Limit-less provocations of the 'safe', 'secure' and 'healthy' child

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Rachel Holmes & Liz Jones

Manchester Metropolitan University
Institute of Education
799 Wilmslow Road
Didsbury
Manchester
M20 2RR

Abstract

This paper arose amongst the making and showing of a film and questions whether there are possibilities for interrupting powerful discursive frames that work at producing 'the normal child' (Foucault, 1979; Walkerdine, 1988). Fischman (2001) discusses how traditionally there has been a lack of interest in the use and critique of visual culture in educational research. Larrosa (1998) points out that perhaps this lack of interest provides fertile opportunities to know something of the structure of education as a discipline, '… the rules that structure it and its deep grammar…' (1998: 213). It may also open up opportunities for disciplinary boundary-crossings where fields that embrace visual culture, such as photography and filmmaking can bring their playfulness across binaries, including notions of certainty/ambivalence, to qualitative research in education. By turning to art theory our aims are to interfere with our utopian longings that steadfastly cling to educational notions of the child.

Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to bring art into productive encounter with qualitative methodology, as a 'bone in the throat' of authoritative voice and method (Lambert 2004, MacLure, 2006) so as to open up new questions and possibilities for re-thinking how the child is conceptualized in UK education policy. Our endeavour is to reflect upon a series of awkward conversational encounters that moved between our paper and the showing of a film we have made, where still and moving images of the young child are elicited to challenge what is often not allowed to be said or even cannot be said about the child within the textual sedation of early childhood mandates. Whilst space does not permit elaboration of all the complexities that always accompany the making of our film, we nevertheless want to outline the 'origins' and some of the intentions of the film. It was made in response to some feedback we received from our External Examiner about students' choice and use of images in their programme assessment work. Both authors of this paper teach on an undergraduate Early Childhood Studies programme. As part of the usual process of quality assurance of the programme a sample of the undergraduate manuscripts were sent to our External Examiner. In a unit entitled Multidisciplinary Studies (MDS) where students are asked to critically deconstruct a selection of images of children or childhood, one student included '*Klara and Edda Belly Dancing*'[1] (Nan Goldin, 1998). In response to the inclusion of this image in the student's work, the examiner commented how we, as tutors should be more sensitive about the images of children that students may chose to present, calling for us to be more mindful of the paedophilic menace that always threatens and exposes the vulnerability of the young child. These comments raised a number of questions for us, including why this image might provoke such an anxious and agitated response? Why were our habitual encounters with images of children generally regarded as quite safe? How might we nudge individuals – ourselves specifically - out of this zone? Further, how might we inject less certainty in the ways that young people are regularly viewed and habitually understood? And how might we bring difficult knowledge about the child and her life to the surface?

Whilst considering such questions, we turned to the worlds of the cinema, the media, Renaissance, Baroque and contemporary art in order to trouble the notion of '(un)safe' images of the child / childhood. We started to gather images from these 'other worlds' that made us curiously disturbed, inspired and troubled, particularly when set against more sedate(d) educational images, including some excerpts of classroom footage, images of the young child from educational documentation and school photographs. This increasingly diverse collection became a series of juxtapositions, sites of awkwardness and provocation, with some images acting as menacing lubricants in and amongst the embodied educational discourses that seem to crudely finalize the child, the academic and the early years practitioner. The combination of still and moving images were put together in a linear way, to become what we describe as a film, a disjointed visual narrative and included images from newspaper and television reports, as well as the work of artists who work with children/childhood as their subject(s), for example Sally Mann, Nan Goldin, Bernard Faucon, Judy Fox, Emmet Gowin, Hellen Van Meene, William Ropp, Loretta Lux, Irina Ionesco, Bill Henson, Ruadh Delone and Robert Mapplethorpe. It also had extracts of moving imagery from home movies and classroom footage that we had collected during research projects over the past two years. The film was shown to a number of undergraduate and postgraduate students, staff from a Research Institute based in the Faculty of Education in a UK university. The audience was not told anything of what the film would be about, but invited on the basis that we wanted to hear their responses to some images / artistic representations of children. We wanted to elicit responses from professionals who work with children in a variety of ways, largely familiar with policy and practice in relation to education, health and social care in order to disrupt the 'safety' that seemed to frame their more traditional and

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[1] *Klara and Edda Belly Dancing* (1998) by Nan Goldin was rejected by the publishers following legal advice, and while this raises important ethical issues, these cannot be pursued here.

[2] Whilst a 'hoodie' is an article of clothing favoured by millions of teenagers it is also used in the UK press to describe

familiar ways of looking at the child. This interruption to their comfort zones was intended to enable us to open up different discussions about the child and childhood. We showed the film in a lecture theatre, again to disconnect the images from where they might usually be encountered, thus trying to deliberately dislocate viewer, image, context. In brief, we think that the film, as a performance, enacted an ontological shudder on the audience and ourselves so that within the shattering something else, something approaching the new could / might be sensed.

This paper draws from various sources of data to enact an interruptive encounter that goes some way beyond the anticipated images usually afforded to represent young people. These include: the film as a montage of controversial pieces of art work that use the child as their subject/object; comments made in response to the film by the research community of the Faculty of Education at the university where we are both employed; and data that has arisen from an undergraduate Childhood Studies degree programme on which we both teach. We will look to the film with still and moving images, text and data to defamiliarise something of the everyday that seems to reside unproblematically in the domesticating (and rather voice-less) projects of school and the family, by attending to UK policy texts and images of children and the bounded frames (Eck, 2001) that render them 'safe'. We turn particularly to more transgressive images that might evoke affects such as repugnance, ambivalence and abjection for the viewer, not least serving as menacing lubricants, destabilising any tendencies to paralysis that would debilitate expressions of the fumbling awkwardness that strikes against more difficult re-imag(in)ings of the young child. By developing methodological conversations between visual and prose-based practices as ways to analyse texts and images, we open up areas of sensitivity and controversy in early childhood, around the young child's body as an object of provocation, playing at the boundaries of innocence and worldliness; public and private, attempting to 'represent the unrepresentable' (Jay, 1993) or be mindful of '… the pressure of the unspeakable that wants to be spoken…' (Barthes, 1981: 18). So we begin by thinking about how some images of the child are looked at, not only as bounded objects, but as Barthes calls *studium* (1981), as producing culturally determined reactions or conventional readings where we seem to *participate with* the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings and the actions.

Worlds apart: the bounded spaces of public and private, innocence and worldliness

Some images of children, whether in school, in tabloid and broadsheet newspapers or adorning the walls of the home as family portraits, contribute to iconographic depictions of particular versions of the child and of childhood (Fig 1). Such spaces where the boundaries between public and private spheres can be, and often are articulated, even demarcated, stabilize images of children within particular contextual and ideological framing devices (Eck, 2001). For example, there seems to be a familiarity and bounded-ness about the regimented genre of class photographs, collections of documentary-style family snapshots and amateur filming and the heart-warming pictures of brave children smiling that continue to sell tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. Sontag suggests that photographs have become part of the general furniture of the environment – 'touchstones and confirmation of that reductive approach to reality which is considered realistic' (1979: 21). Photographs seem to have been enrolled in the service of institutions of control, notably the family, the school and the police, as symbolic objects and pieces of information, valued because they give information. Photography becomes a rite of family life, ghostly traces that supply token presence of the dispersed (or even dead) relatives. Often it is the photographs, which give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal. Such images reassure us of the innocence, vulnerability and safety of 'our children', because they are interpretable, suspended in carefully bounded spaces, where little 'cultural work' is required in this determination (Eck, 2001: 603). Burke and Ribeiro de Castro note, '…Without a school portrait, a modern childhood, at least as an aspiration, is in a sense incomplete… (2007: 215).

Figure 1.

Less comfortable public images are used to galvanize the plight of missing children, or those caught up in the (un)worldliness of poverty, crime, and/or war; some framed as having fallen from grace, others cast with original or ancestral sin, born as perpetrators of, or innocently growing to become victims of terrible abuses or murder. These images, preserved in a kind of foliated formaldehyde, curate stories of contemporary and archived media scrutiny that documents society's but perhaps more poignantly, the family's descent into perilous social disorder. They haunt us in their notoriety from the crude aesthetics of the newspaper page or TV screen. The images, usually close ups of children's faces or grainy CCTV images, deliberately constructed to evoke outrage, regret, helplessness and dread, seem to captivate the fears for/of a society, admonishing the acts of 'pure evil' that interrupt our longings for a particular version of childhood, condemning these acts as separate from, yet finding spaces to fester amongst 'civilized' societies.

Moving between some of these comfortable and less comfortable images of children, there seems to be a sense of bounded contexts that maintain distinctions between private and public spheres (or at least a movement that has been reconciled between the two) that renders most of the newspaper, family and school album images safe and largely unproblematic. Barthes suggests '… the *studium* endowes the photograph… with so many alibis…' (1981: 28) and that although '… the news photo that can shock, "shout"…. it is powerless to disturb or "wound"… (Barthes, 1981: 41). These two ideas of alibis and powerlessness to wound are interesting in amongst the family / class photographs and newspaper images of children. Perhaps the alibis that lurk behind such images are our propensity to allow/invite the photograph to package (the 'shouting' but voiceless child). This is done

both physically (stuck on walls, framed, projected on film/slides) and we would argue it is also done discursively - the packaging of the innocent voiceless child, the 'hoodie'[2], the 'wild/feral' child and so on. Levi-Strauss (1966), Douglas (1966) and Durkheim (1984) note how the greatest comfort comes with classifications [of images] that 'make sense' and do not challenge our worldview. Such images, positioned in predictable contexts, such as in newspapers or photograph albums do not 'wound' us, as they preserve the depictions as innocent and the children as vulnerable yet still always subject to adult surveillance and the knowing gaze. The distinguishing features of particular viewing contexts allow us to be comforted by the ways in which the images move from private to public, from image-taker to image-consumer, '… a frame is characterized not by its contents, but rather by the distinctive way in which it transforms the content's meaning… giving us cues to an object's original and appropriate context…' (Zerubavel, 1991: 11). On viewing our short film, one viewer commented on such reassuring cues, '… *The attributions framed and somehow legitimized the art-ful-ness of the images…*' (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010) and according to Eck (2001: 627) once we recognize where the images are placed or have come from, we know how to feel about them. But another viewer sought danger and provocation and did not want to know how to feel about the images, '*… I was glad the artists' names were small…. I couldn't read them… make them out which kept it dangerous for me. I liked that. I need to provoke myself to be provoked…*' (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010).

Nevertheless some images of children do allow us to soothe ourselves by being convinced of the merits of perpetuating cultural practices of documenting and framing children's lives in particular ways. The visual documents that record celebrations, holidays and everyday lives are markers of certain versions of childhood. Even children with more fractured family histories would be armed with documented 'life stories', a collection of images and texts testifying to their 'former life' with birth relatives and in the care system. These photographic images become '… memories that children have of their past families… (re)constructed and managed within the context of present adoptive parental concerns… a dominant way in which narratives of the child's past family are formed…' (Brookfield, Brown and Reavey, 2008: 474). Such visual records somehow transgress the fragmented history of disrupted attachments and also serve to (re)construct the children as objects of transition, transposing the ambivalent representations of their former lives into futures full of hope. So within the safety of the bounded viewing context, it seems appropriate to claim at this stage that particular images of children can be documents of social and familial histories, they can be used as commentaries on the moral condition of the present and in anticipation of salvation in the future. However, we might also argue that some news images, as well as family and class photographs are no longer capable of disrupting our worldview. Perhaps they have become too culturally embedded as all-too-familiar images, a thought that evokes the familiar rhetoric across UK policy mandates that similarly construct particular bounded versions of children and childhood and reiterate those 'safe', almost voiceless visual documents.

The textual child

Even when confronted by silent victims, images of children who continue to be abandoned, let down and neglected by others who are perpetrators of horrendous crimes, we can be reassured in the knowledge that this, in part is predicated on beliefs in a (dis)articulated evil or original sin, that somehow evades our best efforts to create inter-agency provision. UK–based images of Baby P,

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[2] Whilst a 'hoodie' is an article of clothing favoured by millions of teenagers it is also used in the UK press to describe young people who are suspected of or are involved with criminal activity.

Victoria Climbié or Kyra Ishaq (children caught up in fatal cases of abuse and neglect at the hands of close or extended family) contribute to the public outrage, yet renewed UK policy mandates reassure us that the Government and public services continue to work endlessly to rectify the slippages and pockets of error that usurp an otherwise 'joined up' provision. What remains intact in the images and the rhetoric is the hope and determination to find resolve, alongside the enduring innocence of the victim and the inherent evil-ness of the perpetrator. What always evades being named or being known is the slippage amongst the stark binaries of innocence/worldliness, public/private, and perpetrator/victim. In an attempt to disrupt these binaries that seem to rest easy amongst comfortable images and government mandates for the child, where good versus bad is played out in the persevering smile from the page, perhaps we need to consider how UK policy agendas are driven by what could be referred to as society's anxious construal for the child and childhood. It is as if children (as perpetrator or as victim) are obliged to be buckled into the logic of policy, legislation and / or universal notions of him/herself. But, what does the logic of policy look like and how is this rationality intent on providing a one-size-fits-all resolution to the assumed universality of the young child?

UK Government aspirations for children to be 'safe', 'secure' and 'healthy', are located and find resonance within several powerful agendas including for example *Every Child Matters* (Department for Children, Schools and Families [DCSF] 2003) and *The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* (DCSF, 2007). A key aim of the latter is to help young children achieve the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic well-being (DCSF, 2007). The child within this text is construed as being a competent communicator and learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. Moreover, children can '… learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person…' (DCFS, 2007: 9). The *Every Child Matters* is mandatory and is therefore part of the structural fabric of every UK early years' and school settings. Hence each and every one of the settings are united in developing joined up services and inclusive provision so as to ensure children 'stay safe', are protected from harm and neglect and grow up able to look after themselves (2003: 14). Thus we can see how the public spaces of the nursery or school endorse not just universal notions of the child but additionally the logic of the above rational and aspi(rational) policy documents. But such public institutions also have private moments that are shared between children in the playground and the classroom and the teachers in the staffroom.

Wallis and VanEvery (2000: 409) discuss the dichotomous notion of public/private in relation to the school, the child and the staff and how this complicates any attempts to pursue logical blanket statements written into curricular frameworks that, at every turn undercut the multiple 'realities' of life for most young children. They discuss how the institution of the school and the policy mandates assume, for example, the asexuality of children and staff based on a distinction of private and public spaces being able to be made, which seems to contribute to, '*…the corralling that goes on in mainstream education, to do with sex education... the moral training that gets pumped into kids …*' (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010). If school is public, are we to assume that its purpose is to uphold particular versions of 'moral training'? Are we to assume that school, UK policy mandates and discourses aimed at 'protecting' young people are intended to advocate the romantic innocence, vulnerability and asexuality of the child because this public institution is somehow outside of the private sphere and can therefore purify and deliver young children from the sexualized worldliness and realities of private spaces? Our claim is that a straightforward private / public divide is much more complex, raising interesting questions in relation to children staying safe and protected from harm. Acknowledging a much more contingent and fluid movement across public and private spaces

of the school / nursery, we are led to contemplate different discursive frames that would enable us to interrupt playground games or flippant classroom comments that otherwise reinforce gendered powered relationships, such as 'catch a girl, kiss a girl'. '…*the children in the playground… it made me rethink what is a child, what does it mean to a child…. what do we want or need children to be?...*' (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010). In other words, how do educational institutions reconcile their bounded rhetoric, the domesticating languages of 'safe', 'secure' and 'healthy' within UK policy mandates and statutory frameworks with everyday transgressive acts that express something of children's sexualities? As one individual remarked, *'… sometimes we only look at what we want to or can look at and ignore others things…. maybe we focus on what we want to and what we think we are able to control…… maybe we want…. or even need to ignore the idea of children as sexual beings…'* (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010). How can schools, staff and other adults understand the voices, expressions and behaviours of children and even alternative representations of them that neither serve but actively wreck notions of them as innocent or vulnerable? How can we interrupt the reproduction of childhood as a pretext for the moral work of society? How might we conceive of children in ways that go beyond them being an ethical prop or security blanket?
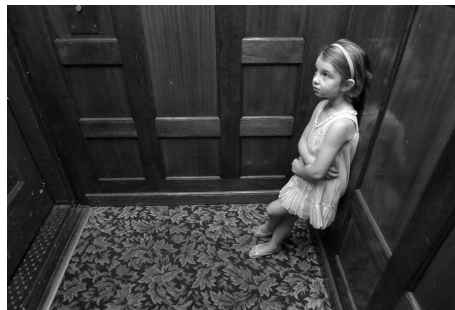
The irrational cut

Figure 2. Ullmer, Going Up (2010)

We would posit that already, there are complex issues emerging here around the universal idea of the child being buckled into the straightjacketed logic of UK policy and of spaces, such as the school being assumed distinctive as either public or private. We would suggest that these ideas remain far more unpredictable and random than assumed, which calls into question the notion of 'bounded' in its relationship with 'safe' texts and 'safe' images of the child. Barthes suggests that the conventional reading of images is threatened by the *punctum* (1981), a detail or object in the photograph that disturbs or shocks the viewer. If we are beginning to think about the ways mandates, language and rhetoric, as well as distinctive public and private spheres for conceptualizing the young child are less certain than assumed, how can we work with this idea of Barthes' *punctum* as we observe other representations of the child to provoke these uncertainties even further? In focusing on the ways particular texts/images are framed, we turn to photographs found in galleries, created by artists/mothers. Julia Margaret Cameron was a nineteenth-century photographer who used her children and close relatives as subject matter (Fig 3, Paul and Virginia, 1864). According to Edge and Baylis, her work proliferated amongst the emergence of new discourses on motherhood, childhood and femininity (2004: 79).

Figure 3.

'The Lois Project'[3] (Fig 4) is a more recent series of photographs taken by artist Susan Andrews, exhibited in 2007. 'This project investigates the significance of images that depict the day-to-day experience of growing up and family relationships, rather than images of high days and holidays that reinforce the childhood fantasy. The nature of the work reflects my dual role as Lois' mother and her chronicler; photographs happen in the gaps between the scheduled significances and unexpected dramas of childhood. Lois participates in all image making and the work evolves, reflecting the growing-up of my subject…' (Andrews, 2007, at www.londonmet.ac.uk, accessed 20th April 2010).

Figure 4.

As stated earlier, some ideological and theoretical versions of the child and childhood seem to have become stabilized because of their over-familiarity. But perhaps the work of artists can evoke the jolt of an 'irrational cut' (MacLure *et al*., 2010: 12) in the attempt to release a more open array of responses that are less burdened with the weight of prior assumptions about childhood. MacLure *et al.* discuss Deleuze's concept of the irrational cut,

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3 The Lois project opens up issues around the family album, asking 'what is missing?'. They document the artist's daughter as she goes about her day-to-day activities. According to Andrews, as the project progressed, Lois started to look at the photographs her mother was taking of her and it soon became a collaborative endeavour. Lois would look at herself and when she looked a particular way, she would say to her mum '*Take a picture of me doing this*'.

> … The pedagogy of the image does not champion one point of view over another, or lead the viewer to resolution through narrative or argument. Instead, through its jarring and disconnective articulation, it holds different views and possibilities in a kind of disjunctive suspension, obliging viewers to 'read' the images and commit themselves to the act of 'relinking' across the interstices of the 'irrational cut' that divides the images (Deleuze, 1989: 266)… (MacLure *et al.*, 2010: 11).

This cut in what can feel like seamless fabric, is used to try to actualize the barely-formed, dimly-glimpsed qualities and sensations that comprise affect, in the hope of opening new images of 'the child', and evading our own impulses towards total or secure knowledge (MacLure *et al.*, 2010: 2). Within this movement from photographs in the newspapers to art work in the gallery, the idea of 'meaning' comes into question, particularly in terms of the complexity and fluidity of the image. Edge and Baylis (2004) discuss the work of Tierney Gearon and Sally Mann as artists/mothers who emerged as a result of an active relationship between the political movement of feminism and cultural practices that generated the idea that for women 'the personal was political' (2004: 78). Their paper refuses to decide whether the work of these artists is art or pornography, but debate how this unanswerable dilemma depends on the ideological politics of the images. Images in the newspaper (as a source of public information), or in the family album (where the home has shared familial history), exude something of expected 'bounded frames' (Eck, 2001: 609), affording specific meaning to those images. With the advent of publicising the privacy of home life on Facebook or YouTube, the 'exposed' home no longer remains a 'private context' for viewing some images. Alternatively, images that change to accommodate something of the different context they are being placed within also become trangressive. Examples would be Sally Mann's photographs of her own children (see for example, 'Family Pictures' at http://sallymann.com/selected-works/family-pictures), where artists use images that transgress the intimacy and safety of bounded spaces as they become (or begin as) exhibits in art galleries.

'… I realized there was all this art right underneath my nose. I started to see things differently…' [Sally Mann speaking about her children].

Elinor Carucci's work (2010), which features herself with her son in the bath (Fig 4) and Amy Jenkins' film of her breastfeeding her daughter (Fig 5), both open up more issues around nakedness and childen. In an interview on Radio 4's Woman's Hour (January 2010), Carucci acknowledges that her children may grow up to resent her portrayals of them. '… They might be angry with me and I'm ready for that…'.

Figure 5

Figure 6.

Figure. 7

Sally Mann's portraits, alongside Tierney Gearon's photographs of her family[4] (Fig 7), evoke controversial depictions of young children, which take various forms and could be understood to incite racial, class, cultural and sexual provocation. Although referring to the sexualisation of children, Edge's and Baylis' reflections on adult interpretations / definitions of images could evoke thoughts about all of these controversial aspects of artists' depictions of the young child / childhood, '…What adults understand as the sexuality of children is always defined by the adult world; in this view, childhood is not fixed but culturally produced…' (Edge and Baylis, 2004: 80). Here we observe the instability of the images continually being re-framed, moving from what might be regarded as the 'appropriate context' of the family album, when photographed by a parent, curated onto the walls of an art gallery, towards a more controversial 'pouring out of the frame' (Eck, 2001: 613), where there are continual slippages being renegotiated, '… between what constitutes childhood (femininity), adulthood (masculinity) and sexual desire (paedophilia)…' (Edge and Baylis, 2004: 79).

Some of the difficulties arising here seem to be about erosion, proximity and intimacy, enlarging possibilities for reflection in much less bounded ways. Perhaps as adults and as educators, we need to maintain a distance from children (and childhood), both physically and conceptually, yet these photographs, in their moments of poetic gesture *straddling* lines *together*, but also a pushing *apart* of lines (Sedgwick, 1987), or Bazin's erasure of the logical distinction between what is imagined and what is real, where the rational and irrational meet (1982), evoke Barthes' *punctum*, … two discontinuous elements, heterogeneous in that they did not belong to the same world… (Barthes, 1981: 23). They arrest something in the adult viewer that both takes us back to our own childhoods and simultaneously is forward-looking into the future. Perhaps as adults remembering our own childhoods, we also evoke memories of lost (corrupted) innocence (that has been), either in fantasy, romanticism, or in the narrowness of recollections. Interestingly with Barthes' punctum, '…. The photographer could not *not* photograph the partial object at the same time as the total object…. (Fried, 2005: 546). So artists such as Sally Mann, Tierney Gearon, Elinor Carucci and Amy Jenkins where the intimate, sensual portraits of their children are not partial stories that deny, enclose or reduce the child to the legacy of paedophile hysteria, setting the standard for what is normal (Toynbee, 2001) but enlarge and expand our expectations, what Benjamin refers to as 'estrangement' (2001). These images as *punctum* operating at levels that evoke, repel, plunder and relish seem to position the viewer who encounters the photographs, in awkward contemplation with herself, '… where some new form of knowledge, affect, sensation, and/or revelation is added to the world…' (Lowenstein, 2007: 61). In these encounters, '… Less distance means greater intimacy, and intimacy …is an image destroyer. It presents a major threat to the integrity of the image. Therefore, regardless of physical proximity, the [artist] must always maintain a conceptual distance. She must create tantalizing and ephemeral characters. She must always remain just out of reach, just out of "real"…' (Davis, 1983: 146). We would want to question here how the 'safe', 'secure' and 'healthy' notions of 'child' are being re-negotiated.

Despite some artists feeling comfortable photographing their own children, it seems in our current context that there are some aspects of family life that are not for photographic consumption. As one student who watched our film remarked, '*My daughter got out of the bath when I was filming my son on crutches and she was wanting me to film her. I said no, you will hate me later if I film you*…' (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010). For this mother, whilst making a record of her son on crutches

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[4] Our initial selection of an image by Tierney Gearon was rejected by the publishers following legal advice, and while this raises important ethical issues, these cannot be pursued here.

becomes a subject that she wants to capture for posterity she nevertheless refuses her daughter's request to be filmed fresh from her bath. Photographs restate symbolically both the continuity of family life and the fact that it's constantly vanishing – babies become toddlers, toddlers turn into adolescents and so on. And of course death means that the photograph becomes evidence that there was life. The mother above recognizes that to capture and pin down her naked young daughter via a photograph momentarily encases time. The image will record something of the constantly vanishing moments of childhood. But as we can see, she also acknowledges that this potential image could have repercussions for the future. Retrospectively we will on the one hand be able to perceive the image of the naked youngster (symbolic representation) whilst simultaneously able to see the child as adult woman (the real). This theme of always becoming was noted by another student who said, '…*I began to think about the pictures as being stories of becoming, sexualized children, but not looking at them as children, but becoming sexualized. The pictures comment on the children becoming sexual objects…*' (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010). Thus the daughter's request for her mother to take a photograph triggers the mother's own adult sexual knowledge. So in looking at her daughter's childish form the mother cannot escape its destiny where childish chest will give way to breasts and so on. It is possible to see this mother inscribing her daughter within the innocence of the (modern) Romantic child where the innocence of the child entails adult sexual knowledge. Higonnet (1998) notes that the innocence of children always brings into play adult sexual knowledge. This is because a polar opposition of values (innocence) is also a binary opposition (innocent child/ knowing - including sexually knowing- adult). Commenting on Barthes's contemplation of his mother as a child in the Winter Garden photograph, Michael Fried suggests part of the workings of Barthes's *punctum* is '… the future death of the photograph's human subject (that is, future relative to the "time" of the photograph)…' (Fried, 2005: 558). We would suggest that in the photographs of artists such as Sally Mann and Tierney Gearon, perhaps it is the future sexuality of the child, her becomings that concerns us. Referring to Gardner's photograph of Lewis Payne (1865), Barthes suggests '… the punctum is: he is going to die…' (1981: 148 – 50). So some of the artists photographs here could be evoking 'she is going to be sexual' or 'she (or even the image) is going to be abused'. If one value is defined mainly as the opposite of something else, then perceiving one value always entails thinking of the other value. The mother is (at a level) conscious of this innocence/knowledge seesaw and she wants to settle firmly on the side of innocence. The child has just emerged from the bath, she is clean as can be but she can never be looked at 'innocently' because there is no such thing as an innocent gaze.

De Lauretis (1984) following the physiologist Colin Blakemore (1973) states that the perceptual apparatus does not copy reality but symbolizes it, noting, 'To perceive is to make a continuous series of educated guesses, on the basis of prior knowledge and expectations, however unconscious' (p. 103). Perhaps we need to contemplate a different conceptual framework that's not founded on the dialectic logic of opposition - one that can countenance the complex interplay and mutual implication between perception and signification, between subjectivity and sociality. One that will allow us to abandon the good/bad child, and so on. It is because art and photography can keep the innocence–knowledge see-saw tipping back and forth that it serves as a necessary, indeed 'hateful' (see mother's comments) mechanism for interrupting our preferred stories about the child. With these ideas in mind, a much more problematic arena of public and more worldly images of the young child lies in bodies of art by artists who are not directly related to the children they photograph. We want to examine how these images, or '*…performances of interruption…*' (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010) can give voice, challenging the ways in which we understand and think about young children within educational contexts, by contemplating how using art as provocation might diminish the vanity of trying to understand the world.

Courting controversy

There continue to be images of children that seem to be dangerously unbounded, moving across into worlds full of the worldliness of children. They seem to bring together, whilst contemporaneously dismantling bounded discourses of vulnerability and evil, good and bad, dismantling these discourses, transgress notions of ethics, decency and acceptability by bringing distinct spheres into a savage, subversive cannibalistic relationship with one another, making it almost '…*too uncomfortable to look at…*' (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010).

Shifting contexts seem to create a sense of unknowing and disorientation, which a viewer of our short film described in the following way,'*… I wasn't expecting to be disturbed in the way that I was because I wasn't in an art gallery… I choose to go into a gallery knowing I'm going to be challenged… in here, I was taken by surprise… the film has stirred things up for me..*' (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010). The notion of being able to undertake a linear reading is confounded and always debatable as we deliberate the interrelationship between images, their always shifting physical contexts and the particular ideological currents active in our western society. Another member of the viewing audience commented that '…*we do have to read the images in their context. We're reading them through the frame of paedophilia… whereas when some of them [i.e. the photos] were taken, that frame wasn't there in the same way as it is now…*' (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010).

Whilst the discourse relating to pedophilia and 'stranger danger' was raging through this reading of the images, we noted that there were similar concerns around constructing images within the canon of family photographs. Susan Sontag, writing in the mid-seventies makes the point that 'cameras go with family life' and that 'not to take pictures of one's children, particularly when they are small, is a sign of parental indifference…' (1979: 8). Sontag comments that through photographs each family can construct a portrait-chronicle of itself, which she describes as 'a portable kit of images that bears witness to its connectedness' (1979: 8). Constructing the family album becomes a rite of family life which can be understood as being particularly imperative at the point when family life is fragmented, stratified and so on.

Controversy around certain images of children pushes us to contemplate how the public image of the naked child has become a dangerous signifier representing the perilous disintegration of upright morals, a difficult metaphorical reminder of corruption, capitalism and westernization, taunting art galleries, curators, collectors, critics and consumers to revere what remains sacred about the very idea of the child. As McNair suggests, '…. From advertising to health education campaigns, sex and sexual imagery now permeate every aspect of advanced capitalist culture…', referring to, 'the sexualization of culture', that has also come to rest on the body of the child (cited in Edge and Baylis, 2004: 85). Has the child's body become an insistent mnemonic of beauty, vulnerability, innocence and provocation? Perhaps its purpose is to signify, disrupt and provoke and importantly becomes a way to contemplate whether '… the way childhood is represented always expresses the concerns of the adult world rather than the 'realities' of life as a child…' (Edge and Baylis, 2004: 85). With the art world reeling from its own censorship dilemmas, left in an ethical and political tailspin, where do such images leave other worlds, such as education that pride themselves on the construction, preservation and perpetuation of 'upright' values, particularly in the interests of future generations? For example, how can, and interestingly, why should education, its language, mandates and associated rhetoric

have conversations with such images? Perhaps unless we take time to contemplate the 'other' voices or worldliness of children and indeed begin to court some sense of controversy, educational academics, practitioners, researchers, trainers and children themselves can only ever retreat into a position of silencing, dismissal, dis-ownership and denial that alternative representations may exist, let alone force us to reconsider how these images interrupt our own sedimented versions of the idea of children and childhood.

The discourse of art as contributing to pornography and paedophilia

There are a number of controversial examples from the world of art that circulate around difficult images, especially naked images of children. Richard Prince's photograph of 10-year-old naked Brooke Shield's ('*Spiritual America*') is one such example. This photograph is now exhibited behind a closed door at the Tate Modern, with a rather tautological warning that, 'This room contains images that some visitors may find challenging'. A second example is an image of a nude five-year-old girl taken in 2003 by her mother, professional photographer Polixeni Papapetrou entitled 'Olympia as Beatrice Hatch in Front of White Cliffs'. This is an image sparked controversy in Australia when it was published in the July edition of the magazine *Art Monthly*. These controversial cases raise questions about the relationship between adult / child, subject / object, expression / censorship, art / pornography, image taker / viewer and child protection / paedophilia. If taken as merely nude images, they also alert the viewer to the sexualization of the child and remind us of the view that even with adult nudity where the act of sex is gestured, '… sex is something we descend to. Art is something we exalt…' (Schweitzer, 2004: 65). This tension that dichotomises sex and art is heightened once we introduce the idea of the child as subject/object, '… sex, more than anything else, threatens the precarious structure of social order…' (Schweitzer 2004: 70). In our short film, the viewers also made comments that reminded us of the precariously deviant image of the nude child,

'Some pictures are uncomfortable to watch as a father. I have a daughter myself…. Some of the pictures were disturbing… the nude pictures' (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010)

'*It's like looking at child pornography… it's uncomfortable. Call me naive, but what makes this art or is it pornography? What's the difference?'* (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010)

'*There was a lot of boundary crossing going on in the film…. from family photographs, to more like pornographic content and art images….'* (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010)

'*…It's frightening how we think of children in danger but also as dangerous to us. There are dangers in those interactions…. looking…. seeing. I thought about the irrationality of what we can do to children who are becoming..'* (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010)

Mohr, (2004) asks 'what makes a picture of a kid into 'kiddie porn'? And in answer to his own question he writes, 'The mind of the beholder'. He continues, 'the image is 'kiddie porn' if it is possessed by someone who, quite independent of the image's content can be considered perverted. And whether or not parents find themselves incarcerated for bear-rug and bath tub shots of their kids turns on what prosecutors and juries think was in the parents' mind when they took the photos, rather than anything distinctive about the picture themselves" (2004: 21). He continues, 'It is the mind not the image that is dispositive' (2004: 21). Mohr points out that in the United States the law typically gives longer sentences to possessors of 'kiddie porn' than to adults who have sex with children, which in his view 'shows the contortions and absurdity of culture's anxious construal of

paedosexuality' (ibid). So on one hand we are terrified of imaging children because of the way in which paedophilia is configured but on the other we use what Mohr describes as 'sexy children', 'virginal and alluring' in mainstream clothing advertisements (see for example Calvin Klein & Tommy Hilfiger). Mohr writes 'were society to allow itself to articulate that it does have sexual interest in children – little adults are not sexy but innocence and purity are – society would have met the enemy and seen that he is us'. (2004: 29). He then continues, '… the paradox of everyday paedophilia is this: once we have made over childhood into purity and innocence, we naturally enough want to have it, but to have it would make it what we no longer want…' (2004: 29-30). Kincaid makes similar remarks where he notes that blaming the media for eroticising children is a lame move. He suggests, the media, books, movies and so on '… are part of an ecology of desire, a complex symbiotic system that circulates in and through us' (2010: 2).

Looking at children; children looking at us

We are told as children 'not to stare'. Moreover children in school have to control their faces in general but their eyes more so. The teacher's injunction to 'look at me' is a mechanism of subjection. But the child's look has to be practiced in particular ways. Looks that carry a whiff of confrontation bode ill for the child. As hooks (2001) notes, 'imagine the terror felt by the child who has come to understand through repeated punishments that one's gaze can be dangerous' (2001: 123). There is power in looking, 'Even in the worse circumstances of domination, the ability to manipulate one's gaze in the face of structures of domination, the ability to manipulate one's gaze in the face of structures of domination that would contain it, opens up the possibility of agency' (hooks, 2001: 123). Interestingly, one student after viewing the film commented on the dangers of children 'looking back',

'… *The bad girls look back, only the fat boy was looking away'*… [referring to Hellen Van Meene's work, 2007]. *It also made me think of different kinds of knowing, knowing as sexual beings, this was problematised by some of the images. Some of the children's gazes alluded to a certain knowledge, or was it that we project our ideas onto what we understand those gazes to be about …'* (Film viewing data, 24th February, 2010)

We are left wondering whether the film has messed with our assembling mechanisms? Freidberg (quoted in hooks, 2001: 124) argues that 'identification can only be made through recognition, and all recognition is itself an implicit conformation of the ideology of the status quo'. Walter Benjamin adds another dimension when he notes,' The manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well' (2001: 66).

At this juncture we want to turn to a specific photograph, Nan Goldin's 'Klara and Edda Belly Dancing, 1998' (image in '*The Devil's Playground*', Phaidon Press Ltd, 2003)) and to some responses that were triggered by it. When The Baltic Center for Contemporary Art in Gateshead exhibited this photograph they felt sufficiently nervous that they might offend members of the public that they called in the police for advice. Both authors of this paper teach on an undergraduate Early Childhood Studies programme. As part of the usual process of quality assurance of the programme a sample of the undergraduate manuscripts were sent to our External Examiner. In a unit entitled Multidisciplinary Studies (MDS) where students are asked to critically deconstruct a selection of images of children or childhood, one student included 'Klara and Edda Belly Dancing'.

In response to the inclusion of this image in the student's work, the examiner commented,

> … I felt that the choice of a photograph of a very young girl (probably about 2) showing genitalia face on was questionable. The recent case of the nursery worker in Plymouth engaged in child pornography should alter us to being sensitive about what images students may chose to present…' (External Examiner's Report, July 2009).

The students also had to discuss their work publicly with their peers as part of a series of assessed seminars and in response to the same image, an undergraduate student reflected,

> … The MDS unit made us feel uncomfortable and fearful of our reputations as early years practitioners, I hated that module…We had to check with our safeguarding officer about the acceptability of looking at images of children on the computer… (data from part-time undergraduate student, 25th February 2010)

These comments have raised a number of issues for us, which have contributed to our interest in art as a menacing lubricant in and amongst the embodied educational discourses that seem to crudely finalize the child, the academic and the early years practitioner. For example, why did this image provoke such anxious and agitated responses? Did the act of viewing the children force a form of *estrangement*? Walter Benjamin (2001) in discussing *estrangement* uses the analogy of looking in the mirror where the image that is presented never quite matches the idealised image that each of us carry around in our heads. The photographer and artist Sally Mann makes the point that art's role is almost nefarious. It's to challenge expectation. To push a little bit, whether that's aesthetically, politically or culturally. Has Goldin's photograph pushed at the boundaries around, and given voice to something that is not acceptable? Are the examiner and the students experiencing 'estrangement' where the familiar has been supplanted by the child as 'taboo' - where the 'reputable' child has been rendered 'disreputable'? Is it this that causes their dismay and their discomfort? Sontag asserts that 'The photograph that brings news of some unsuspected zone of misery cannot make a dent in public opinion unless there is an appropriate context of feeling and attitude' (Sontag, 1979: 17). So within the context of the comments noted above, we are interested to pursue what could be thought of as an *appropriate context of feeling and attitude* here. The examiner's thoughts emerge from her undertakings as an academic working in early years, selected to monitor quality issues across the undergraduate programme. This seems to be a rational endeavour to police the teaching and assessment of legitimate discourses of reason and guide our impulses towards secure knowledge in pursuit of standardization across undergraduate work. However, within her role, she has been jolted by the inclusion of an image of two young children, which seems to interrupt what she expected to undertake as an annual academic exercise. Instead, she seems to have been provoked by an ontological shudder. The MDS unit is designed to be the 'irrational cut' (MacLure *et al*., 2010: 2) that causes students to take a sharp intake of breath. It is provocative in its deliberation of alternative 'texts' about the young child, setting out to ask hard questions of students, who are expected to become uncomfortable, ill at ease and reflective as they deliberate their own awkwardness with surprisingly (in)nocuous issues. Similar to Barthes' punctum (1981), this unit aims to inspire intensely private meanings in responses to images of the child. We encourage students to select images that are unexpectedly recognized and consequently remembered, as Barthes suggests, the punctum '… shoots out of [the photograph] like an arrow and pierces me…' (1981). The *punctum* is a detail or partial object that attracts and holds the viewer's gaze. It bruises or wounds the observer. Its affects or piercings seem to escape language. The examiner's comments perhaps suggest that the image worked as punctum on her, provoking levels of dis-ease in her as she read this student's work. It

seems to have triggered a disruption to the framings that guide her 'professionalism' as a guardian of, and advocate for the romanticised innocence and vulnerability of the young child. This image of two young girls does not sit comfortably with this charge. Here, we could argue that the idea of 'punctum' for us is not something specifically located in the photograph itself, but it is the movement of this transgressive image into educational discourses that disturbs the 'safe', 'healthy' and 'secure' renderings of child as embedded in educational policy mandates. The girls could be gesturing/voicing sexuality in their dance, their dress, their pose, their relationship with one another and a confident worldliness that menaces from the inside, the very framings that are intended to protect them from potent deviances already grooming them from the outside. These visual cues disrupt the passivity of the experience of childhood. Perhaps it is because the examiner is anchored resolutely to another way of seeing the child that she wants to refuse the image, to render it taboo because to welcome it would mean having to relinquish too much that is comforting and comfortable. Her sense of childhood as a 'situation' (children in their right place, children as knowable subjects) is jeopardized and when we confront jeopardy we are fearful. The horror of the image (from the perspective of the examiner) is that the two children are immortalised in a world that she would rather not confront or recognise.

She defends her a/objection to the image by reminding us of our role as tutors to guide students towards less insensitive images and almost by default, gesturing at the unethical exploitation and moral (ir)responsibility of the artist who is understood as desecrating something of the children. Sontag (1979) argues that when we photograph any individual we 'violate' them, which comes by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed. This is a challenging position to contemplate as we try to reconcile the use of images and art education, whilst being reminded of our own ethical dilemmas. The examiner also prompts us to be mindful of the threat of child pornography and paedophilic activities (from onlookers) that haunt us, '… implications of the exotic, the freaky, and the lawless… Antagonistic to family values and community standards, the building blocks of culture … attracts strange elements and fuels depraved appetites. It transports the viewer not only into fantasy but into the shadow world beyond the pale … (Schweitzer, 2004: 66). Perhaps she recoils from this familiar territory as she would rather render the adult, whether photographer or spectator as 'perverted' (Mohr, 2004) as monster and the children more easily readable, interpretable, recognizable, tying them down into the discourses of child protection, made 'safe', kept 'healthy' and 'secure' amongst the rhetoric of early childhood mandates. But what becomes interesting, is to allow ourselves to think of children as less recognizable, similar to Sontag's musings on the photograph's incomprehensibility where 'The very muteness of what is, hypothetically, comprehensible in photographs is what constitutes their attraction and provocativenes' (1979: 24). The examiner has encountered an image that speaks of that muteness, that something else. Here are children who provocatively challenge any straightforward readings of who they are, or might be(come), their interests, actions, thoughts and feelings. Sontag proposes that photographs teach us a new visual code, they alter and enlarge our notions of what is *worth* looking at and what we have a *right* to observe, describing them as a 'grammar' and an 'ethics' of seeing (1979: 4-5). Interestingly, the examiner commented that '… child pornography should **alter us** to being sensitive about what images students may chose to present…', urging us to be altered by looking away from the photograph towards a sobering reality of paedophilia, whereas Sontag invites us to look to the photograph as a source of our education, as this process can **alter our** notions of what is worth looking at. Perhaps the examiner does not want to 'see' the two children as they are just not 'right' and are therefore not worth seeing, other than as a recourse to incite more familiar child protection discourses. She sees them as confounding moral codes – but codes, which stem from where? This image somehow turns the idea of agency and voice, as understood within liberal humanist early

childhood rhetoric, on its head - here the children are doing and saying what is thought developmentally *in*appropriate, perhaps already corrupted by age *in*appropriate cultural influences and therefore requiring even more stringent care and attention to render them more appropriate for white, professional middle class consumption. Goldin is not so much attracted to 'official realities' but to an 'unofficial reality' the one that lies out of sight and behind what might be described as middle class or bourgeois notions of children and childhood. 'The limit of the photographic knowledge of the world is that, while it can goad conscience, it can, finally, never be ethical or political knowledge. The knowledge gained through still photographs will always be some kind of sentimentalism, whether cynical or humanist' (Sontag, 1979: 24). This image seems to have rattled at the examiner's essentialist values that guide her conscience to act in a morally obliging way as an academic, a guardian of the early years sector and an external charged with patrolling quality issues. Perhaps it has acted as a lubricant amongst a more secure sense of knowledge.

The examiner utters what could be understood as a rallying call when she alludes to her fear for '**our** reputations as early years practitioners' (our emphasis). The use of 'our' is suggestive of a homogeneous collective. If there is such a phenomenon, is it incumbent upon this collective to fix images of children that are predicated on representations that totalize the child? Wouldn't this infer a collective gaze that is so normalized that it fixes children in a way that a chemical fixes a dye? Alternatively could we not read Nan Goldin's image as an antidote in that it releases the children or at least temporarily unsettles the bonds by which 'we' ritualistically gaze at them. Could we not understand the image as teasing the children away from a parasitical dependence on our ritualized notion of who the child is? Such ritualized viewing includes perceptions about innocence and perceptions about what constitutes 'beauty', 'wild' and so forth in relation to the child.

We accept and recognise the political savvy in having a discrete early years professional group. We are nevertheless concerned that the examiner draws an immediate relationship between the image, paedophilia and professional reputation. Perhaps she perceives the reputation of the profession as being inextricably linked with sanitised and pure versions of the child where the early years practitioner like the good mother will protect the child, nurture her and allow her to develop as nature intended. Goldin's image soils this particular dream. Instead of a 'walled garden' she places (or the children have placed themselves) in what might be a kitchen. And here again we are unsettled because whilst the sink might speak of homes, this isn't a 'homely' and thus familiar and comforting family portrait.

The external examiner's comment infers little recognition of a more heterogeneous scattering of practitioners, practices and belief systems that are already working to untangle a more scripted, binary version of having either a good or bad reputation. The use of the terms 'reputation' and 'safeguarding' are also provocative within this context. The esteem, character and standing of early years practitioners is clearly something she is concerned about. The student's comment seems to suggest that this image subverts something of the moral integrity of the early years. Amongst this subversion the photograph panders to the nascent potential of her own 'right-eous' position that advocates the prevalent role of the safeguarding officers in settings and the profession's heightened sensitivity to the (mis)use and policing of the computer. To some extent, the abuses committed by Vanessa George[5] have already dirtied the profession, throwing into disarray the reputation of 'our' trustworthiness to protect the most vulnerable and innocent of beings, which negates alternative

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[5] In 2009, Vanessa George, a nursery school worker from Plymouth, UK received an indeterminate prison sentence for sexually abusing children in her care and swapping images of the abuse with two other paedophiles.

readings of the practitioner and of the young child. Her protection of 'our reputation' is twofold – a distancing from, and dis-ownership of any individuals and their activities bringing ill-repute in association with the early years sector and also the fierce guarding of the belief that early childhood practitioners should / must buy whole-heartedly into particular and bounded versions of the young child. This unit challenges students to disregard, albeit momentarily, those beliefs that seem laden with the weight of prior assumptions about children and childhood. It aspires to upset something of the burdening rhetoric of working with children in the early years by allowing more difficult conversations about representations of children and childhood to emerge.

Concluding remarks

Our efforts have been directed towards art(ful) and experimental provocations so as to disrupt or at least provide temporary respite from imaging the child in specific ways. The film/paper intends to mobilize the visual in qualitative research in ways that do not further objectify children. We would argue that by attending to Butler's notion that, '…[o]ne 'exists' not only by virtue of being recognized, but, in a prior sense, by being recognizable… '(1997a: 5) in addition to Foucault's '… practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak…' (1972: 49), we can summarize how our visual methodology has tried to resist renewed forms of objectification. Cannella (1999) describes Foucault's disciplinary technologies as objectifying practices in a culture that would produce docile bodies, as objects to be manipulated. In other words, education becomes a process whereby an invisible colonization of bodies occurs that renders them docile, instantly knowable and recognizable. If we (or our students in their MDS assignments) had persisted with practices that foregrounded 'safe', docile, knowable and recognizable images of the child, for example images found in educational documentation or school photographs, perhaps these all-too-familiar representations of the child would merely contribute to an archive that Foucault suggests becomes a history that is, '…no longer a monument for future memory, but a document for future use…' (Foucault, 1977: 191). Graham (2005) draws from Deleuze (1992) and Scheurich (1997), to argue the objectification of the child acts as a locating device - once constituted as an object of a particular sort, individuals can be dispersed into disciplinary spaces within a '…grid of social regularity… ' (Scheurich, 1997: 98), part of what Butler describes as, '… the very operation of interpellation, …by which subjects are formed in subjugation…' (1997b: 358-359). As part of this process of interpellation, where the docile child is recognized and summoned into a particular position ('It's a child!'), hierarchical observation helps determine and maintain the 'normality' of bodies that are observed (Cannella, 1999). So if, as occurred with the close supervision exercised by our External Examiner, we (meaning researchers, early years practitioners and students) change our practices and allow something not as docile and inasmuch, unrecognizable to enter this closely supervised colonised space, an image of a child that looks, behaves and speaks differently, it is rendered disorderly, falling outside of 'normality'. By moving outside of the usual 'practices of representation' within education that serve to form the child as an object about which those practices speak, we find Nan Goldin's (and a plethora of other) images of 'unrecognizable' children. Here we would argue that images such as *Klara and Edda Belly Dancing*, constituted as (un)safe within educational discourse, enable 'disordered' discursive objects (Deleuze, 1988) to be articulated. To draw from the work of Kristeva (1982), the child in such images, is no longer rendered docile, but causes abjection, inhabiting a space that lies between the concept of the docile objectified child and the concept of the child as subject, something alive yet not alive. The film gathered together 'disorderly' children from 'other worlds' and upon being faced with these other worldly images the External Examiner was repulsed because she was forced to face something that has been violently cast/kept out of the cultural world of education, having once been a more recognizable subject therein. As educators we encounter familiar images of the school(ed) child daily.

To confront a different version of the child, of one that we recognize as 'child', something that *should* be docile but isn't, is to confront the reality that we are capable of having awkward feelings towards and difficult knowledge(s) about the child / pupil. We are forced to turn towards our own subjective responses to ourselves and to the child(ren) and in doing so, this forces us to experience the otherwise sedate(d) and objectified self/child in new ways. We would argue that our visual interrogatory practices of attending to an array of seemingly (un)recognizable, (dis)located and (inter)disciplinary images from the worlds of cinema, the media and art alongside the world of education, we have upset the familiarity that objectifies and subjugates the individual within the educational '… grid of social regularity…' (Scheurich, 1997: 98). By making and showing the film, we hope to have conjured a more disruptive visual methodology that engages with the complexities and intricacies of children's subjective worlds aimed at tampering and maybe even rupturing the familiar devices that frame the (objectified) child. Our intentions have been to mobilise 'effects of meaning and perception' (de Lauretis, 1984: 102), so as to loosen the grip of ideology in order to breathe air into stale ways of 'knowing' the child. In setting the images to work our aim was to confuse, to produce contradictions so that we complicate how we understand children and their subjectivities and the social processes in which children's lives are lived. How we 'translate' becomes an issue when it is evident that children are subjected to numerous voice-less translations between ideology, policy and practice (Stronach and MacLure, 1997). The film has made us raw and acutely sensitive to the codes and practices that predispose us to read and interpret in certain and not other ways. But as Kincaid remarks, '… there are, even with these instructions, wide ranges of possibilities; and we are not compelled to read anything mimetically, pornographically, hysterically' (2010:4).

Referring back to UK Government rhetoric noted earlier in the paper, UK policy discourse works at promoting every child's achievement of the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic well-being (DCSF, 2007). Such discursive aspirations that look to nurture qualities of self-confidence, be(com)ing self-assured, capable, resilient, strong and independent hint at the child as a narrative of salvation where the aim is to produce better citizens for the future. However, what 'better' might mean must and should be contested. We argue that the film/paper allows children to strike back at us so as to cut and tear at the discursive seams that hold them in their place. In being brought fact to face with images we have had to trouble 'fixed' and 'natural' assumptions concerning the child where categories such as 'innocent' or 'age appropriate' are no longer tenable. The images have, we would argue set the child adrift between past, present and future. Additionally, they allowed our respondents to move between past, present and future. Think here of the mother who could not bring herself to photograph her naked daughter because 'she would hate me in the future' and of the student who cannot *now* look at naked children without also letting in notions of child protection, safeguarding and so on shroud her perceptions all of which implies that there was there was a time when these discursive practices were either absent or less pressing.

There is we believe a temptation to practice a form of cultural amnesia where we kid ourselves that there was once a golden age of childhood that was safe, healthy and secure and that if we create the right kinds of conditions, by passing the rights kinds of legislation and so on we can (re)turn to this utopia. However, such a vision is a myth. If such a time had existed there would never have been the necessity to always use education as a conduit for a form of reason that has always had as its target the 'unruly masses'. A further layer of our cultural amnesia lies in the contradictions of the education system existing with(in) a global capitalist society. It could be argued that education in the 21st century renders concerns of the heart and mind subordinate to political and economic concerns. Ideally early years settings would be the vehicle through which the cultural aspirations of being safe,

healthy and secure are passed on to young children. Yet these settings are being increasingly driven by the principles of the economic, rather than cultural, whereby other outcomes such as 'making a positive contribution' and 'achieving economic well-being' (DCSF, 2007) take priority. According to Howley (1990), education is being forced to endure novelty (in the form of a preoccupation with reform), efficiency (more education for the taxpayers' money), and utility (the ability of education to meet a predetermined, politically charged set of goals). In this model, education serves as little more than a series of institutions that specialize the human intellect for work in the capitalist system. Therefore, the juxtaposition of early years education with(in) an established and expanding capitalist society, renders education as always in the business of regulating the space of childhood. Those deemed to be disorderly, causing an interruption to the work of an education system that survives by driving forward the political and economic capitalist agenda, whether that's in terms of class, ethnicity or cognitive development are brought into the orbit of what is countenanced as 'normal' (see for example Walkerdine, 1988; Popkewitz and Bloch, 2000).

As two professionals who are in the field of training future practitioners we recognise the tight rope that we are trying to negotiate. So on the one hand we are inevitably implicated in and part of governmental social apparatus that has as an aim 'social betterment'. Yet at the same time we realise that modern government is considerably more intrusive than in previous manifestations. Popkewitz and Bloch (2000) note it is this that makes 'resistance and revolt more distant and less plausible' as 'it's the self's capacities and potentialities that are the site of perpetual intervention' (2000: 106). Previously we described aspects of an interdisciplinary childhood studies honours programme that draws from the fields of education, sociology, social policy, educational and social psychology in nurturing students' criticality and reflectivity. In so doing, such a childhood studies programme provides an opportunity for students to reconceptualise children and their lives. It was noted how the external examiner's advice veered towards caution where the implication was that we should police ourselves so as to censor the kinds of artefacts that we use as part of our pedagogy. Both within the taught programmes and here in this paper and film our efforts are located in struggling to develop different voices, alternative lines of enquiry that only become possible if we unblock or disturb those discursive elements which admit some knowledge and some voices whilst studiously and steadfastly alienating others.

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