

Introduction to the Special Issue

Videography and Decolonizing Childhood

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1 The Role of Videography with/in Research

Videography, the use of all recordings of moving images on electronic devices in research, is seen as a reliable and dominant form of data to document objectively what takes place in the classroom (de Freitas, 2016). It is often assumed that videos accurately record children's movements and represent the 'real' world as it is. Whilst other disciplines like anthropology have challenged claims of objective understandings of video data and have foregrounded approaches that involve "the call for ethnographies to be formulated as multi-vocal texts and 'reflexive mirrors' rather than objective data" (Jewitt 2012, p. 3), traditional video observation in which video is used as a reliable form of data-gathering, still dominates the educational field.

Spaces tend not to "announce themselves through verbal language", hence the popularity of video-research because it enables visibility of "the complex set of bodily presences and absences, movements in the space, material

details, colours, sounds, and rhythms” (Mengis, Nicolini and Gorli, 2016, pp. 2, 4). Moreover, videography enables repeated playback of recordings and offers unique opportunities to slow down what happens in ‘real’ time through ‘still’ images, exploring “in detail the effects of specific ways of seeing with a camera” (Mengis *et al*, 2016, p. 4). We tend to think about still images as capturing, isolating and freezing moments in time, but they can also be understood as a kind of colonising “violence” (Kind 2013, p. 437) that removes the event from its situatedness and space-time-dis/continuity – “a leap out of the marked body...into a conquering gaze from nowhere” (Haraway, 1988, p. 581).

The authors of this special issue regard video recording not as an objective, neutral methodological tool (epistemologically, ethically or politically), but as ‘seeing with the camera’. The eyes of different organisms or machines ‘see’ differently. Therefore, objectivity involves understanding “how these different visual systems work, technically, socially, and psychically” (Haraway, 1988, p. 583). Their articles have been sequenced in the order of their appearance in this introduction. Resisting the urge to summarise and categorise each video article and explain how they contribute to the theme of the special issue, this introduction offers a flavour of new ideas or concepts brought into existence by the texts – provocations for another way of thinking/doing/becoming. The nine contributions are introduced organically, woven into our text as an affirmative way of highlighting and bringing to life our more theoretical wanderings. In its own specific way, each article assumes that video-practices are not passive, observing instruments and measuring devices, but are productive and performative in how a phenomenon materialises and how meaning is given to what is observed (Mengis *et al*, 2016, pp. 5–6). Rather than the standard practice of using video to ‘collect’ data and evidence of learning, we are interested in video research for how “it is materially implicated in the production of new knowledge and new kinds of knowers, attending to the unique qualities of digital nature of video data for how it mobilises new social and cultural relations” (de Freitas, 2016, p. 554).

Together with the authors, we are wondering how videography can challenge the ontologies of humanism with its power-producing binaries that include and exclude the subhuman (e.g., child) and the nonhuman (e.g., cameras): nature/culture, mind/body, inner/outer, cognition/emotion, animate/inanimate, human/animal, human/machine, adult/child.

The following questions guided the authors of this special issue:

- How does posthumanism shift the role of the researcher using videography in educational settings?

- How does the inclusion of the material (the use of camera and video as an apparatus) *matter* in knowledge production, ontologically, epistemologically and ethically?
- In what way do *time* and *space* play an active pedagogical role in the classroom?
- How can ideas about time and space in education be challenged by developing new ways of seeing through videography?
- What are the possibilities for decolonizing childhood by using video recordings?
- How does the technology enable the relationality in-between the young human and more-than-human to be reconfigured, rendering not only children, but also the material, capable of ‘having’ agency, and thereby calling into question deficit notions of child?

2 The Political Difference the Ontological Shift Makes for Childhood and Educational Research

Critical posthuman researchers are particularly interested in exploring how video recording technology can help rethink “what forms of intelligence, truth and expertise count” (Lorimer 2010, p. 238). Moving away from following only the human in research opens up epistemic possibilities of paying attention to the material world, performativity, embodiment and “the diverse objects, organisms, forces and materialities that populate an emergent world and cross between porous bodies” (Lorimer, 2010, p. 238). The indeterminacy and uncertainty of this ontological shift in research opens up possibilities to evaluate children’s movements differently, troubling hierarchical relationships between young and older humans. For example, **Nikki Rotas** work with children wearing cameras (Rotas, 2016) exemplifies ‘flattening’ the relationality in-between ‘subhumans’ (e.g., children) and other humans and between the human and the nonhuman (e.g., camera, computer, chair, atmosphere, word).

Rotas’ contribution to this special issue introduces the practice of what the children in her research referred to as “mashing”. With a focus on process rather than end-product, the children used editing software to cut and paste images together that are important to them and that have been recorded on wearable cameras (GoPros) attached to their head, chest or wrist. The micro-films (seconds in length) activate a critical and creative thinking process about knowledges that have been neglected, thereby giving young research participants access to research practices normally hidden from them. Mashing disrupts linear practices as it moves in-between the human and the non-human, encounters that which “the human cannot quite (yet) figure out in language”. Through moving images, Rotas shows how children see through their moving bodies and perform documentation that demands attention and invites adults to listen to “the more-than of the human eye and/or developmental brain”. Children make learning visible that is often

marginalised in education and that affects not only the adult researchers, but also the children themselves as they dissect and diffract through the films, including images of the researcher captured by the child. As Rotas concludes: “The use of wearable cameras enables this shift in documentation and distribution of recording power”. Challenging the confines of language and ways of seeing in educational research, Rotas’ article responds to many of the guiding questions, including a modest claim about the potential for decolonizing childhood by using video recordings.

Inclusion of the material (such as cameras) activates an ontological shift that does more justice to non-human forces at play in an educational event/research, and troubles colonizing notions of relationships. Decolonizing educational research involves examining the various ways in which coloniality manifests itself in producing and communicating knowledge and meaning-making (Patel 2016). This includes the affordances of recording-machines, with their ability to ‘slow-down’, ‘fast-forward’ and ‘pause’ time, thereby offering methodological opportunities with ontological implications. Including videography as research instrument in posthuman research disrupts the idea that there is an ‘after’, ‘before’ and a ‘now’ – unilinear time with all its allusions to human ‘progress’ and ‘development’, so characteristic of modernist education.

In answering the questions above, our authors make the following contributions to video and childhood research: *methodological*, *theoretical* and *decolonizing*. We explore each in turn.

3 Methodological Contribution to Childhood Research

The articles trouble normative methodologies that assume that videos accurately and objectively record children’s movements and represent the ‘real’ world as it is, and enable objective knowledge about children in educational settings. The authors explore the agency of the technology, such as cameras, microphones or other materials as well as children as co-producers of knowledge as part of a material-discursive entanglement or assemblage. Where traditional video research often tries to minimise the influence of these technologies to portray the world as it is, this issue actively explores the possibilities of these technologies to inform the decolonization of education by interrupting habitual processes of seeing and understanding. Matter such as prints, sound collage and video clips open up new possibilities for the practice of analyzing empirical material, whereby researchers (and children) are invited to meet the empirical material, not as a dead entity to be taken apart, but as a door to new possibilities of thinking, doing and becoming.

When analyzing camera/screen and child entanglements of children at a computer club, **Lucy Catherine Caton**’s contribution focusses on the

‘doing’ of the video, rather than what the video ‘means’ in relation to dominant socio-cultural practices and terminologies. Through this ontological move to postqualitative research, Caton challenges contemporary humanist approaches to child participatory visual research and its subject-based agency. This decenters the child/researcher and acknowledges the camera and film produced during the research in an affective methodology called *Video data sensing*. Supported by using digital software, this approach disrupts dominant conceptions of children’s knowing, and offers an alternative to how child subjectivities emerge out of the vast volume of material often gathered in video research. Hence, *Video data sensing* opens up a way of understanding how the video fragments select the researchers just as much as the researcher selects the video fragments. Additionally, through the use of digital filters, leading for example to the pixilation of images, the urge for ethnographic description and habitual interpretation is disrupted by the focus on light, pattern, color and texture. Therefore, the video fragments as Child-Camera-Digital assemblages offer a change in direction for child-participatory video research that, as Caton puts it, “registers the uneasy, untimely and non-linear video content as a route to understanding the lively intervals within the event through a new singularity”.

Deborah Silvis’ article follows a similar line of thought, and discusses how emerging methods of video production in the digital age broadens the locations of learning and opens up epistemic heterogeneity as well as expands what counts as knowledge. Aligned with anti-colonial perspectives of knowledge, Silvis aims to highlight voices and bodies often located in the shadows of hegemonic knowledge producers. Pointing to historical examples of colonizing participants through the use of film-based ethnography, she recognizes the danger of a settler gaze, albeit arguing for video as a means to disrupt this gaze, because the medium captures situated, embodied and moving forms of meaning-making. For Silvis, traditional analytic lenses on the types of data collected proved inadequate for conveying infants’ particular ways of knowing. This led her to develop a method of montage filmmaking mobilizing blurry, low quality infant-collected footage as well as imagery from FaceTime screen captures, webcam video and phone-camera videos. By re-animating the data – *as data* – Silvis “reinscribe[s] the relentless rendering of the visual and mobile into the verbal and static”. Drawing on Manning and Massumi (2014) this highlights bodily intensities and vitality often under-communicated in text-based approaches to analyzing visual material. For participants whose knowledge we would like to learn to treat differently, Silvis suggests methods attuned to aesthetic dimensions of video, which disrupt the ethnographers analytic gaze and foregrounds bodily movement instead of discourse and meaning.

Karen Malone's contribution to this special issue is a good example of how the technology in research practices can make us think differently about child subjectivity. Through a captivating, sensorial, ecological encounter in-between child and fish in an aquarium, she proposes that moving images "find spaces for the pauses, the silences, the recognition of ecological kin tracings". Malone introduces the concept of "*bodies sensing ecologically*" to imagine very young children's pre-linguistic communication with nonhuman animals (in this case fish) and becoming with water, plants, weather and so forth. Moving away from anthropocentric observation and language-based research practices, she invites readers to be open to being affected by the experience, rather than document what they observe. Rejecting the critique from some quarters that anthropomorphism is anthropocentric as a form of speciesism, she proposes *ecomorphism*: all ecological beings can share their animalness through a sensual knowing of bodies sensing and recognizing other bodies – a becoming *with/in* the world, a worlding practice of companion species (as Donna Haraway put it). The human/nonhuman relation we humans find ourselves in, is always already there. Malone argues that videography enables researchers to attune "to worlds otherwise left as unrecognised and unwitnessed", enabling interspecies communication and exploration of the enchantment of a childfish encounter without sentimentality.

4 Theoretical Contribution to Childhood Research

The articles in this special issue put to work the philosophies of Baruch Spinoza, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour, Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti and others, and provide a solid theoretical base on which to challenge the ontologies of humanism with its power-producing binaries that include and exclude the subhuman (e.g., child) and the nonhuman (e.g., cameras).

For example, with the help of three video clips, **Ingvild Kvale Sørensen, Pål Aarsand and Marit Honerød Hoveid** challenge humanist binaries by showing how videography is always entangled with the method of using video recordings. Drawing on Bruno Latour's *actor-network theory* (ANT) as methodology, they reflect on the concept 'agency' and the difference it makes to understand agency without intentionality in the context of the notion of the competent child. Agency is conceptualised as decentering the human, with the human and nonhuman always already in relation and as multiple. Agency is not about human mastery or control of individual bodies, but an enactment. The authors claim that instead of (Western) binary logic – thinking in terms of either/or – and with an *apriori* assumption about children's "world-building capacities" (as Latour puts it), the question is rather "who/what, when, where, how and with what consequences do children participate in research". Rejecting individualised notions of agency, they regard agency as mutually enacted

and distributed among and in-between bodies as part of an assemblage acting and *reacting* (and sometimes not-acting), but still as agentic. Drawing on Latour, they define an actor as “anything that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference”. Agency is not what children have or possess; hence they cannot have *more of it*, as per the ideals of child-centered and progressive education. Reconfiguring agency makes room for a different perspective on what is privileged and what is valued, including Enlightenment ideals of autonomy, agency and independence of the young child in research. It is particularly in their third video clip – when children see the live recordings of themselves being filmed on a screen – that the authors’ decolonizing approach to childhood studies becomes more apparent. It is when the “observer becomes the observer observed” that the common distinction between researching *on* and *with* children is troubled.

Others putting these theories to work include **Maria Olsson and Anne-Li Lindgren** who explore the intersection of screens, children and researcher during a twelve month videography where both researcher and preschool children are engaged in the act of filmmaking. Deleuze’s film theory (1986) and his description of the camera shot, allowed the authors to engage with how realities emerge through entanglements in-between the bodies of the children, researcher, digital handheld cameras/tablets and a preschool environment. The filmic event is an encounter where both researcher and children are filming at the same time, both producing different, yet related new becomings. The researcher’s wider and more traditional camera angle is disrupted by children’s fluid and decentered what Deleuze terms ‘affection-images’ consisting of movements, close ups and various intensities of the same event, where children, in contrast to the researcher, follow the rhythm of music and light present in the moment. By focusing on *moving towards* and *moving away*, both camera shots are additionally contrasted as movements of admiration by the researcher while movements of desire are actualized in the children’s camera movements. Equipping both the children and researcher with movable and controllable recording video devices allowed this interception, which challenges hierarchies of knowing. Theorizing the filmic event and transferring Deleuze’s work on cinema into video research allows a reconfiguring of educational events and boundaries between researcher and child to be blurred as both children’s as well as researchers’ machine-perception-image become knower and known.

5 Decolonizing Contribution to Childhood Research

As we have seen above, in various significant ways the authors in this special issue intervene in dominant humanist child-nature discourses of progress and unilinear development (**Murris and Haynes, 2018**). **Theresa Giorza**’s article features a colonized park in inner-city Johannesburg, South Africa, the geopolitical location that has stories to tell – stories that

were made and remade as Giorza re-turned (to) the video clips again and again. The Baradian method of temporal diffraction opens up possibilities of regarding the past as not gone and irretrievable but implicated and threaded through the present and the now. Quantum physics undoes notions of 'here', 'there', 'now' and 'then' and also 'inside' and 'outside' in terms of space and time. Troubling the idea of using the park by a preschool as a "natural' antidote to too much concrete, indoor-time, and stale air", diffractive engagement with/in the images makes visible an "intra-active curriculum" where micro and macro movement of human and nonhuman bodies produce learning as a worlding-with process. Through a series of images of young children running, rolling and doing cartwheels in the park, Giorza shows how also cells, chemicals and atoms "impact profoundly on the conditions for one another's being", hence do not deserve outsider status to the epistemological project. Disrupting the common practice of favouring the visual aspects of video footage, Giorza also pays attention to the sounds she had not previously noticed. As she re-turns to the video material, she notices voices that come from outside of the camera's view previously not heard and inviting her to press the replay button many times. When new connections appear, as she puts it, "like invisible writing revealed by a flame", new stories emerge from a past that never simply 'was'. The event in the park is not interpreted as "expressions of individual identities, abilities, personalities, or interests and intentions of particular children", but child is an entangled phenomenon, "an assemblage of elements that produce one another through the relation, none of them pre-existing the event". This is of particular significance for decolonizing childhood. Child subjectivity is reconfigured as 'posthuman child' (Murriss, 2016), not an individualised body, but a Baradian phenomenon.

6 Troubling Humanist Notions of Causality and Matter: Emptying the Waste Bin

Instead of following the humans (children), as in child-centred educational research, the authors of this introduction are interested in how philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1986, 1989) resists the notion of film as a 'succession of still photographs' because this would reinforce humanist notions of causality. Matter (read: video camera/video images) is not simply an "inanimate given" or "mere stuff" that is unresponsive and in need of something else "to give" it agency or "an inert static canvas" without "memory, history, or an inheritance to call its own", waiting to be inscribed by human meaning and culture (Barad, 2013 p. 17). It is the *intra-action*, the mutual constitution of entangled agencies, that disrupts our familiar understandings of causality with individually constituted agents or entities (e.g., a human), as well as times and places preceding one another and producing an effect (Barad, 2007; Kleinman, 2012). Unsettling the metaphysics of individualism, this ontological shift decolonizes research by decentering the human, thereby disrupting our usual understanding of causal relations and enabling us to

talk about materials intra-actively, and how bodies, human and more-than-human, render each other capable (Despret, 2004; Haraway, 2016).

Jon Wargo's contribution to this special issue draws on Szarkowski's classical text *The Photographer's Eye* (1966). Inspired by the ontological turn – and in particular Haraway's notion of diffraction – it questions the role of the image in research that involves children's worlding practices. He is surprised to find few “child-produced photographs” even when researchers claim they queer the binary between child and adult, and his project sets out to trouble the dominant role of the adult by focussing on “visual waste” – the images rendered unimportant (also by children) that are not selected as documentation, but literally end up in the bin. Wargo puts forward a nonrepresentational, corporeal and affective way of adopting photo-based documentation in early years research. He shows how his use of ar/t/o/graphy as a methodology intervenes in dominant humanist child-nature discourses of progress and unilinear development by reconfiguring the concept of “*withness*” through a series of experimental provocations that “cut-with the visual”. These cutting-*with*-collages on a light table highlight video's material capacity in a posthuman mov(ing)e (a)way from privileging human's role in research. His use of his own visual “waste” as a researcher is of particular interest. When returning to the research site a year later, Wargo brought the 73 coded photos rescued from the waste bin, unused field notes printed on transparencies, photos from his phone, etc., material-discursive assemblages that decenter the human, democratize research relationships (to include matter) and disrupt linear research practices.

7 Realizing the Power of the Video Apparatus

The contributions to this issue also extend the practice of communicating research through channels and approaches that shift the understanding of articles as representation of research findings to a material-discursive s/p(l)ace where research presentation and the visual matter involved are understood as intra-active itself. Drawing on Deleuze's extensive work on cinema (1986, 1989) reveals interesting alternatives for conceptualising videography. According to Deleuze, there is an essential difference between language and cinema. Whereas “formal language operates by differences among terms and create universals or generalities [...] cinematic signs operate by relation of time” (Colebrook, 2006, p. 44). In addition, cinema “does not establish itself within a symbolic order but operates with potentials and affect from which systems are produced” (Colebrook, 2006, p. 44). This spotlights the “emergence of relations” instead of already existing ones, and disturbs “the system of the speaking subject, which is the result of a history that produces 'man' as an effective social animal” (Colebrook, 2006, p. 44). We suggest that these differences generate unused possibilities, including those for the use of video in educational research. However, to fulfill cinema's (and videography's) “potential to transform the

structure of perception which has dominated the history of thought” one has to “realize the power of the cinematic apparatus” (Colebrook, 2006, p. 39).

Christina MacRae explores this power of the cinematic apparatus, and expands possibilities of video research in a nursery class. By using slow-motion, she aims to make the relationality of all bodies perceptible (both human and nonhuman), and film offers a philosophical medium that allows the human body to be decentered in relation to the passage of time. Films’ unique characteristic of being able to portray time is examined through a genealogical approach that recapitulates the use of scientific film to construct the configuring of the developing child. Links are made to the temporal construction of western childhood and the urge to interpret behavior through the logic of consciousness. This in turn is connected to the wider colonial discourse of othering, in which chronological time is deeply implicated. Etienne-Jules Marey’s photography work is used as a contrasting idea that disrupts linear understandings of time as distinct parts adjacent to each other. He explored movements, and portrayed them as horizontal overlapping images. In addition to the theoretical arguments proposed in her article, MacRae explores the potential of the cinematic apparatus through an attached video essay. It consists of a slow motion video of a child’s hands playing in a water tray with toys voiced by MacRae, and allows an affective experience of how Piaget’s concept of the sensori-motor can be reconfigured as a relational mode of engagement with the world.

The aim of this special issue is to offer experimental, innovative and forward-looking contributions that challenge accustomed ways of producing and analyzing video (and sonic material) with an anthropocentric base in education and pedagogy. Texts (in the broad sense) are included that present research where images, film, sound and their recording devices are understood as material-discursive entanglements with agency rather than representations of reality. Moving images and sound together are an *apparatus* that “enacts agential cuts that produce determinate boundaries and properties of ‘entities’ with phenomena” (Barad 2007, p. 148). This ontological shift allows the material to be read diffractively instead of through the classical binary between video/sound material and theoretical analysis, thereby reconfiguring the use of video in educational research.

Taken together, the special issue decolonizes childhood in the sense that the video articles challenge traditional forms of knowledge and understanding of children and childhood as well as the “ontoepistemic injustice” which is inherent in these forms (Murris, 2016, p. 35). In different ways, each article draws on key thinkers who are associated with the postqualitative, posthuman turn in educational research. Their ideas and concepts are creatively adopted by the authors, who in turn have produced cutting-edge

material that extends and challenges our views on childhood and pedagogies. The experimental and innovative contributions reconceptualize educational research in ways that intervene in dominant child-nature discourses, trouble normative methodologies, and unsettle humanist ways of using videography in research.

The *Video Journal of Education and Pedagogy* is the technological medium that uniquely integrates moving visuals and sound directly within each presentation, thereby creating affirmative Deleuzian/Braidottian/Baradian diffractive possibilities for conducting research differently. This opens up fresh investigations that matter epistemologically, ontologically and ethically.

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