

# Family Members as Co-researchers: Reflections on Practice-reported Data

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English abstract

Based on data from two studies, the practice of using participants – here children and parents – as co-researchers to document children's everyday practices is discussed. Participants' video recordings have been analysed from a post-humanistic perspective, in which focus is placed on what kind of data are produced and how this is done within these activities. It is shown how the researcher loses control with regard to understanding how these observations have been made. This raises questions concerning research ethics, as well as the quality of the empirical material that has been collected and that the researcher has to handle. In addition, it is argued that the conditions under which these data are produced demand critical thinking with regard to what analyses can be done.

**Keywords:** children, interaction, ethics, family research, co-researcher, ethnography, reflexivity

## Introduction

Children's use of digital technologies has been studied for more than three decades (e.g. Papert, 1980; Turkle, 1984), and we know quite a lot when it comes to what digital technologies children use, how often they use them, and together with whom (e.g. Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, & Macgill, 2008; Medierådet, 2010a, 2010b; Medietilsynet, 2010).

For more than ten years, I have been studying how digital practices are accomplished in children's everyday life. This has been done from children's point of view, which is a way to underline that children are seen as actors in their own lives (e.g. James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; James & Prout, 1990). To capture children's perspective, different methodological approaches have been suggested, such as ethnography (Halldén, 2007; James et al., 1998) and ethnomethodology (Evaldsson, 2004; Goodwin, 1990; 2006) as well as discourse analytical perspectives (Aronsson, 1998; Sparrman, Cromdal, Evaldsson, & Adelswärd, 2009). These approaches involve different data-gathering techniques like interviews, questionnaires and participant observation, and operate with a clear-cut distinction between the researcher and the research object: in short, classic designs whereby researchers are those who conduct interviews, make questionnaires, observe and analyse children's practices.

Lately, there have been several attempts to access and capture a children's perspective by using children as co-researchers (Christensen & James, 2000; Clark, Kjørholt, & Moss, 2005; Sparrman, 2007). In these studies, researchers have had children take photos of places they like, dislike, use or avoid (Sparrman, 2005; Staunæs, 2004), draw maps of places they use (Gustafson, 2011), keep diaries about their everyday experiences (Sjöberg, 2010), and even interview other children (Sparrman, 2002). Within these research designs, the distinction between researcher and research object is blurred since children are sometimes made the object of observations while at other times they are making observations themselves, on which they report to a responsible researcher. Put differently, they work as co-researchers.

Inspired by actor network theory (ANT), several researchers within child studies have argued that children have to be seen as interwoven in social, cultural and material networks (e.g. Prout, 2005; Sparrman & Aarsand, 2009). This means that children are actors that have to deal with ideas, norms and expectations concerning being children within these practices. Further on, it is argued that, in order to fully understand how these practices work, it is not enough to focus solely on how children understand their practices. We need to consider how activities and networks that children are part of restrict and enable ways of acting, and the consequences these actions have on the ongoing practice. Thereby, how adults see and deal with children's practices will be of interest to child studies, but this requires that the adults' position also have to be considered as situated and partial (cf. Haraway, 1991). From the very beginning child studies have criticized research design whereby adults are interviewed about, or asked to answer questionnaires concerning, children's practices (James & Prout, 1990). But this is not the same as the research strategy of using adults within or close to children's practice, as co-researchers, to gather data on children's practices. Known adults like parents or teachers can be seen as the 'less stranger', and therefore could uncover valuable information on children's everyday life.

The strategy of using children as co-researchers within their own community (here, families are used as examples) produces what I call *practice-reported data*. There seem to be several advantages to using members of the community to produce practice-reported data. First, the *access* argument: as members

of the community, they are most likely to get access to the practices of interest to the researcher. Second, the *ethical* argument: the members are able to decide what, when, where and how to record, which makes it easier for them to erase episodes they do not want the researchers to use. Third, the *knowledge* argument: members of the community often know what the key aspects of the practices are; they are the ones who know what information is relevant for understanding important aspects of that practice. Members are experts on their own lives and practices (e.g. Clark et al., 2005). This may be particularly true of participants who are at the core of the practice (cf. Lave & Wenger, 1991).

In the present paper, I will discuss the use of children and parents as co-researchers equipped with video camera to collect information about children's everyday practices in the light of the presumed advantages listed above. In addition, I would like to discuss what kind of data these research strategies actually produce.

## Video cameras in social studies of children

The video camera has been used for several years within anthropology, communication and interactional studies (e.g. Goodwin, 1990, 2006; Ochs, 1988), and lately has also become an important tool for many researchers within social research such as child studies (e.g. Aarsand, 2007; Aronsson, 1998; Tholander & Aronsson, 2003).

It is often argued that the use of the video camera has been a huge contribution to studies of activities, practices and communities; particularly when it comes to research traditions that focus on interaction and communication. The most important argument for using video recordings is the possibility to study interaction in detail by playing and replaying auditive and visual aspects of the observation (Heat, Hindmarsh, & Luff, 2010). This makes it possible to do analyses that would not have been possible otherwise. Today's handheld video cameras are small and lightweight, which makes it possible to move around among children relatively easily. These are aspects that are of particular importance to researchers who study children in and around different places. In addition, video cameras are no longer especially expensive and are therefore easily accessible. However, the possibility to use the video camera in social research and the fact that this is done do not mean it is an uncontroversial research tool. Studies have shown that the use of a video camera involves ethical dilemmas (e.g. Aarsand & Forsberg, 2009; Sparrman, 2005), technical dilemmas concerning the camera's focus, angles and placement (Heikkilä & Sahlström, 2003; Luff & Heat, 2012), and analytical dilemmas concerning how to systematize and transcribe data (Aarsand & Sparrman, 2012; Mondada, 2006). Even though researchers are well aware of the video camera's influence on the construction of data, only a few studies have examined *how* the video camera works as part of scientific practice (e.g. Aarsand & Forsberg, 2010). Instead, video recordings are often presented as a way to increase the validity of the analysis, for instance through (re)viewing and analysing video-recorded data alone and with colleagues (e.g. Heat & Hindmarsh, 2002; Silverman, 2001).

## Research as boundary-drawing practices

In the analysis, I combine Goffman's attention to how borders, distinctions and frames are created in activities by the involved participants, with Barad's post-humanistic perspective, which focuses on how the research process is a boundary-drawing practice. This theoretical point of view indicates a twofold focus. First, it draws attention to how the participants in the studies orient to different

activities, and second, it draws attention to how researchers such as myself contribute to the construction of reality through the way we work.

Goffman and Barad share an interest in the production of boundaries and distinctions. Goffman's (1974) notion of *activity frames* is explained as distinctions created in interaction whereby the ongoing activity is framed as something particular, for instance, learning. This means that what is said, how it is said, what is touched on, how one orients to certain actions and so on, are seen as part of the learning activity and are thereby not to be understood as, for instance, flirting. The material framing of a situation will even strengthen how this activity is seen, and thereby strengthen the distinctions that matter (cf. Latour, 1999). Activity frames are not to be considered static, but rather are dynamic and changeable in interaction (cf. Aarsand, 2008). Thereby, frames and distinctions are subject to negotiations that can potentially be produced differently. The advantage of Goffman's (1974) notion of activity frames is that it offers analytical concepts for seeing and understanding activities from the participants' point of view. More precisely, it draws the analytical focus to the participants' 'focus of attention' to see what activity is going on and how they position themselves to this at the given moment (e.g. Goodwin, 1990).

Post-humanistic perspectives are critical of the idea that the world revolves around the human being located at the centre, and that a human being is an individual apart from the rest, a distinct individual. What at first glance seem to be separate entities are 'enactments of boundaries that always entail constitutive exclusions and therefore requisite questions of 'accountability' (Barad, 2007, p. 135). According to this perspective, there are no clear-cut distinctions between human and machine, public and private, or subject and object. Rather, these distinctions are produced in action. Barad (2007) distinguishes between 'phenomena' and 'apparatuses'. *Phenomena* are the basic ontological units that researchers study. They are neither independent objects nor collages of fixed entities; rather, phenomena are heterogeneous relations of various discursive, material, human and non-human resources. These are produced through specific 'intra-actions', a term Barad prefers to 'interaction' because the latter presumes the prior existence of entities. To study phenomena, researchers use and are part of scientific *apparatuses*. These are not 'mere observing instruments but boundary-drawing practices' (Barad, 2007, p. 140) in which the distinction between, for instance, child and co-researcher is produced.

Barad's notions are used to discuss how data are produced by research strategies whereby the purpose is to understand children's digital practices. I apply the term 'interaction', but my usage is informed by Barad's notion of intra-action.

## Participants as researchers

Video cameras are found in ordinary cameras and cell phones, as well as more regular video cameras. It could be claimed that video cameras are part of Western families' basic equipment for documenting their children's childhood and development. Many children are familiar with being recorded by parents and other adults on vacation, holidays and events such as family parties and sport. The present paper discusses the use of video recordings produced by family members in two different research projects. Here the families are just the context, but similar strategies can also be discussed in relation to schools or preschools. The first are recordings from the CELF project (the everyday lives of middle-class families in Italy, Sweden and the US), which focuses on everyday routines and activities that take place in middle-class families within and across national borders (Aronsson & Pontecorvo, 2002). From the CELF project, I will discuss children's video recordings

of their own homes, called ‘home tours’, with examples from US families. In short, the child was asked to walk around their property while presenting different rooms, spaces and objects and explaining how the family used them. If they had particular meanings or memories related to what they filmed, we asked them to talk about this as well (e.g. Giorgi, Padiglione, & Pontecorvo, 2007). The idea behind the home tours was to get children’s perspectives on the social and cultural geography of the home, and that the children’s own presentation was the best way to do this.

The second recordings used are from the LINT project (Interactive technologies, learning and remembering in early childhood), which focuses on children’s use of digital technology in learning and remembering in homes, schools and afterschool centres. The data used in this text consist of video recordings of four focus children. From the LINT project I will discuss parents’ video recordings of their children’s everyday life at home, what I call ‘parents as co-researchers’. The children were recorded for one week. At school and the afterschool centre they were video recorded by two researchers from the university, while the parents did the video recording at home. The parents were given instructions concerning what to film, when, where and for how long. In short, they were told to focus on the child (target child); they were to film him/her throughout the day, from when the child got up in the morning until he/she met up with the researchers in the schoolyard. The researchers filmed throughout the day, and the parents were to continue when they picked the child up from the afterschool centre. One of the reasons the parents recorded their own children was the problem of getting access to the home. Another reason was that parents were assumed to be less ‘disturbing’ to their children’s everyday activities.

In both projects, informed consent was obtained from the children and their parents. All participants have been given pseudonyms. Excerpts from the video recordings have been transcribed according to a modified version of conversation analysis (see Appendix 1). The transcriptions from the LINT project have been translated into English.

While working with the data, several challenges and dilemmas arose regarding questions of what kind of data were created and how they could be used. The reason for focusing on two different data-gathering techniques in two different projects is that they both involve community members’ use of audio-visual technology. Here, the family is seen as a community of practice of which parents and children are members (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991). In the projects, these members participate in different ways in the work of documenting their own family’s practices. The main difference is that in one case the children are documenting their own point of view, while in the other case the adults are documenting the children. This difference is not discussed in this paper.

### **Children documenting their home**

I will start by looking at how children, aged 7–11 years, document their home, so-called home tours. Some of the children gave detailed descriptions of different rooms in the house, what they do or used to do there and the people in the room, and some even described family pictures that were included in the recordings (Aarsand, 2011). Other children more or less walked through the house and briefly told the viewer which room they had entered. The children even edited while they were recording, turning the camera on and off as they moved from one place to the other. Thereby, they restricted their narrative to selected rooms and objects in their house. Some walked through the house alone while others walked with their parents or older siblings, who helped them with the task of recording their home.

From the research project's point of view, it could be seen as problematic that the children differed so much in how they interpreted the task of conducting home tours. The differences in solving the task raise the question of whether or not the same phenomenon is documented in the data. The diversity of data demands reflexivity concerning how data can be used, what questions can be asked, and how data can be analysed.

In Excerpt 1a we meet Alan and his sister Pamela. Alan turns the video camera on and starts talking right away. Two material aspects seem to have consequences for what is produced in these home tours: first, the distinction between the camera and the child who is recording; and second, the distinction between the 'reporter' and others present in the room. When we enter the excerpt, Alan has just switched on the camera.

### Excerpt 1a

Participants: Alan (9), Pamela (12) and the camera

- |    |      |   |
|----|------|---|
| 1  | Alan | This is Jeremy watching TV (2) this is Pamela                 |
| 2  |      | helping me with the recording. ((In the living Room))         |
| 3  |      | (7)   |
| 4  |      | This is the path to the bathroom to the kitchen.              |
| 5  |      | (2)   |
| 6  |      | This is the cabinet with food ((opens the door and films it)) |
| 7  |      | (2)   |
| 8  |      | and cereal.   |
| 9  |      | (4) ((closes the doors and moves to the bathroom))            |
| 10 |      | This is the bathroom.   |
| 11 |      | (3)   |

Alan starts by presenting the people in the room and what they are doing – his older siblings Jeremy, watching TV, and Pamela, helping him with the recording. At this moment, the camera and the imagined audience are made actors to whom Alan addresses his audio-visual report. Then, he walks from the living room into the kitchen. Here, he directs the camera at the bathroom while he tells us that this is the path from the bathroom to the kitchen (Line 4). He then directs the camera at a cabinet that is in the kitchen but outside the bathroom, opens the doors and shoots the inside of the cabinet and tells us a few things that can be seen here (Lines 6–8). When we watch the recordings this movement goes fast, which makes it hard to see what is in the cabinet. As a viewer, one gets the impression that to Alan, this part of the recording is uninteresting. It is important to note that the home tour is yet another adult-initiated task given to the child that he/she is expected to solve.

From the cabinet Alan goes into the bathroom, where he turns the camera 180 degrees. When the shower comes into focus, he tells us that it is small but that he likes it. Alan's way of displaying his home is common to many children in the CELF project. They enter a room and tell us where we are and perhaps something about what we see in the room. If we look at the excerpt, one can ask what kind of information we get from this home tour. At first glance, the information from Alan seems to be something we could have easily obtained from studying the blueprint of the house, for

instance, where different rooms are placed in relation to each other and how to enter them. But there is one main difference: Alan presents the house in the order he wants, and tells us what he feels is important to know about each room. Thus, it could be argued that this is like a ‘documentary’ of the house created by the child, which gives us the viewer’s perspective on how this is experienced.

Later in the home tour Alan’s sister, Pamela, enters the activity and takes an active role in the task of recording. In Excerpt 1b, it can be seen how the home tour turns into a joint activity.

### Excerpt 1b

Participants: Alan (9), Pamela (12) and the camera

- 12 Alan Here’s the shower. It’s a small shower, but I like it.  
 13 (3)  
 14 Pamela ’Cause you fit in it. ((Comes into the bathroom))  
 15 Alan (5) ((walks into the kitchen))  
 16 Here’s the kitchen.  
 17 (1.5)  
 18 Pamela °It’s a small kitchen°  
 19 Alan It’s a small kitchen  
 20 Pamela °I like to make Swedish pancakes and macaroni°  
 21 (2)  
 22 Alan And I and I like to make (0.5) Umh: macaroni and Swedish  
 23 pancakes on the stove.

Alan continues and shows us the shower while he explains that it is small but he still likes it. Then his sister, Pamela, enters the scene and explains that this is because he is so small, ‘Cause you fit in it’ (Line 14). Alan continues his tour, returning to the kitchen: ‘Here’s the kitchen’ (Line 16). Then, Pamela whispers ‘It’s a small kitchen’ (Line 18) to Alan, who repeats this. Pamela develops her, or Alan’s, narrative by whispering to him: ‘I like to make Swedish pancakes and macaroni’. Alan repeats what Pamela said, but changes the order of the words: ‘And I and I like to make (0.5) Umh: macaroni and Swedish pancakes on the stove’ (Lines 22–23). Alan takes a short pause followed by ‘Umh:’, which indicates that he is taking time to think about what he says. The macaroni and Swedish pancakes switch place in the telling, and he adds that this takes place on the stove, which is in the camera’s focus. The narrative is no longer Alan’s story all alone, but rather a co-construction in which the video camera, Alan and his sister are the main actors. Thereby, a children’s perspective is not to be regarded as static or restricted to one human being, but rather as negotiated, co-constructed and displayed with regard to the setting. Thus, the question of whose narrative it is, Alan’s or Pamela’s, is not relevant.

Home tours, or the use of children with video cameras to document aspects of their own lives, can be analysed as documentaries. This kind of data can offer valuable information on how such video narratives are created and what they look like. It even provides valuable information about what children consider important in their homes, and how they distinguish between different rooms and

people. It is also important to keep in mind that the home tour is an adult-initiated activity that comes with instructions on how to do it, which can give reason to question whether or not this can be regarded as a children's perspective.

### Parents documenting their children

The parents in the LINT project solved the task of recording the child's everyday life very differently. Two of the families turned the camera on early in the morning and recorded the focus children until they arrived at school, and started again when the parents met the children at the school gate, while the other two families were more selective in what they recorded in that they kept turning the camera on and off. This resulted in many short clips from the day, which can be seen in contrast to the first two families, who made a running film throughout the day. The parents also handled the co-researcher role differently. In two of the families, the parents were eager to get most of the family members in the shot when recording everyday activities like dinner and watching TV. In the other two families the focus was placed on the target child, which often resulted in recordings in which adults and other children were partly or fully out of sight. A pattern that was seen in all the families was the practice of placing the camera on a stand, either while the parents participated in the activity themselves or, for instance, while the children played computer games. This sometimes resulted in recordings in which the children left the focus of the camera, giving clips in which they could only be heard or, in the worst case, were gone as long as 40 minutes. There is also an example of a father who fell asleep while reading to his child in the evening; the camera recorded the two of them sleeping for more than two hours.

With regard to the quality of the data, two critical aspects will be discussed. The first concerns what has been called *field relations* (e.g. Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), in this project the relationship between the co-researcher and the child. The second deals with how and what type of data are produced.

#### *Field relations*

Even members of communities who work as co-researchers have to handle relations with members who are part of the study. According to Hammersley & Atkinson (1983), one can distinguish between *entry* and *access* when doing fieldwork. Entry means that as a researcher one is allowed to visit the practice one is studying, for instance that one is allowed to be physically present in the family. Having access means more than being present; it means that one is even allowed to record, take notes, ask questions and so on when participants talk and do things that are not necessarily official, for instance siblings gossiping about friends. To gain access to activities, the researcher needs to continually negotiate (Aarsand & Forsberg, 2010).

Being a member of a community does not necessarily mean that one has access to all activities that take place there. Entry and access are discussed when researchers study communities or practices they are not familiar with, like classroom activities, and even communities in other cultures. In the next excerpt, I will look at what happens when the father starts recording the child, Maja, for the first time. He has just picked Maja up from the afterschool centre. At school and the afterschool centre, the researcher has followed Maja throughout the day and now her father is about to continue the recording. He has just turned the video camera on, and walks side by side with Maja to the car. In the recording, the wind can be heard a great deal so the quality of the audio is rather poor.

## Excerpt 2

Participants: Maja (7), Father and the camera

- 1 Father Maja, do you think there'll be anything since the wind is blowing?  
 2 Maja No never ever ((walking fast, looking straight ahead))  
 3 Father Hm you said never ever  
 4 Maja I xxx (.) that was stupid  
 5 Father I was talking to Pål and told him that this is our first day  
 6 (0.5)  
 7 so we start to record today (.) now when you're leaving school  
 8 (19) ((walks fast/runs through the gate and to the car))  
 9 Father Do you need help with the seatbelt?  
 10 (2)



- 11 Maja Yes please (.) not ((the recording stops))

The father starts the sequence by asking Maja how she thinks the recording will be since there is a strong wind (Line 1). Thereby, he presumes that she knows the consequences of recording outdoors when it is windy, and that she agrees to being recorded. Maja answers in an 'angry' tone, 'No' and that there will 'never ever' (Line 2) be anything. Using the words 'no' and 'never ever' can be seen as a way of telling her father she is not pleased to see him with the video camera. Moreover, she does not agree to being videotaped by her father and even indicates that this will not happen now or in the future.

It could be argued that when the father uses the university's video camera in this setting, he turns into someone else. He is not the usual father who picks her up at the afterschool centre, but is rather someone who is documenting her everyday life. He tells Maja he has been talking to one of the researchers, Pål, in the schoolyard. In fact, he has reported to Pål that they have officially started the recording they both know will last a week. Thereby, he also tells Maja that the recordings are not being done for personal reasons. Maja does not respond to her father's comments, which causes him to offer a reminder and further explanation, 'so we start to record today (.) now when you're leaving school' (Line 7). Maja's fast walking in front of the camera but without comment demonstrates that she disapproves of the arrangement. The question of gaining access to Maja's experience of her day through talk with her father seems problematic at this point. As can be seen,

she even turns her body and gaze away from the camera simultaneously as she holds her hands in front of her face (Lines 9–11). The father’s attempts to establish the activity of ‘being as usual’ fails. Thereby, he is (they are) not able to document Maja’s daily routines.

The purpose of the recording is to let researchers access Maja’s life outside educational institutions. Put differently, her everyday life is turned into a phenomenon that the father is to document on behalf of a group of researchers, using a video recorder from the university. This could be seen as a boundary-drawing practice in which the scientific apparatuses, consisting of the camera from the university, the father, the researchers and the practice of recording, create several distinctions that are of importance in understanding the situation. First, it creates a distinction between daughter and father whereby Maja is turned into a research object. Second, it creates a distinction between father and co-researcher, and third, it creates a distinction between being observed in school and being observed out of school. The fieldwork changes character since the scientific apparatus is slightly different out of school, with Maja’s father now participating. But more important, the video recordings are no longer a joint project.

The distinction between the co-researcher and Maja is sustained by the fact that Maja walks quickly in front of her father straight to the car. She gets in the car, places herself in the seat and holds her hands in front of her face (Lines 8–11). She refuses to look at him or the camera, and avoids talking to him. When they drive home, she bends forward and thereby stays out of the camera’s sight. These physical acts clearly signal that she does not want to be filmed, and the father has problems accessing his daughter’s experiences of the day. Compared with video recordings later that week, this way of interacting is unusual for Maja and her father. It can be mentioned that when we recorded her at school and at the leisure centre, we never experienced problems like these.

Negotiating access to peoples’ practices creates ethical dilemmas. It has been argued that informed consent is an ongoing practice that is (re)negotiated in all meetings in the field (Aarsand & Forsberg, 2009). Both Maja and her parents have signed the papers in which they agreed to participate in the project. As a member of the family, the father knows his daughter and their routines. In addition, he is the adult in this family relationship, which puts him in a particular position with certain rights and obligations regarding his child. As a researcher, one would likely have stopped the recordings when the child resisted. This creates new dilemmas and questions that we as social researchers have to deal with when using participants as co-researchers. Questions that arise are: Can researchers delegate the negotiation of informed consent to participants who carry out part of the fieldwork? And if so, how can this delegation be done in order to ensure that research ethical standards are followed?

### *Staging everyday activities*

The use of family members as co-researchers in their own family can be problematic with regard to ethnographic challenges such as access and ethics. Another challenge is to get data that allow the researchers to answer the research questions. Parents are actors who are usually part of the family practices, but when they are turned into co-researchers the social dynamic in the family changes because they take the position of an observer. In the next excerpt, we meet Maja and her father in their backyard.

### **Excerpt 3**

Participants: Maja (7), Father and the camera

- 1 Maja Dad  
 2 Father Ye:ah  
 3 Maja Is it on?  
 4 Father The camera's on right now  
 5 (2)  
 6 Maja May may may may may I may I may I ma::y I?  
 7 Father Do you want to do some tricks?  
 8 Maja Ye::ah it's fun it's not fun to fall on your head  
 9 Father It's quite windy so you have to talk loud (.) so I can  
 10 hear you  
 11 Maja Okay ((starts swinging)) DO YOU HEAR ME NOW?  
 12 Father I hear you very well right now  
 13 Maja GOOD

As mentioned above, the co-researcher is the combination of the father and the video camera. Maja is standing next to the swings and looking at her father, who is handling the camera, when she asks if it is on. The father assures her that it is on (Line 4), which in turn is followed by Maja asking if she can do some tricks in front of the camera. The tricks are activities that involve the camera, and in addition, it has to be turned on. Put differently, the tricks are dependent on an audience and the father is not enough.

The father enters the position of a co-researcher who is securing good recordings. He even turns their attention to how the video camera works when it is windy to make sure Maja is in focus (Lines 9–10). In short, to ensure that everything gets taped, he encourages Maja to talk loudly. This also indicates that he is not a researcher as such, who most likely would have made the preparations and kept the worries to him/herself while working on getting as good a recording as possible. Maja answers 'Okay' in her usual way of talking before raising her voice and saying 'DO YOU HEAR ME NOW' (Line 11). Thereby, she makes sure she is heard as well as seen on the tape. Moreover, the recording of the trick is turned into a joint activity in which staging the trick in front of a video camera, rather than the trick itself, is the main activity. As a researcher with interest in children's everyday activities and practices, I find it problematic when the activities are framed as performances in front of a camera because the activity is something extraordinary.

Excerpt 3 shows how the co-researcher is part of the group he/she is recording. If the purpose is to observe naturally occurring events and activities, the use of members of the community seems to be a solution that demands that they work on downgrading their identity as members. In the excerpt above, it can be seen how Maja turns to her father with questions – an interactional pattern whereby the members use mundane identities such as father and daughter. Simultaneously, the father accomplishes the task of being a co-researcher documenting his daughter's everyday life outside educational institutions. This can be seen as an example of how the co-researcher and the daughter set up scenes in front of the video camera, and of how everyday activities run the risk of turning into something else (see also Aarsand & Forsberg, 2010; Sparrman, 2005). When researchers use members of communities, like parents in families, as co-researchers it is important to keep in mind that they are not professional researchers but rather parts of the practices they are observing.

## Critical aspects of practice-reported data

The use of members of communities of practices as co-researchers to document everyday life is based on the idea that they know the practices they are part of, and that they are able to produce relevant data for researchers (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). In this article, I have used examples from video recordings in families, but similar challenges are likely to be present in other institutions such as preschool and school.

Two central aspects of the research process will be discussed with attention to critical aspects that are related to the quality of such data. This will be discussed first, with focus on the production of data, and second, with focus on dealing with data.

### Producing data

How are data produced? In both projects, the participants were given relatively detailed instructions concerning how and what to record. However, members of communities as co-researchers face the same kind of problems that researchers do. From what angle is the activity, room, or object to be filmed? When do I use a close-up? Who and what is important to get on film? When is it important to record? Lately, questions like these have been discussed among researchers and the common conclusion is that what is recorded and how this is done have consequences on what kind of analysis can be conducted (Luff & Heat, 2012). Therefore, decisions must be taken in the field based on research questions and interest. When video cameras are placed in the hands of members of the community of practice, we also give them the power to choose how to record children's activities, as well as what to record. The risk is that we as researchers do not know how or why these choices have been made, or put differently, what distinctions are made within the activity.

A similar but still different aspect of handling the camera was noted when parents recorded at home. In the examples, the recording was in addition to everything else they usually had to do. The result was that from time to time the camera did not follow the target child but was instead placed in one position in one place, on a stand. This means that one gets only a partial view of the situation and cannot control the camera. For instance, children moving within the room risked leaving the camera angle, and children left the room and returned several minutes later while the camera was placed there the entire time. In short, making good video recordings for research is more than just being able to handle a video camera.

Making video recordings as a co-researcher involves several technical issues that have to be solved, but it also involves questions concerning identities. When the father turns on the video recorder while talking about the researchers in the schoolyard, he changes his identity position from father to co-researcher. The scientific apparatus constitutes the phenomenon of the girl's everyday life and the researcher, but it does not produce a father. At the same time, the practice is not constant in that the father balances his two identities of father and co-researcher by doing fatherly things like asking questions about her day and being addressed as Dad by his daughter while he is recording. As an adult in a family, one cannot escape being a parent simultaneously as one records one's child's everyday life in the family. Once again, the video recording is added to other tasks and activities the parent has to solve as a member of the family, which in turn has implications on the recording. The situation is changed radically, because the father is now less available as a co-researcher. In addition, as a co-researcher one may not have access to the same activities one does as a parent. This can be also described as the distinction between two kinds of relationship: that between father and daughter

versus that between co-researcher and object of study. Anthropologists have argued that there are certain problems involved with being *too familiar* with communities and the practices being studied (e.g. Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). The main problem of going native is that the researcher starts to take for granted several activities and their function, which means that they no longer notice them or their importance within these practices. When it comes to family members documenting family members and their own lives, there is obviously a risk that what is recorded is systematically other activities rather than the ordinariness of everyday life.

The interaction between the child and the scientific apparatus shows that there are negotiations about how to use video cameras and what to use them for when constructing the everyday lives of children. The phenomenon is adjusted to the video recorder, and to the co-researcher's way of handling the activity. The child checks whether the camera is on, the co-researcher makes sure the child acts in a way that can be fully captured by the video recordings. As such, it could be argued that an awareness of the everyday life is produced. A similar awareness can be seen in the home tours in which the focus child adjusts to and navigates the camera. In Excerpt 2 we saw how the child, together with the camera, creates an audio-visual narrative, and how the sister in the family helps the target child in his construction of the home. Moreover, awareness is directed at the result of the recordings.

Another important dimension of working in the field is the issue of research ethics. Episodes like we saw in Excerpt 2, when the child strongly signalled that she did not want to participate in the video recordings, show that it may be hard to stop recording when the two participants, as a common decision, have decided to participate in the study. If consent is continually negotiated in the meeting between co-researcher and child, it is obvious that the child does not approve of his/her participation in the situation. As a researcher, one is responsible for handling ethical dilemmas; if this is not possible, one may have to leave the field. As a parent, and a member of the family, one does not run the risk of being 'thrown out' of the field since there are other rules and ethical guidelines that govern the relationship between parent and child. In the LINT project, we tried to ensure that the participants were comfortable being filmed by asking them whether there was something they wanted to remove from the camera before giving it to us. In the light of recordings and episodes like Excerpt 2, it seems important to put more effort into discussing and showing ethical dilemmas that members may face when recording practices and activities. This concerns adults as well as children.

## Dealing with data

How do we see and understand data produced by members of families? Are data considered part of a larger data corpus, or do they stand on their own, which means that they can be analysed in line with other kinds of data produced by researchers? The home tours can be seen as one way of getting children's perspectives on how they see and understand different parts of their home and the practices they relate to these places. As such, they could be seen as a complement to the video recordings of everyday life in the families and the interviews conducted by the researchers; these data add something to the other data. But, the question is: What kind of contribution do we actually get when participants produce the data? What do the recordings seen in Excerpt 1 and 2 tell us about children's everyday practices? A result of the home tours as well as the parents as co-researchers is the huge variance with regard to how long the recordings are (time), what they recorded, when it was recorded and how it was done. These variances in how, where, when and what is produced indicate a lack of consistency across sites (families). Then, it becomes difficult or

even impossible to compare patterns within things like social interaction, routines and identities in families.

A slightly different, but fruitful, approach to the use of members of communities as co-researchers is to treat, in this case, the video recordings as a socio-cultural practice that gives us information about how children and adults interact with each other while documenting parts of their everyday lives. The home tours can principally be understood in similar ways as children's drawings, as we were able to see both the production and the final product. Parents' recordings of children may give us insight into how adults understand and handle children, and their practices at home.

Video recordings being done by participants when researchers are not present raises questions, such as how to understand these data with regard to the practice in which they are situated. This raises the question of *context*. That the researcher was not present when the recordings were produced, in addition to the fact that the recordings differ significantly, make it important to reflect on what is made relevant as context in the recordings and how this is done. This does not mean that context is considered static with regard to certain background variables; it is rather seen as dynamic and as existing in a mutual relationship with talk and other activities (cf. Duranti & Goodwin, 1992). But if we only get the talk and a restricted visual presentation of the practices, it is difficult to understand how the different activities are related to the practice. For instance, studying children playing video games without knowing the game they are playing, and with restricted images from the screen, makes it hard to understand the children's practice of gaming in the family. People who are members of a community take certain things for granted, but these are aspects that may have relevance for understanding the activity. Barad's (2007) notion of intra-action underlines that distinctions like text-context, figure-background and researcher-informant are outcomes of situated activities. This means that we together, as co-researchers and researchers, produce phenomena as well as context. As knowledge producers we need to be able to show what, how and why data and knowledge are produced. One aspect that has to be discussed is how different scientific apparatuses produce different phenomena. As a researcher with theories, methods, video cameras and colleagues, one produces different phenomena than a member of a community, adult or child, who is equipped with instructions, video camera, identities and relations within the community. What is constituted as phenomena during the production of data have consequences on what can be studied and how this can be done. In sum, it is important to stress that even in projects in which participants are used as co-researchers, or producers of empirical material, the researchers are the professional party and are thereby responsible for all aspects of the study.

## Appendix 1: Transcript conventions

Symbol	Meaning
?	Inquiring intonation
=	Contiguous utterances
:	Prolongation of preceding vowel
[...]	Lines left out
(2)	Pause 2 seconds
(.)	Pause shorter than 0.2 second
Xxx	Something was said but the transcriber could not discern its content.
Wo rd	The bracket indicates the onset of overlapping speech.
<u>Word</u>	Underlined means stressed word (or part of it).
WORD	Loud speech
°Word°	Quiet speech
((laughing))	Comments made by the researcher
>Word<	Embeds faster speech than surrounding speech
Hehe	Laughter

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