The Apple of the Eye: Parents' Use of Webcams in a Danish Day Nursery*

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Abstract

Via webcams parents can now, from their place of work, see what happens in the day nursery of their child. The focus of this paper is why Danish parents of children, aged 0-6, use webcams, what they use them for and why some parents refuse using the webcams. The conclusions rest on a qualitative analysis of 3 of 11 interviewed parents. It is concluded that control is an important, but surely not the only motive behind parents' use of this sort of CCTV. It's also concluded that a substantial number of needs are connected to the use. Most prevailing are security needs, needs of social contact and of knowledge. The use of webcams has a clear relation to the parent's handling of his parenting, his relationship to the day-care institution and his situation at work, his attitude towards the use of webcams and technical and practical matters. It is connected with tendencies of the radicalized modernity of today and with parents' different ways and possibilities of handling these tendencies.

Subject and Background

When Ulla came into the office, she turned on the computer. She logged on to the homepage of the nursery and then into the room of the child group that her daughter is attending, to see if her daughter was there. She does that every morning, when she starts work. For once she could see Ulrikke:

> "..and there I could see that she was playing. It was as if she was taking something and putting it into this carton. It actually looked like the carton some toy had come in. And then she picked it up again and went to the nursery teacher…and sort of tugged at him. I remember I kept watching it, since I had to sort of see…Because the nursery teacher was sitting doing something with

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four other children. I don't know if they were working with pearls or something like that. I've got no idea. And the nursery teacher then turned the chair towards Ulrikke and sort of answered her or reacted to her coming. And I just noticed that he didn't just reject her, because he was playing with those other children. Then Ulrikke went back, and she picked up this carton from the floor and put something into it. I couldn't see what it was. And I kept watching. (…) Then she disappeared from camera angle and I logged on to the room that belongs to the other nursery children. The door between the two rooms is open (…) But you need to write your password again to do this...And when I had done that, she was gone. Then I logged on to Ulrikke's group. You don't need a password then. And there she was again. It often happens that she isn't in the camera angle, when I am logging on, so when I can see her, I often keep watching until she runs out of the field of view. But in the end I logged off, since I had to work." (Jørgensen, 2001: 1)

Webcams in nurseries and pre-schools have existed in the United States of America since at least 1996, where companies such as WatchMeGrow and Kindercam have offered parents the possibility to watch the activities in the nursery or pre-school of their child 'live' while they are at work (Franklin, 2000). In year 2000 webcams existed in around 1% of all 102,000 nurseries and pre-schools in the USA (Carter, 2001). A few institutions with children up to the age of 12 also offer the webcam possibility according to one source (Franklin, 2000). The phenomenon has now spread to Europe, where I've found webcams in at least the United Kingdom and Denmark[2].

In Denmark the first nursery with webcams opened in 1998. It's a nursery for children of the age of 0-6. In the following the term nursery is referred to as a day-care possibility for children of this age. The opening of the nursery 'Dronning Olga' (Queen Olga in English) was followed by a lively public debate in the media. In general it was agreed that the phenomenon can be related to surveillance in a panoptic sense (see for instance Information, 11.12.1998; Wiborg, 1999; Viemose, 1998)[3]. However this was a benign panopticon, not the undemocratic and evil form found in George Orwell's novel '1984', a protectional surveillance to care for the *child* – a sort of 'big mother' surveillance (Information, 11.12.1998). Inspired by Foucault (1994: 193, 201) one could argue that surveillance in modernity always has played an important role in the concept 'institution'. Nursery teachers have always monitored children in nurseries and nurses patients in hospitals. So is there actually anything definitely new about these webcams?

In the debate the use of web cams was also connected to parents' fear of paedophiles (see for instance Politiken, 7.2.1999) and their increasing lack of confidence in the nursery teachers (Information, 11.12.1998). Some argued that the presence of webcams would alienate and humiliate the children (Viemose, 1998: 3-4) and that the children will get used to a surveillance society and feel unsafe, when they are *not* under surveillance (Information, 11.12.1998).

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[2] e.g.: http://www.cybertots.co.uk

[3] Information and Politiken are Danish newspapers.

The owners of the Danish nursery, a private non-profit Foundation called Børn og Unge Fonden (the Foundation for Children and Youngsters) didn't understand the scepticism. For them the purpose of the webcams is simply to show all the good work that is done in the nursery (Wetterstein, 1999: 13), and the chairman Johnny Wetterstein Hansen stated that parents are *not* monitoring children and nursery teachers. The webcams aren't used for surveillance (Viemose, 1998: 3-4).

In this paper I'm trying to empirically explore and discuss some of the claims made in the debate and to look at the phenomenon with bright new eyes. *Are* webcams used by the parents as a tool for disciplining or self-disciplining the children and nursery teachers? Are webcams used because of fear of paedophiles among the staff? Is what happens in the nursery surveillance or must one use another word? More precisely, I want to investigate the following:

1. Why do parents in the Danish nursery use webcams?
2. What do they use the webcams for?
3. Why do some of the parents partly or totally refuse using the webcams?[4]

A central element of this project is that it is based on empirical research, which I've carried out, since a lot of the literature on surveillance is purely theoretical. It's important to discuss surveillance in the specific setting, in which it takes place, since the motives and effects of surveillance in a train or in a nursery are not necessarily the same. In the public debate, only one motive was claimed to lay behind the use; control (to protect the child and discipline and self-discipline teachers). I wanted to find out whether other motives (also) lay behind the use of webcams? Webcam use in nurseries no longer exist in Denmark, since Queen Olga and another nursery owned by the Foundation also offering webcams closed down in December 2002 because of financial problems (Hagemann, 2003). However it's a growing industry in Anglo-American countries and I'll argue that they will return to Denmark sooner or later since this study shows that they can at least temporarily fulfil some needs of parents *in a way in which conflicts with nursery teachers and children are avoided.* Webcams in nurseries are just one of many modern technologies, which over the next few years might change the relationship between children and parents (and parents and nursery teachers). The case is a symbol of our time[5].

To investigate why parents use webcams I've constructed a model of action, which I believe can be used when empirically investigating reasons for other kinds of surveillance, too, was developed. The model also helped pointing out, how the use is connected to general tendencies of a radicalized modernity.

This paper is built on a dissertation about the subject that I finished in December 2001. At the time of finishing the dissertation I hadn't found other research projects about the subject in spite

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[4] In the dissertation I also investigated how much and how often the webcams are used and whether particular kinds of parents use the webcams the most. Because of the limitation of the length of this paper the results of the questionnaire survey isn't reported here. Please see Jørgensen (2001: 13-22).

[5] Other examples on such technologies are: the mobile phone (where in some cases the parent gets a message if the child moves away from a certain area); the baby alarm; chip cards that allow the parent to check what sort of food the child has bought today.

of a thorough research. According to sociologist Kim Rasmussen (2003: 65) there still hasn't been any other research projects about the use of webcams in nurseries[6].

Webcams in the Danish nursery

The following descriptions of the webcams in Queen Olga Nursery are based on observations and talks with members of the Foundation and the staff during my visits to the nursery. The webcams in Queen Olga's take colour photos without sound, which are broadcasted on the internet. How quickly the photos are updated on the parent's computer depends on how fast the computer and internet connections are. Using a fast connection the photos will be updated every second or third second. The quality of the photos is not too good. If the child is sitting close to the camera, the parents will be able to see the facial expressions of the child. If the child is sitting at the other end of the room, this is not possible. The cameras cover between one third and half of the rooms in which they are placed. There are five webcams in Queen Olga. One in a play room of each child group and one in the hall. The cameras are visible, but discretely placed. Only parents of children in Queen Olga, the staff and members of the Foundation have access to the webcams. The password often changes. Children can move from room to room because the members of the Foundation believe it's a good idea that the children themselves can decide, which activities to take part in (Wetterstein, 1999: 2). On the homepage of the first CCTV provider for nurseries you can get a demonstration of what you can see when using a webcam in a nursery[7].

Webcam use regarded as an action

An accidental day, an accidental place. A father sits down in front of his computer and logs on to Queens Olga's homepage, writes his password, watches the activities in the nursery for a couple of minutes and logs off again. When parents use the webcams they perform an *action*. Therefore, the concept 'action' has a central meaning in this paper and focus lies on the characteristics of and reasons for this act.

When one wants to understand why a father (or mother) chooses to use or not use the webcams one must ideally map the *life conditions* of the father, the conscious and not conscious *negotiations* (in other words the mutual influence) that goes on between the father and the surrounding world, and the conscious and not conscious negotiations and *processes inside* the father himself (inspired by Bäck-Wiklund, 1997: 86). These life conditions define a room of possibilities for the father restricting the possibilities for action. The life conditions that I assume have an impact on the use of webcams are of a biological, material, social and cultural kind[8].

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[6] Rasmussen (2003) himself has just investigated Danish parents' attitudes towards CCTV in nurseries.

[7] http://www.watchmegrow.com 20.11.2003

[8] Concerning the negotiations with the surrounding world I investigate how the parent handles his life conditions, not how his needs, attitudes etc. *are* actually being negotiated.

The life conditions of the individual (including the physiological and psychological capacities of the person) and the individual's interpretation of these conditions manifest themselves in some partly socially constructed *needs.* Inspired by humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow I understand needs as *"a sort of conceptual constructs"* (Maslow in Madsen, 1981: 35)[9]. Therefore, we cannot determine how many there are and which categories the different needs belong to, and this is why Maslow only makes a rough categorization of the needs. A categorization that I have nevertheless found quite usable analysing reasons for parents' use of webcams. According to Madsen (1981: 36, 37-40) Maslow splits up the needs into five categories: The *physiological needs* are the needs of food, water, sex, protection against heath and so forth. The *needs of security* are the needs of security, safety and protection and for structure, order, regularity etc. The *needs of contact* are, for instance, needs of love, friendship and the feeling of belongingness to one or more group. The *needs of self-assertion* are e.g. needs of prestige and performing well. The *needs of personal development* are for example the needs of realising the possibilities (including abilities) one has and the need of knowledge.

The needs of security need a further explanation, since this analysis required a more exact definition of this sort of need and the inclusion of an additional one. Unfortunately, security is used as a sub as well as a main category because of the lack of a more precise word. I understand the need of security as a need of *financial security*. Such as a need to know that you won't lose your job tomorrow because of material or spiritual changes in values. The need of *(bodily) safety* I understand as a need to sense that no dangers threaten the personal integrity and physiological safety of yourself or your loved ones. The need of protection (mentioned by Maslow) is therefore included in this sub-category. I believe a need of *mental certainty* exists too. A need to know that the things which are considered good and bad today, will be considered good and bad 'tomorrow', too. A need to know that what you are doing is the right thing.

Inspired by psychologist A.N. Leontjew I believe that it isn't the needs in themselves, as inner conditions, that govern the action[10]. What guides the action is the *motive.* A need, which has found an object that, can fulfil the need (Leontjew, 1983: 91,197,200). In my interpretation an example of a motive is a wish for insight into the behaviour of one's child (which can fulfil the need of knowledge etc.). Often the motives aren't conscious for us while we perform an action, but might reach a conscious layer, when we consider what we have done. But even when the motives aren't conscious for us, they find a psychological reflection in the emotions (Leontjew 1983: 208-213); emotions that can easily be reported by the parents. I will claim that these *emotions* and the cognitive state of the parents before, during and after the action 'logging on to the webcams' can tell quite a lot about which exact motives and needs that are underlying the action.

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[9] I've translated all quotations into English myself.

[10] Partly because the needs in themselves aren't directed towards a specific 'object' that can fulfil the needs, partly because they, to a large extent, are produced. As already explained some culturally and individually fixed life conditions lie behind the needs (*ibid.*).

When the mother is worried about her child (as illustrated in *Figure 1*, overleaf), and is considering whether the child is okay, and we know that she is using the webcams, it can make it probable, that this mother is using the webcams, because she has a need of safety and a motive of monitoring the condition of her child.

Model of action	Simplified exemplification
Life conditions, inter- and intrapersonal 'negotiations' ⇓⇓	Mother of a 1-year-old nursery child. Has read that it damages a small child being separated from its mother ⇓⇓
Need as an inner condition ⇓⇓	Need for safety ⇓⇓
Emotional and cognitive state of mind ⇓⇓	Feeling fear. Considering whether the child is okay? ⇓⇓
Motive (a need which has met its object) ⇓⇓ Goal ⇓⇓	Hidden or explicit motive of evaluating the state of mind of the child ⇓⇓ Watching the child through the webcams ⇓⇓
Action ⇓⇓	Using the webcams ⇓⇓
Smaller actions each containing their goals ⇓⇓⇓	Getting hold of a password etc. ⇓⇓⇓
Operations (automated) ⇓⇓⇓⇓	Turning on the computer, logging on the webcams etc. ⇓⇓⇓⇓
Emotional effect ⇓⇓	Being easy in ones mind, feeling safe ⇓⇓
Rational evaluation ⇓⇓	That was an easy to find out whether the child is okay ⇓⇓
Need extinguished (at least for a while) ⇓⇓	Safety achieved for a while ⇓⇓
(New) need	?

Figure 1: *Model of action and simplified exemplification*

A motive determines a range of *goals* given by the objective circumstances (Leontjew 1983: 110-111). Fulfilling a motive of controlling e.g. the emotional condition of one's child to gain safety can sometimes be reached by using *other strategies* than CCTV, e.g. calling the nursery. But first of all webcams provide a possibility of control, where you don't risk conflicts with children or nursery teachers, the behaviour of your child isn't affected by your 'presence' since at least the small child isn't aware that you can monitor him or her from your work. Secondly, some parents don't have the possibility of e.g. talking to a nursery teacher who knows how the child has been doing during the day when the parents picks up the child (because of long working hours etc.).

To reach your goal and thereby realise your motive(s) and need(s) you have to act. As illustrated in *Figure 1* this action can be separated into *smaller actions* each containing there own *smaller goal*. The smaller acts can again be split into *operations*. The latter often being automated (Leontjew, 1983: 49,109). After the performance of the needs and motives emotions arise "reflecting the relationship between the motives (needs) and the [possible] fortunate realisation (...) of the activity of the subject corresponding to these needs and motives" (Leontjew, 1983: 205).

During interviews with parents I focused on pinning down the goals, motives, needs and emotional conditions connected to their use of webcams after which I could begin explaining *why* these needs and motives were *unfulfilled* and *why* webcams were used as a strategy to fulfil them.

Interviews with parents showed, that the webcams are especially used to fulfil needs of safety and structure and order (security needs), of love, the feeling of belongingness and friendship (needs of social contact), of knowledge and understanding (needs of personal development) and to a lesser extent needs of prestige (needs of self-assertion) and physical and mental recharging (physiological needs). Feelings of missing the child, bad conscience and fear, but also of alertness and the joy of expectation are prevalent before logging on and the emotional effects of the use are sometimes joy or a feeling of trust. But when what the mother sees through the webcams doesn't live up to her expectations, and the motive of the mother isn't satisfied feelings of missing the child, of 'depression', fear, disgust or jealousy arise or are intensified.

Interviewing the parents and analysing the interviews

During the spring and summer of 2000 I interviewed 11 parents of children in Queen Olga's about their use or lack of use of the webcams. Seven mothers and four fathers. I didn't select the parents, but simply interviewed all parents who had agreed to participate in an interview. Luckily enough I got quite a broad selection of types of users and parents[11]. Still it's reasonable to believe that certain groups of parents from the nursery aren't represented. In my sample parents who feel ashamed of using the webcams or are without much energy in their everyday life may be unrepresented. Parents were recruited through a questionnaire survey.

The interviews lasted about two hours. They were semi-structured and the themes were:

1. Description of a specific day without and if possible with the use of webcams (including questions about emotions, motives and needs connected to the use and other occurrences during the day).
2. Comparison of this day with a normal day.

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[11] Parents of children of all ages and both sexes, daily, weekly and monthly users, parents not using the webcams anymore or never having used the webcams were represented. I interviewed parents working full-time, part-time and not working at all, and single mothers and single fathers as well as married parents. I also interviewed parents with part-time as well as full-time access to the webcam possibility.

3. The child's and parent's relation to the institution.
4. The general use of and attitude towards webcams etc.
5. Parent's thoughts about childhood and parenting today.

Following a method inspired by Norwegian Psychologist Hanne Haavind (1987) the parents and I thoroughly and chronologically went through what had happened during one or two specific days to increase the reliability of the answers and to find out whether specific occurrences on this day can help explain the use.

All 11 interviews were transcribed, and this article draws extensively on three of the interviews: Two extreme cases and one case in between. The first case is *Ulla*. She is the parent among the 11 using the webcams the most. She is using them 4-5 times a day. Ulla is a lone parent and has only one child. A daughter aged three. The second extreme case is *Mads*. He has two sons attending Queen Olga's. One aged three and one aged six. He lives with his wife. The extreme cases were chosen because factors encouraging or impeding the use would be more distinct here. The third case is the father *Niels*. He is married and has a son aged two and a half. Initially, Niels used the webcams up to once an hour, but he hasn't used them in the last six months to a year.

The three cases were analysed in three steps. First, the individuals' own understanding of; how and why they use or don't use the webcams, and what they use them for as wells as their understanding of the other themes in the interviews was mapped. Secondly the use/lack of use was interpreted by the use of the model of action described earlier. This implicated e.g. that for every situation with webcam use that the parents thoroughly had described for me, I mapped which needs, emotional and cognitive states of mind and motives which the parents possessed before and during the log on, and what emotions and thoughts were prevalent after the log on. The latter showed whether the motives and needs connected to the use were fulfilled. To investigate why some of the parents' needs were unfulfilled and webcams used as a strategy to fulfil them, while other parents' needs weren't unfulfilled in the same degree or other strategies were used to fulfil them, I analysed whether the use could be explained by parents' different life-conditions and their different ways of handling/negotiating these conditions. On this step of analysis I also tested some questions which partly arouse from the parents' own understanding of their use, partly from my own sensation of connections after interviewing the parents. The preliminary analysis showed that it was important to examine whether the parents' handling of their parenting and working life, their relationship to the nursery, their attitude towards webcams and technical and practical matters were connected ot the use. I also investigated whether the amount of use varied depending on how long the child had attended the nursery and when some parents partly or totally refused using the webcams, was it the due to that they didn't have the same needs as the freguent users or did they just use alternative strategies? Third step was interpretation by the use of context bound theory. In this way the analysis moves from a phenomenological towards a double hermeneutic approach (Helenius, 1990: 43). The purpose of this method is to allow the subjects' own interpretations and stories access to the field of analysis. During interviews parents had room for bringing up their own explanations for the use, but I started out with some questions and hypotheses since I believe that it's better to partly know your direction instead of claiming to be totally explorative. To avoid being affected by my

pre-understanding *without* being aware of this, I continuously wrote down my pre-understanding of the field and how it developed during the process.

The names, ages, occupation etc. of the persons being interviewed have been anonymized. The parents themselves decided how much information I had to hide. The staff in the nursery and the members of the foundation didn't know who was being interviewed[12].

I've already described needs and motives involved in the webcam use. In the following section, I'll explain the connection to tendencies of society of today.

Radicalized modernity

> In the beginning, when my son started in Queen Olga, I used the webcams (...) to catch a glimpse of my son...That small feeling of guilt that I had, handing over my son every morning. It helped a little (...) that you could see that he was actually doing quite well...he was playing with some of the other children or he was sitting on the lap (...) I didn't watch for a long time, it was just to get the picture of it (Niels) (Jørgensen, 2001:41).

The human being of the western world of today lives in a modernity, which I believe must be characterized as 'radicalized' rather than 'post'. Where the consequences of modernity, using the expression of Anthony Giddens (1997: 3), to a larger extent than in the newly passed modernity are radicalized and universalized. The dynamics of modernity have speeded up. This concerns the separation of time from space, the disembedding of the social systems and the constant reflexive structuring and restructuring (Giddens, 1997: 16-17). This radicalized modernity can be contrasted with a traditional society characterized by close connections between time and space, by collectivism, religiousness, a low degree of reflexivity and therefore a low speed of change.

The analysis shows, that parents' ideals are *still* affected by discourses resembling the reality of the 1950s and traditionality. But their everyday lives resemble the radicalized modernity. This conflict is an important reason for the use of webcams.

Discourses about good parenting and the best childhood

The fragile child – the dangerous detachment

In the 1950s theories regarding the mother as the person being held responsible for the psychological well-being of the child became prevalent. According to sociologist Lynn Jamieson (1998: 27) an emotionally quite intensive relationship between mother and child was considered natural and right. Sociologist Talcott Parsons was the main theoretician spreading the idea that

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[12] In my dissertation the method is described and discussed much more thoroughly (Jørgensen 2001).

the mother is the only person, who can raise a child (Jamieson 1998:45-47)[13]. Psychiatrist and attachment theoretician John Bowlby (1971:14) gave a psychological explanation of the reason that a child needs a stabile attachment to *one* caretaker. If the child is partially deprived a 'mother figure', e.g. staying in the nursery during daytime, he argued, the child will in the short term develop an excessive need of love, anxiety, wishes of revenge and therefore a feeling of guilt. In the long term, this leads to an unstable personality and nervous disorders. The child has difficulties handling the separation from the prime caretaker until it's three years old (Bowlby, 1969: 204-205, 308). These thoughts still inspire encyclopaedias aimed at parents, such as 'Our child' by Penelope Leach (1998).

The competent child and the wholesome effects of nurseries on children
I believe that confidence in the competences of the child and the wholesome effects of nurseries on children lower the inclination to use webcams, because parents then feel less worried. The ideas of the child being competent, able to cope with a multipersonal world, and partly resilient is a newer conception, according to psychologist Dion Sommer (1996:28, 183). Sommer (1996: 77-84) also argues that because of growing individualization greater demands are being put on the individual to profile himself and take part in many different social and cultural settings. Capacities which are actually learned in the nurseries between the children, since the relationship between the children is symmetric, while the relationship between children and grown-ups is asymmetric.

The analysis shows that *in reality* parents are influenced by both discourses of childhood. This makes them even more confused about who should raise the child and how. Webcams are used as a sort of bridge between ideals reflecting tradition and modernity giving the parent a chance of not having to choose between which of the two sets of ideals he should follow. I'll later explain why this makes Ulla and Niels, but not Mads use the webcams.

Tendencies of childhood and parenting in the radicalized modernity

Not only do the contradicting discourses create conflicts in the life of parents – which webcams (and probably other surveillance technologies) help 'relieve'. So do tendencies in the actual society itself.

The changed and growing importance of the child
In the 1950s mothers were not often working. In Denmark in 1998, 54% of children aged 0-2 and 89% of all children aged 3-5 attended nurseries (Ligestillingsrådet, 1999:19). Ulla and Niels both show difficulties accepting the decreasing importance of the family in the socialization of the child. This might be connected to the 'fact' that while the socialization to a larger and larger extent is taking place outside the family, the child becomes more and more important for the personal stability of the parent in a world, which seems strange and inhospitable. The latter is

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[13] This mother centric approach dates, according to Jamieson, back to the period of industrialization and Durkheim's ideas of the necessity of division of labour. Fathers should produce and mothers reproduce (ibid.).

argued by German Sociologists Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 46-55, 68) who also claim that modern tendencies are breaking down the certainty and support the individual used to find in tradition, religion and the local community. Identity is now based on love. But the problem is that the relationship between man and woman stands opposed to the demand of individuality. Marriage becomes a battlefield and breaks down. What remains is the child. "It promises a tie which is more elemental, profound and durable than any other in this society. The more other relationships become interchangeable and revocable, the more a child can become the focus of new hopes – it is the ultimate guarantee of permanence, providing an anchor for one's life" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 73).

Lone mother Ulla, but also Niels although to a lesser extent, demonstrate a very close emotional relationship to their child and feel a sort of pain when the child is away. The following quotation exemplifies Ulla's very strong emotional dependence of her daughter in lack of a partner:

> I saw something some time ago, which made me feel a twinge in the heart. It's the first time I've experienced that while using the webcams." Ulla saw a nursery teacher playing intensively with her daughter. The daughter was running from one end of the room throwing herself into the lap of the teacher again and again. Ulla couldn't see who it was, and therefore she kept monitoring while she was considering: "Who is it that Ulrikke has such an intimate relationship to?" In the end, the nursery teacher rose from the chair and Ulla could see who it was. "It was 'Ute' [Ulla is talking slowly and with a feeling of disgust in her voice] (...) She is reeeaaally nice [ironically]. Not my cup of tea (...) It made me feel a twinge in my heart: 'Has Ulrikke such a good relationship with her?' (...) This shows the advantages and disadvantages of the webcams, they don't only give you good experiences... (Jørgensen, 2001: 63).

The unknown future – the increasing feeling of insecurity, risk and uncertainty

In addition to the increasing emotional importance of the child, parents of today are bombarded with new and often contradictory advice of how to raise their child in the best manner. And the experts have, as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995: 118,128) argue, taken over the power that God previously possessed. So all in all, parents of today therefore have a great love of their child, feel a great responsibility and a great insecurity (or as I would call it uncertainty) (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 109-118).

My analysis shows that webcams function as a tool giving the parent the feeling of protecting the child. But I'll argue that this need of protecting the child (safety) stems from a need of certainty, which can't be realized in the individualized, secularized and de-traditionalized society of today. Parents cannot ensure themselves that the values by which they raise the children are also valid in the future, but they can try to protect the child and thereby realize their *own* need of safety. So I will claim that we see a sort of sublimation of needs from *certainty* to *safety* in the minds of Ulla and Niels!

On the contrary to Ulla and Niels, Mads is very religious and lives in a marriage resembling the traditional. Furthermore, his wife has the closest emotional relationship to and responsibility for the children. This might explain why he seems to have his needs of certainty and safety fulfilled to a much larger extent than the more 'radicalized modern' parents Ulla and Niels, and why he finds it unnecessary to use the webcams.

Three social characters – three sorts of parents

In the classic 'The Lonely Crowd' (first published 1961) David Riesman describes three social characters each of whom are prevailing in a certain type of society. My analysis shows that the type of character of the parent both influences the amount of and motives behind the use of webcams. A social character is "the part of the 'character' which is common to larger social groups (…), and a product of the collective experiences of these groups" (Riesman, 1985: 48).

The *tradition-directed* are led by traditions and seeking conformity by punishing deviant behaviour. The *inner-directed* have from an early age (by parents or others) been inculcated with a set of values and thereby with a sort of 'power'. A power guiding them towards the same aims all their life (Riesman, 1985: 48-58). The *other-directed* are led by the opinions of their surroundings (mass media as well as people they know). Therefore, the goal of the life of such persons changes when the opinions of the surroundings change. The other-directed are therefore very sensitive towards the actions and wishes of others. It's their way of seeking conformity. Everybody is of cause affected by the wishes of others, but only the other-directed let the others rule their life (Riesman, 1985: 64-65).

Contemporary society of today is to a large extent 'other-directed' and no parents can be sure that the values and norms they give to their children are valid. In their despair parents turn to mass media, e.g. to find an answer to how to raise their children (Riesman, 1985: 88). But as we've seen the advice is contradictory and furthermore changes all the time. I believe that the tradition- and the inner-directed possess a fundamental certainty, which the other-directed partly lacks. The other-directed must continuously scan the surroundings for changes in values. As I've argued earlier the uncertainty functions as an inclination to use the webcams and since Ulla resembles the other-directed character this is an important reason for her use.

The more inner- or tradition-directed parents sometimes use the webcams, too, but the inner-directed to reassure themselves that norms are being kept up with in the nursery, and the tradition-directed to assure themselves no deviant behaviour is taking place. They will monitor 'because' of a need of either interior or exterior appearance of order and structure, not because of a need of safety. Mads is extremely inner-directed, his religion guides him, and he trusts that the nursery teachers believe in the same norms as he does himself. He's got an education as nursery teacher himself. While Mads possesses a great deal of certainty he is actually even more than the other-directed risking raising his children after norms and values which aren't useful in the radicalized modernity. But he doesn't feel this himself because of his strong religious belief. Niels is other-directed as well as partly inner- and tradition-directed: tradition-directed because he thinks that it is very important to act in a certain way and inner-directed because he is raising his son after certain norms and values. Other-directed (not according to Riesman, but in my

opinion) because the norms he himself were raised after *actually resemble an other-directed character*; you should yourself be guided by the needs of others.

Motives in play

So tendencies of the time and the differences between parents in their possibilities and ways of handling these tendencies are important when explaining why some parents use webcams as a tool, but which motives for the use of webcams does this lead to?

Gaining insight
Gaining insight is a prevalent motive behind Ulla's and Niels's use of webcams. I define insight as a wish to gain knowledge ideally spoken without judging what you've seen. Ideally spoken because you always, to a certain degree, judge what you see. When I'm using the word insight it is just indicated that the *main motive* was to meet the 'watched' with an open and curious mind.

Building on Giddens (1997: 21-27), but defining his notions in another way, I believe that the everyday life of the western human being of today is marked by a craving for the distant. You might be working in an establishment 2-hours-drive from home. In the afternoon you are chatting on the internet with unknown persons from a far away country or playing golf with people from other towns. All in all taking part in a multiple set of sociotopes (a notion borrowed from Professor in Social Psychology Lars Dencik 1999:246). I define this tendency as disembedding: A crave for the non-domestic, where Giddens (*ibid.*) defines disembedding in a more narrow sense, as solely a splitting of social systems and thereby social relations so these are no longer dependent on the local community and limitations of time and space. I will argue that webcams in nurseries can be regarded as an attempt to combine disembedding with a sort of reembedding. Ulla and Niels use the webcams because of a craving for homeliness and the well known: the child. The webcams make it possible to feel that you are being disembedded and reembedded at the same time[14].

Behind the motive of gaining insight sometimes lies a need for knowledge. I will argue that this need, in this context, is sometimes sublimated from the unrealisable need of certainty. And don't we see such sublimation in other areas, too?

A feeling of presence
Closely related to the motive of insight and my thoughts about embedding and disembedding is a motive of feeling present in the nursery. A motive of gaining the *feeling*, that you are actually taking part in the activities in the nursery, that you are together with your child even though you are miles apart. This was one of Niels' motives behind his webcam use; a motive which he actually *felt* could be realized by using the webcams: "It's the possibility of seeing my son in a situation in which you can't take part, but nevertheless you sense that you do." (Jørgensen, 2001: 82). I believe webcams can give such a feeling since the visual sense is dominating,

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[14] Like with the notion disembedding, I define the word reembedding in another sense than Giddens (1997: 88). Giddens argue that face-to-face contact is needed for a reembedding to take place. I simply define reembedding as a craving for the local, the 'near', the homely, the family.

because the situation in the nursery is broadcasted live and because the parent is familiar with the smell, the atmosphere and the usual sounds in the nursery.

Control

My analysis shows that a motive behind the use of webcams *is* sometimes control – but rarely in the narrow meaning of this notion, where control is exclusively connected to words as discipline and self-discipline. The control carried out by the webcam users has a much wider and often different purpose. I use the term control, when it's evident that the parents are *evaluating/valuating* what they are seeing. When they are *not* watching with an 'open mind'. When the parents are evaluating, it's because they've got particular *expectations or hopes* to what they will see. Therefore, we often see a feeling of joy, relief etc. when what the parents see is what they hope to see or a feeling of anger, disappointment or indignation when it isn't. Like Ulla in the quotation in the beginning of this paper. She is hoping that the nursery teacher will take notice of her daughter, and she feels relieved, when it happens. My use of the notion control is therefore wider than most theoreticians'.

Following Erik Sigsgaard (1985: 24-36) I believe that the term control can only be used when the person watching has a *possibility* to sanction. Not *using* this possibility doesn't mean that the motive behind the use isn't control! Parents using webcams have the possibility to sanction, but rarely use it. Partly because it's a taboo, as I'll explain later, partly because they never or only very rarely experience incidents via the webcams that make it necessary to intervene[15]. But what are the parents actually evaluating and if the parents only rarely evaluate to discipline or self-discipline, what are the sub motives of the control then?

The parents evaluate 1. If the child is okay, hoping that he or she is. 2. How the child develops compared to other children. How the social capacities of the child are e.g. 3. How the relationship between their child and the other children is. 4. How the relationship between their child and the nursery teacher is. 5. If an activity that the parents appreciate is taking place in the nursery. 6. And hereby the parent also indirectly reflects on his own relationship to his child and abilities as a parent.

Often some sub motives are included in the motive of control:

1. Mainly to gain a feeling of *protecting* the child.
2. Sometimes a wish to *affect and support the development of the child*. I will argue that you can't term this a wish to discipline the child. Because the purpose is to enlarge, *not* to limit the possibilities of the person kept under surveillance. Niels is evaluating with the purpose of affecting the development of his child, partially because he thinks that his son is fragile and needs support, partially because the norms of the nursery teachers differ from Niels'.

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[15] One could ask why they rarely experience something that makes it necessary to intervene? Is it because the webcams self-discipline teachers and children or is it because nursery teachers in Denmark in general are doing a very good job?

3. In a few cases the webcams were used to *discipline* or in other words *limit and change the actions of the nursery teachers*. Ulla e.g. once complained to the nursery teachers about a situation she had seen, since she couldn't accept what happened. She told that she did this even though she thinks it's wrong to discipline the teachers by the use of webcams, because a consideration for the child justified it.

My analysis indicates that webcams aren't used to discipline the children. There neither seems to be a connection between Foucault's notion of hidden surveillance as a tool to self-discipline and parents' motives behind the use of webcams when it comes to the children (Foucault, 1994: 180-182). Ulla and Niels actually prefer that the children don't even know that they are being monitored. Whether a purpose is to self-discipline the teachers is uncertain, since this was such a taboo that those interviewed wouldn't comment on it. But a parent wrote the following on the questionnaire: "In the nursery my daughter previously attended, we had a serious case with a paedophile (…) it comforts me to know that the staff aren't against them. It gives me the feeling that they have nothing to hide" (Jørgensen, 2001: 4). To sum up; webcams aren't use to discipline and self-discipline the children, but when it comes to the nursery teachers, the picture is much more blurred.

Both Ulla and Niels deny that their use has a connection to the notions surveillance and control. I believe this is because they connect these words with discipline. To limit and change the actions of children is, at least partly, accepted and very important when raising children in general. And Ulla as well as Niels think that disciplining their children is a necessity. But they believe that webcams shouldn't be used as a strategy to discipline. When using *webcams* to discipline is a taboo, I believe it's due to the fact that because this sort of surveillance is *hidden,* which means that the children and nursery teachers don't know *when exactly* they are monitored, by *whom* (by which particular parent) and *what* the norms and hopes of the parent monitoring are. Therefore, children and nursery teachers don't have perfect possibilities to adapt themselves to their own expectations of which hopes the parent monitoring has to the behaviour of the teacher or child. This possible asymmetric relationship is a taboo.

Getting entertained, passing time and sharing one's experiences
Ulla and Niels also use the webcams 'because' of a motive of sharing their experiences with others. Meaning that webcams aren't only used to increase the 'contact' to the child, but to increase contact to those, one is surrounded by, too. Webcams are also used to pass time and as entertainment.

About analysing motives
Revealing motives for the use of webcams one must consider four things! 1. Many motives are often included in the same act. 2. You cannot make a general model for, how X motive comes for Y need. Sometimes Ulla for instance evaluates to gain a feeling of safety, other times to gain a feeling of belonging to her child. Therefore, you need to analyse the context. 3. Motives also change and are actualized during the webcam session. For instance, the parents logs on to get insight into what the child is doing. Suddenly the child begins to cry and the parents now keeps monitoring the situation since they now want to evaluate whether a nursery teacher is comforting the child.

Using other strategies than webcams

Mads doesn't use the webcams. Does this mean that he doesn't have the same needs of safety, certainty etc. as Ulla and Niels? Needs are partially constructed and determined by cultural and individual characteristics so this might be a partial explanation, but the analysis also shows that Mads has also a craving for certainty, safety etc. But he uses and *has the possibility of using* other strategies to fulfil his needs, such as religion and the traditional parenting, where the wife is the prime caretaker. Furthermore, he feels comfortable in the nursery, since he, because of his education, 'talks the same language' as the nursery teachers.

Life at work, the relationship to the nursery, attitudes towards use of webcams and technical and practical matters

If the parents don't feel comfortable at work their inclination to use webcams is increased.

Bad experiences with the staff in previous nurseries or Queen Olga or a child who is feeling uncomfortable in the nursery have the same effect. The parents' attitude towards the webcams only partly influences the use, since radicalized modern parents often act affectively or according to a goal-oriented rationality more than acting in accordance with a value-oriented rationality, using the terms of Max Weber (Månson, 1998: 91). Therefore, I think that webcams in nurseries in Denmark has a future, even though a questionnaire survey made by Kim Rasmussen (2003: 63) concludes, that only 10% of Danish parents would like the sort of CCTV investigated in this paper in the nursery of their own child[16]. Of course cheap, fast and frequent access to the internet also affect the use.

Protestant values

In the case of Mads three specific factors which I'll argue originate in the protestant values of his religion keep him from using the webcams. First of all, Mads regards *perseverance* as a virtue. He tells that no matter whether his sons like staying in the nursery or not, he will not pick them up. They must learn to deal with the problems of life. "It's okay to get sorry, but you *must* go through with what you are doing", Mads says (Jørgensen, 2001: 106). Mads also sees the ability to deselect as very important in the society of today and *abstention* is furthermore one of the Christian virtues (see Paul's letter to the Galatians, chapter 5, verse 22, in the New Testament). Mads furthermore sees his work as a *vocation*, therefore he won't use his time at work on private issues. This high degree of work ethic is, according to Max Weber (2000: 105-11), also part of the protestant ethic.

Conclusion

What do parents use webcams in day nurseries for, why do they use them, and why do some parents refuse to use the webcams? The answer is connected to tendencies and discoursed

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[16] The questionnaire survey is based on 503 parents from all over Denmark, representing a broad selection of parents according to Rasmussen (2003: 175).

prevalent in the radicalised modernity and parents' different ways and possibilities of handling these tendencies. Motives behind parents' use of webcams are; to gain insight, to gain a feeling of presence in the nursery and to gain control. The notion control is used when the parents evaluate people or occurrences in the nursery. The sub motives of the control are; to gain a feeling of protecting the child, to affect the development of the child, or (all though rarely) to discipline the nursery teachers. Behind those motives lie some unfulfilled needs. Most prevalent are needs of security, safety and certainty, of social contact, love, a feeling of belongingness and of knowledge. Needs that most often are unfulfilled (and/or fulfilled via the child and the webcams), if the parents' ideals of childhood and parenting reflect the traditional society, while their every day lives resemble the radicalised modernity, if the child is the only love object of the father or mother, if the parents' needs of social contact and financial security aren't fulfilled at work, if the parents can't gain information about the child from the nursery teachers (which is sometimes due to that they don't feel welcome in the nursery), or if the child seems unhappy in the nursery. The conclusions are verified by the fact that parents who are living under opposite conditions and are affected by discourses which are in harmony with their own every day lives don't use webcams.

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