used this material to inform our future planning. The public display of these conversations within documentation may represent an assumption on behalf of the teacher that children consent to this practice. (p. 194)

As a researcher, Burke (2008) also asks, "what right do we have as adults to know the hidden worlds of children's culture and to have them illuminate this through visual means?" (p. 26). This is something that seems to largely be ignored in the literature on documentation. I wonder that, as educators working with children and documenting their learning as teacher-researchers, we might consider the stance taken by educational researchers to honor the intent of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). We might openly discuss and ask for consent from children before we begin to document, and to consider that this is provisional consent that is continually renegotiated. This requires sensitivity because of inherent power relationships in the teacher-student relationship to ensure that children know they have a right to say no at anytime. No matter how good our intentions are, I believe that we should be mindful of the question, "what is our right to do this?" Should our needs as educators to plan curriculum and assess students for reporting purposes override students'

right to have a voice in those things that concern them, as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)?

Numerous researchers (e.g., Clark, 2005; Burke, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Bitou & Waller, 2011) have demonstrated that even children can, given cameras or drawing media, document aspects of their lives that are important to them and can explain their thinking. As educators in pedagogical documentation, we need to be continually mindful of engaging children in the process of documenting and constructing visual representation of their lives together.

Reflections and Shadows Revisited

In returning to my experience in the parent-two-year-old program, I believe that our intentions to advocate for young children's capabilities and their abilities as problem-solvers through the video observation and discussions between parents and the facilitator, which supported sharing multiple perspectives rather than providing answers, foreshadowed my work with pedagogical documentation. The Reggio philosophy and reconceptualist thinking challenged me to think more deeply about the assumptions we held at the time. While I was present on the videos, I had only a slightly louder voice than the children. Each week a single child was followed during the morning, with some sessions focused on the teachers. At times I could provide an account of an event from my perspective but mostly I was just as much an object of the camera's gaze as were the children. We recognized, as have researchers using visual images (Goldstein, 2007; Pink, 2007), that the camera's gaze only provided a partial view of classroom experiences and sometimes gave accounts to fill in what the camera did not show - but we did not question the surveillance nature of the experience.

Here I have explored some of the ethical issues that confront educators working with pedagogical documentation reflected against issues raised by researchers who have taken a stance grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to involve children in research that involves them, to giving them the right to consent and the means to participate as co-researchers. As outsiders, researchers have provided a mirror in which to examine some of the assumptions about consent and participation that may be overlooked by educators working with children. The term teacher-researcher comes with many layers of understanding and assumptions that I have tried to bring to the surface in this paper. Both educators and researchers must negotiate their way amongst the continually flickering shadows of the ethical dilemmas that arise when we work with visual images intended to bring visibility to the lives of children in ways that include their voices in a collaborative endeavor.

To return to my pond…

The grasses in my pond create intertwining reflections and shadows that both play across the water's surface in the sunlight and penetrate deep into the pond's depths. And like these, as educators and researchers we must penetrate beneath the surface reflections to continually re-examine our ethical encounters with children.

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