

## English summaries

Maj Asplund Carlsson, 2003: Perspectives on childhood in literature on childhood /Om barnperspektivet i barndomslitteraturen/. Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 8, No 1-2, pp 6-12. Stockholm ISSN 1401-6788.

Astrid Lindgren is one of the best-known writers in taking children's point of view against the adult world. Along with Tove Jansson and Lennart Hellsing, she created a considerable upheaval in post-war children's literature with the introduction of Pippi Longstocking. Pippi was considered rude and ill mannered but children loved her, since she realized every child's secret dream of competence and self-containment. Post-war children's literature in Sweden presented a different view on children and childhood compared to the sentimental tear-jerking childhood fiction of the 19th and early 20th centuries. On the other hand, the »sloppy» writings of this period were in themselves a reaction against the previous authoritative and patriarchal ways of upbringing.

Lewis Carroll's book about Alice avoided all sentimentality but ridiculed the contemporary literature for children. As Alice finds a bottle with a label DRINK ME she looks for any signs of it containing poison »for she had read several nice little histories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts and other unpleasant things, all because they *would* not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them».

Childhood literature is not only written by adults for children but also for other adults. One such example is the literature of »revenge» where the adult writer tries to redress the wrongs done to the author as child. The inscribed child narrator tries in vain to hide the voice of the disdained adult. A different attitude to a child's point of view is taken by the writer who presents the world as the child sees it, with objects overlooked by adult eyes, like a dried chewing gum or a pile of horse manure in a street. The adult narrator is totally absented from the text.

Some aspects of childhood are mostly absent from banned from childhood fiction such as sexual abuse and violence, and in particular violence directed towards children. However, there are exceptions, like Peter Pohl's *Johnnie, my friend*. Some of the fiction from the last decades of the 20th century present such dilemmas to the young readers. The borders between children's literature and literature for adults are transgressed.

In the theories of childhood sociology four aspects of childhood can be discerned (James, Jenks & Prout 1998). The first aspect looks upon childhood as »a permanent form, which never disappears» although it is looked upon as prone to historical variations. Childhood is part of every society. The second

category makes the claim that childhood is socially constructed and that creating childhood is a social practice. A third proclaims children to be part of a minority group like any other, and that generation is a valid social category just as gender, ethnic belonging and religion. A fourth category covers the conception of the tribal childhood, that children are separated from adults and that adulthood has very little in common with childhood.

Childhood literature incorporates all four aspects of children and childhood. What is more interesting is the fact that the concept of the child reader can also be related to these aspects, as the reader is implied in the texts of childhood. Astrid Lindgren takes the perspective of the child reader in a direct address to the reader »Now you think ... but then you forget ... ». She offers her steady narrative hand to the child reader, while the children depicted are competent and sometimes even deserted by the adult world. The childhood novel of late modernity on the other hand does not provide a guiding hand regarding which direction child readers should go in their understanding of the text.

Children's literature as it has changed during recent years is a challenge for children as well as adult readers. Children and adults together must accept this challenge in the form of multiple intertextual references, heteroglot narrations, varying viewpoints and foci. Children as readers are neither less nor more competent before the childhood narrative of late modernity.

**Gunilla Halldén, 2003: Childrens' perspective as an ideological or methodological concept /Barnperspektiv som ideologiskt eller metodologiskt begrepp/. Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 8, No 1–2, pp 13–24. Stockholm ISSN 1401-6788.**

Child perspective is a flexible concept that can be used in different ways. It has been used as an important political tool in relation to the UN Convention. It has great rhetorical capacity and it is hardly possible to argue for something that is against »the best interest of the child». In the new social studies of childhood, considerable emphasis has been placed on taking the child perspective or the children's standpoint. The argument is made from a methodological point of view and presented as a way to allow children a more direct voice and participation in the production of a sociology of childhood.

Another argument for the child perspective concerns the importance of studying children's social relationships and cultures in their own right, independent of the perspective and concerns of adults. In this new paradigm for the sociology of childhood, children's agency is emphasized and concepts like childing and generationing are introduced to point at these practices. This is in line with developments in other fields such as gender studies, where we talk about »doing gender», and family research, where we »do family».

The article points out that the child perspective must be given meaning in relation to a specific study and that it is important for us as researchers to reflect on how we use children's accounts and that we are participating in a process of reconstructing childhood in society. In an effort to engage reflexivity, the discussion draws on an empirical study based on children's narratives about a future family life. Conventions for transcribing and quoting from the narratives are discussed as well as the analytic framework and the importance of relating narratives not only to individual perspectives, but also to the cultural meaning of childhood and parenthood in society. The article argues that in this particular study a child perspective means listening to children's reasoning and by doing so giving them a voice.

The children wrote about a future family and the stories are used as a key to understanding their conceptions of family relationships and of their own positions in a gender and power system. The narratives reflect the children's ways of exploring a male or female identity. It is important, however, to relate these positions to the discourse of childhood. The children's accounts of life in a fictive family are not only a key to understanding their subject positions, but are also possible scenarios for a childhood in contemporary society.

Taking the child perspective can be discussed in terms of children's positions in society and the value accorded children. It can also be discussed in terms of children's accounts of a lived life. This means taking into consideration children's accounts as well as the process of understanding children's views as part of a discourse. The child perspective concerns what place children are given in our society, what general experiences this place gives the child, and in what way the child expresses these experiences. The child perspective will therefore go beyond simply proclaiming what it is in relation to various phenomena.

**Mia Heikkilä & Fritjof Sahlström, 2003: On the use of video recordings in fieldwork /Om användning av videoinspelning i fältarbete/. *Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige*, Vol 8, No 1–2, pp 24–44. Stockholm ISSN 1401-6788.**

The aim of this article is to discuss video recordings in fieldwork with children as a method of data construction in research studying children's perspectives. The article is written against the background of an increasing use of video recordings in the field of research on participants' perspectives, both with adults and children. One aspect of this everyday work is the practical use of camera and microphones in fieldwork.

The issues of constraints and possibilities in using video recordings is approached in two different ways in the article. The first consists of a reading of a number of Nordic, primarily Swedish, doctoral theses, where video recordings have been used, and where there is an interest in children's perspectives. The second way consists of an exploration of video recordings made within a

research project at the Department of Education, Uppsala University. The exploration of the video tapes has been guided by a three-fold division of the analyzability of the material with respect to the talk of the children studied, the gaze and body orientation of the children studied, and the artifacts used in the interaction of the children studied.

The results of the reading of the dissertations show that they discuss the use of video recordings in quite different ways. In a small group of dissertations, practical issues of the use of video recordings are discussed, both in themselves and in relation to the research aims and perspectives. In a larger group these issues are mentioned but not discussed in detail. There is also a third group where the use of video recordings is discussed very briefly. In sum; the analysis shows that issues pertaining to practical issues of recordings have not been discussed very thoroughly in the field of research on children's perspectives. One consequence of the relative absence of these issues is that it would be difficult, in most cases impossible, to even in a loose sense replicate the studies – simply because there is not enough information available on how to do it.

The results of the analysis of the video tapes show that differences in terms of camera and microphone placement and focus have considerable consequences for the construction of the data, and hence for the constraints and possibilities for analyzing the perspectives of the studied children. Recordings where the sound uptake was placed close to the children in focus, and where the camera captured both the studied children and their interaction partners, were found to enable analysis of children's perspectives better than other ways of recording. Recordings with a large number of children in view, recorded with a camera microphone, were found to be quite constraining in terms of possibilities for analysis of children's perspectives.

In conclusion, the article highlights two issues: the analytic consequences of practical recording actions, and the relative absence of discussions of decisions about recording in the literature. The article also empirically demonstrates that notions of video recordings as »holistic» or »all-encompassing» quite clearly are misleading, and that the use of video recordings in field work is not a single unitary action, but rather a varying practice, where the variation has consequences for further analysis. In discussing these issues, the article takes part in the effort of establishing a greater reflexivity within the field of research on children's perspectives where video recordings are used, and in the development of the use of video recordings within the field of ethnographic research on participants' perspectives.

**Eva Johansson, 2003: To approach and understand a child's perspective as a teacher and a researcher /Att närma sig barns perspektiv: Forskare och pedagogers möten med barns perspektiv/. *Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige*, Vol 8, No 1–2, pp 45–60. Stockholm ISSN 1401-6788.**

In this article I discuss the ambition to reach and understand a child's perspective in research and Early Childhood Education. The reasoning is based upon a phenomenological theory of the life-world mainly appertaining to views discussed by Merleau-Ponty. Since the research interest of phenomenology is to understand the subjects' experiences of the studied phenomena, it is claimed here that this theory might support researchers as well as teachers in their ambition to understand a child's perspective.

A child's perspective is defined as the child's experiences, intentions and expressions of meaning, that is »the phenomena that might become visible for the child«. What does it mean to understand a child's perspective, to allow a child's intentions and experiences to become visible on the child's own terms? Is it possible for a researcher or a teacher to understand and speak about a child's perspective? What claims does the phenomenological theory of the life-world make in this respect? What dilemmas might arise for the researcher or the teacher in their efforts to come close to children's perspectives? What degree of responsibility then follows?

As a starting point, some traits of importance for understanding a child's perspective from the life-world theory are outlined. These traits concern how we come to understand others, how to experience and express meaning and the importance of closeness to the others' life-world. From this analysis it is concluded that the child's experiences of inhabiting the world take shape through their bodies as gestures, facial expressions, deportment, words and emotional expressions. The child is in communication with the world and with other people. The child creates meaning and is able to understand other people through their bodily presence in the world. Thus we can understand that the child expresses his or her perspective through his or her body. Other bodily expressions, gestures, emotions and words create an entity enabling us to understand. Nevertheless there are always parts of the other aspects that we can neither reach nor understand.

When interpreting children's actions as expressions of a child's perspective it is important to take the wholeness of the physical child into account, including his or her experiencing and expressing of meaning. It is also of vital importance to consider the entire situation, where other children as well as the researcher or the teacher are parts of the whole as this has an essential meaning to the child. Closeness is constituted through sensitivity and respect for a child's integrity. In this process time is of importance. Finally we have to be open for the ambiguity and complexity of the life-world and to the fact that there are always parts of the other's perspective that we are not able to reach or understand. Questions of power, whether implicit or not, are of significance for reaching proximity to or distance from a child's perspective as well as the teachers' educational intentions and goals.

The empirical analysis that follows is concentrated on certain observations from pre-school interaction. These observations are analysed in terms of closeness or distance from a child's perspective. The examples are part of a larger investigation about the quality aspects of learning in pre-school amongst children under three years of age. Thirty teams of pedagogues from different pre-schools in twenty municipalities spread all over Sweden participated in the study. The daily interaction between the children and teachers was observed and video recorded for three days on two separate occasions. The aim was to find out the teacher's goals for the early childhood education in pre-school, their experiences of being able to work towards these goals and how the goals and intentions were expressed in teachers interaction with the children. Aspects such as the atmosphere, the teacher's way of communicating with and conceptualising the child as well as their ideas about how children learn were analysed.

The claim of the analysis is that to understand a child's perspective, the ontological grounds must »permit» phenomena to become visible. Sometimes the educational ambition seems to be in conflict with a child's perspective. The teacher's ambition is in that case to create circumstances that in a long-term view are in the best interests of the child. Other teachers seem to conceive of the child's perspective as constituting an obstacle for their teaching. These conceptions seem to belong to a more or less conscious ontology where the child's perspective is more or less neglected and placed in the background. However, for certain teachers, the child's perspective is an intertwined part of their ontology and their educational goals. This does not mean that teachers always act in harmony with the child's perspective, but the child is permitted and encouraged to express his or her view.

To conclude, understanding a child's perspective as a researcher or as a teacher incorporates different dilemmas and ambitions. On the one hand being a teacher means taking a normative standpoint, which is to value and encourage children's learning. It is easy to understand that many situations in early childhood education embody different dilemmas where the teacher may choose to or is sometimes forced to decide in conflict with a child's intentions. This means that the issue of a teacher understanding a child's perspective might not always be obvious or even important. On the other hand, as a researcher one has to invent and find knowledge without necessarily making evaluations. Moreover being a phenomenological researcher makes the child's perspective a preconception for the value of the study. Power is always part of these processes giving the researcher or the teacher and children different positions in which the child is always the weaker participant. In addition the methodology is complex and demands sensitivity, respect, closeness and time.

In my view, ontology should also open up possibilities for seeing and understanding what is of importance in a child's lived world, no matter if you are a teacher or a researcher. A careful choice of a philosophical basis for research and educational practice is one way to handle this problem. A life-world ontology helps to open up the child's perspective, but it does not reduce the complexity of the lived world for the children, the teacher and the researcher engaged in the study of this world.

**Ingrid Pramling & Sonja Sheridan, 2003: Participation as a value and a pedagogical issue /Delaktighet som värdering och pedagogik/. *Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige*, Vol 8, No 1–2, pp 74–88. Stockholm ISSN 1401-6788.**

Participation as a value and a pedagogical issue are mutual and interdependent dimensions. They are discussed separately here in order to highlight their different meanings. Both are based on ethical grounds, which gives children the right to express their views in different situations. The other dimension, participation as a pedagogical issue, has a deeper meaning in which children's ways to understand and express themselves have a real meaning and constitute both content and form in research and praxis.

Children's participation as a value and a pedagogic issue are discussed and problematised from the following questions: What does children's influence and participation mean in preschool and school? How do teachers develop an approach in which children have, and experience that they have, influence and can participate? How do teachers know that they have interpreted children's intentions from their own intent and perspectives?

The meaning of children's influence and participation underlying this article is that children can participate in both words and »actions«, that children are treated with the same respect as grown ups and that grown ups try to interpret children's ways of making meaning from children's own expressions and ways of acting in both research and praxis (Doverborg & Pramling Samuelsson 2000). Furthermore, grown ups trust and expect children to deal with different tasks with the right support and guidance from grown ups (Lindahl 2002). We mean here that children have influence and are a part of what is going on when they experience that their world is seen and heard, that their interests, intentions and ways of understanding are met and respectfully considered.

What does children's influence and participation mean in preschool and school? During the history of preschool the view of children's learning, teacher's approaches and the pedagogic of preschool have changed drastically. An historical view of grown ups changing ways of seeing children in relation to changes in society is therefore necessary to understand today's meaning of influence and participation.

Throughout history the changing view includes intentions for children's participation, even if participation has had different meanings. The changing view of the child has gone through the process of seeing the child as nature and the view of seeing children as a product of development psychology to the meaning of today, in which children's abilities and experience should be consciously be directed towards the goal of the curriculum and the knowledge that from today's discourse is valued as essential.

During the history of preschool there has also been a shift in the balance of power between grown ups and children. This shift started during the romantic period and through developmental psychology it gave the teacher a new identity, which was twofold. On the one hand it gave possibilities for an equal relationship between the teacher and the child, thereby increasing children's possibilities to influence and participate. On the other hand the teacher was no

longer superior to the child in knowledge; instead the new knowledge should be found in the child (Baker 1998).

The UN Convention and the curriculum for preschool have intentions for children's lives and for practice in similar ways that earlier guidelines have had through time. Common to them is the signalling of human values to be cared for. However, the importance to interpret children's perspective and consider their right of participation has not been as outspoken in earlier guiding documents as it is in today's curriculum in which democracy is expected to have a concrete meaning in practice.

How do teachers develop an approach in which children have, and experience that they have, influence and can participate? To highlight the way of grown ups try to catch children's perspectives and to discuss their approach in relation to participation as a value and a pedagogical issue, we present the results of a selection of studies on which this article is based. Common to these studies is the obvious conclusion that children must be a part of various decision making processes and that participation constitutes the basic condition for children to speak their mind. Furthermore, to interpret children's perspectives, grown ups must have knowledge of children's constitution of knowledge and listen to what children say.

How do teachers know that they have interpreted children's intentions from their own intent and perspectives? Several studies show that children do not experience that they can influence what is going on in preschool (Søbstad 2002, Sheridan & Pramling Samuelsson 2001). We mean by this that children's rights to participate and to be listened to are an undisputable democratic right and constitute the foundation for pedagogical issues. Children's possibilities to constitute knowledge in a specific learning situation depend on the ability of grown ups to start from the way children see, think and understand the world around them (Pramling 1994, Marton & Booth 1997). Therefore, participation from a deeper sense involves the perspective of the child and the ability to use experience and understanding as content in both research and practice.

To know if grown ups have interpreted children's intentions we have to evaluate. The results of many studies show that there is an ambition to tune into children's perspectives throughout interviews, video-observations and various kinds of documentation in which children's participation has a high value. At the same time there seems to be limited knowledge and tools to analyse and apply the knowledge from this documentation in order to enhance children's possibilities to influence both their own learning process and the pedagogical environment. Our conclusion is that children's participation is studied more as a value than a pedagogic issue. Children's participation seldom becomes, in other words, a pedagogical issue.

Another conclusion is that all documentation if needs to be analysed together by the teacher and child and then used by the teacher as a basis for a more systematic evaluation of the quality of preschool and school. It is also obvious that methods for analysing and evaluating need to be developed in interaction with the children to gain their perspective of high educational quality.



**Dion Sommer, 2002: View of children in the developmental psychology: Is a child perspective possible? /Børnesyn i utviklingspsykologien: Er et børneperspektiv mulig? Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 8, No 1–2, pp 99–104. Stockholm ISSN 1401-6788.**

The main purposes of this article are to investigate the following: What kind of societal and cultural change makes a child perspective possible? Is a specific child perspective present within mainstream and contemporary developmental psychology? Which definition criteria must a psychological definition of a child perspective meet?

The growing interest in taking child perspectives is a result of a recently developed historical ›child-friendly‹ attitude. This view is closely related to vital societal and cultural changes in the twentieth century. There is no need to go further back in the 1930s in order to find a radically different perspective on children. At that time an adult perspective was clearly dominating. In the 1930s »good advice« to mothers from child experts was to provide strict training and discipline of the infant in order to avoid it to grow up as a tyrant. Quite an unthinkable expert approach today.

Within a relatively short time radical alterations in the view of the interactions between adults and children have taken place, even though the historical precursors reach relatively far back in time. Changes within society and culture have been crucial, and this is also the case within the psychological and pedagogical scientific literature. First of all, a gradual breakdown of the authoritarian society has happened after World War II, and »negotiation relations« increasingly characterize social relationship in western democracies. Humanistic considerations about minority groups have become more pronounced. This humanization perspective is interested in how minority groups experience their reality. Children, as a subgroup within society, has become a part of this effort. This worldview puts some obligations on adults to know more about the child's perspective.

Developmental psychology expresses an enormous range of theoretical and empirical perspectives on children, and it often constructs children as objects for an adulto-scientific enterprise. Children are seldom conceptualized as subjects, whose direct experiences of the world are presented, although subjectivity more or less implicitly is taken for granted.

Seeing the child as an active and intentional subject embedded in time and space has fundamental consequences for how its behaviour is understood. This child-view has important parallels within modern pedagogy: Here the child is seen both as active and a meaning constructing being, and the child's everyday life-worlds and phenomenology are in focus. Within pedagogy this is understood as an actual child perspective, e.g. because the experience of the child is in focus for it's learning.

Is it possible to derive a specific child perspective from the new child paradigm? Yes, the phenomenology of the child and the correspondence between the child's and the adult's understanding of their shared situation constitute two essential elements. Awareness of the linkage between the inner intentions of the child and how intentions are shown in various actions are

also of great importance. From birth human beings express their intentions and other mental phenomena in social meaningful practice. Thus, through observation it is possible for both the researcher as well as the practitioner (not to take, but) to approach the perspective of the child, even before language develops.

The »blank-face study« is presented and discussed as an example of a type of study, which has generated the revolutionary thesis about early primary human intersubjectivity. In studying the non-verbal period, the possibilities and limitations of a phenomenologically valid child perspective are seriously tested. Research from a child perspective, implying that we shall come as close as possible to the child's private understanding of the world, is loaded with methodological problems. Direct observation always needs (even when data-authenticity is aimed at) an interpretative adult perspective. Despite this there seems to be empirical support behind the conclusion that even very small infants are mentally organized, have intentions, and master early intersubjectivity. This »new child-view« paradigm has not been deduced from a general »great theory«, but has been developed from the interpretation of results from a series of groundbreaking empirical studies of infants.

Adult's child-views are the interpreting filters with which we observe and judge how children's intentions are »shown« in their actions. Developmental psychology has with its well-documented new perspective of children's socio-emotional competencies much to add to the theory and profession of modern pedagogy. This article shows that there are possibilities, but also limitations in our abilities to approach the child's perspective, e.g. experience of itself and its social world. However, this is a perspective that we should aim at approaching. The scientifically based new child-view and the contextual approach can be useful tools in such an endeavour.

**Birgitta Qvarsell, 2003: Children's perspectives and human rights. Doing good or building knowledge /Barns perspektiv och mänskliga rättigheter. Godhetsmaximering eller kunskapsbildning/? Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 8, No 1–2, pp 105–118. Stockholm ISSN 1401-6788.**

What is the point of using (or taking) a child perspective? In this essay the question is discussed with reference to different dimensions and contexts, the dimensions being the various ambitions that may be visible in attempts to take the child's perspective, the contexts then being respectively research, practical work, and political ambitions. In this discussion the importance to make a distinction between needs and rights is stressed, especially in research but also in praxis and political discussions. It is interesting to note that the Swedish political agenda tends to translate »rights« to »needs« when applied to practical situations. To take the rights of the child (which are essentially legal and

political) seriously is however not compatible to professional care for children's assumed needs.

What is then studied from the viewpoint of a child or children's perspectives in educational research? Using children as informants about their conditions, for instance the social and educational circumstances they live and act under, is not the same as taking respondent inquiries into account, although both may be of importance for different purposes. In this essay different techniques for collecting data are considered, with special emphasis on what can be gained by using key informants among young people as special data sources about something other than themselves. The point that is made in the discussion on research is that children and young people may say something important about things they perceive and conditions they live in, but not necessarily about themselves as psychological entities. Their perspectives cannot easily be turned towards themselves but rather towards environmental matters and circumstances.

In practical educational work with and for children, in schools and child care, it is also interesting to note how the different perspectives on what seems to be a joint reality may differ, especially between professional adults and pupils, probably due to their different positions but also due to their different interests and knowledge about the supposed joint endeavour. An example is used to illustrate this dilemma. The character of the dilemma is underlined by the fact that professionals (in this case the school teachers) have a responsibility for the children's welfare and knowledge development during school time, and wonder about what happens during freetime, while the children (as pupils) show how they make sense of different surrounding conditions in their own dealing with what the contexts may afford.

In political work with children, their rights to be heard are primarily underscored. As a tool for such work the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has come into use, both in and outside the school and other institutions. The convention itself is often discussed in terms of perspectives and cultural frames of reference. It is not obvious, from the convention, that each child can be included in a cultural community, and it cannot be taken for granted that the rights of the child may be extended to all situations which are important for the child. The distinction between social claims and legal rights is not always clear.

The different dimensions and aspects of using or taking children's perspectives often converge in practical attempts to make school more democratic. The article ends with some comments on such attempts and the problems to interpret what is important when it comes to political rights, from the perspectives of pupils in the school context. If adults, primarily professionals, think of the best for the child and at the same time have the ambitions to do good, not just for the moment but for the future, it is near at hand to take over the responsibility and the agenda, to see the children but not necessarily listen to what they have to say.

The question is whether to do good or to make a contribution to scientific and educational knowledge (to educological knowledge building) by using a special informant perspective on living conditions. Of course it must be assu-

med that, in the long run, research using a child perspective will also do good. The problem is, however, that the ambition to do good in educational and social work with children may hinder the possibilities to understand how the world looks from the child's perspective. Professionals may have as a special task to do good for others, and this may be a problem if we also have the ambition to understand the world from the informants' perspectives. It is not self-evident that the ambitions converge on the same points. This may be a challenge for research, and a problem for praxis, be it educational or political.