Tracing Actants in Discussing Photographs of Preschoolers

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During the last decades, photographs taken by young children have received research interest in different academic disciplines. Photographs of young children have been treated as visual data in analysing e.g. their social relations, learning abilities and well-being. However, there are only few studies which address photographic practices of young children as visual meaning-making, discussing them as particular means to explore one’s relation to the surrounding world of things, bodies and spaces.

In my presentation I introduce a qualitative case study, which draws on research in childhood studies, art education and visual cultural studies. The data was produced in a photography workshop in a Finnish daycare center, where 14 preschoolers (6-years-old) discussed the photographs they had taken, inspired by contemporary photographic art.

Although visual and verbal elements are closely interlaced in my data, photographs of the preschoolers are examined according to the discussions of the children and me, the researcher. When studying children’s accounts, a special emphasis is put on descriptions of the photo shooting process and children’s relation to objects, including the camera; other material entities and space. Using discursive analytical approach, my aim is to identify what kind of agencies preschoolers produce when discussing their photographs. By applying Bruno Latour’s actor-network-theory (1999, 2005) I try to trace those human and material actants, which children describe in their discussions. I consider the photo shooting as an event where both the preschoolers and their material surroundings can perform as actants by inviting, guiding, making possible or prohibiting thus, having an influence on human and nonhuman entities.

References


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