《藝術教育研究》（2004），7，1-21

Family Photography and the Art Class

家庭攝影與藝術課程

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Abstract

As part of the emerging paradigm of visual culture in art education, the author examines the personal, social and political significance of family photography in the West. The historical development of family photography is sketched to help indicate its immense importance in maintaining a sense of self, family life, and social cohesion. The author concludes with descriptions of art programs in both elementary and high schools that in various ways address family photography.

Keywords: visual, culture, family, photography, art

摘　要

作者以藝術教育中視覺文化的部分模式，來檢視西方家庭攝影對個人、社會和政治的重要性。家庭攝影的歷史發展狀況之描述亦可以幫我們指出攝影在維持自我觀念、家庭生活和社會凝聚力上的重要性。作者在文章中亦描述他在小學及中學裡以各種不同的方式所實施以家庭攝影為主題之藝術課程的情形。

關鍵字：視覺、文化、家庭、攝影、藝術

1. Family Photography and the Art Class

"Stop doing that! Look this way, towards the camera. Now smile!" The scene is a familiar one: parents taking snaps or a home video of their children. How many of us as children were the cause of such exasperation to our parents? How many of us as parents have sometimes reproduced this scene?

In a conventional art class family photography and such questions would not normally be asked. Under the influence of the emerging influence of visual culture in art education issues involved with family photography and related contemporary, everyday cultural sites have become a major focus (Duncum and Bracey, 2001; Duncum, 2002; Freedman, 2003). By cultural sites, I refer to signifying systems – TV, the Internet, movies are further examples – which are constitutive of beliefs and values. Visual culture in art education seeks to examine the cultural sites that inform student's perceptions of the world, which they enjoy, and which influence their life decisions. High tech information societies are now picture saturated, and a visual culture informed art curriculum attempts to respond to this challenge.

This paper addresses just one contemporary cultural site. First, I will describe how significant family photography is in offering a narration of our lives. Secondly, I will note some of its typical features. Third, I will discuss its social, economic and political significance in representing the institution of the family, reproducing and affirming it, and how family photography can be regarded as an instrument of national stability. I will sketch the history of family photography and show that its social functions are the result of astute promotion that fully utilises long-standing dynamics of socio-economic life. Finally, I will describe several exemplar programs that are bringing family photography into the classroom.

Being an introduction to family photography, the paper offers no more than generalisations; moreover, it is limited to a Western perspective. Specific examples are taken exclusively from Europe, England, the United States and Australia. This paper is, therefore, culturally specific and does not relate to developments in other parts of the world. The paper is offered in the hope that colleagues in other regions will follow with their own journeys.

2. Personal Significance

Family photography is crucial to family life, celebrating its many joys and concealing its complexity, including its secrets (Hirsch, 1997). Family photography, especially of children, is the most common form of image making in the world, and there seems no limit to its popularity. The throughput of snapshots is increasing, and the sale of camcorders continues to rise. Family photographs are often the most prized possession among older family members, and often they are the first to be rescued from the threat of fire or flood. Many household items can be repurchased, but a record of one' s family life is irreplaceable. Family photography is the focus of profound emotions, of hope and regret, of love and sadness, of all the trials and joys of lives spent together. However ordinary they are to others, they are endlessly fascinating to ourselves.

Snapshots are presented in elaborate frames, sent to relatives, and systematically stuck into albums that are brought out for inspection by visitors. They are arranged on tables, mantle pieces, and dressers, and often they comprise a "kind of family photo blitzkrieg" (Halle, 1987, p. 222). In addition, cupboards are filled with videos and computer discs of family fun. Since their main purpose is a record of happy times, the more the merrier. Repetition of similar, even identical, scenes reinforces the point that the recording of happy moments is to have as many happy moments as possible (Hirsch, 1998).

The pleasures offered by family photography, however, are ambiguous (Holland, 1991). They bring to mind what we had forgotten, make us want to forget what we too vividly recall, and bring into sharp focus what we already know. We see a child mysteriously connected to ourselves, the person we once were, and to which we can never return. There, in the image, is the unmistakable proof of the body and the eyes from which we once experienced the world. We bring to the images a wealth of emotion and desire; and knowledge, too, about the people and circumstances that were important then. The images signpost the appearance and disappearance of significant others, of our losses, and of our gains. They help create a sense of identity and our life story, and they can be corrective (Hirsch, 1997). Williamson (1986), for example, discovered that her family' s mythology about her grown-up behaviour as a toddler was at odds with the photographic evidence. She had been told, and had accepted as fact, that she had

welcomed the arrival of her baby sister. So it came as surprise to discover the undeniably anxious and ambiguous looks she gave the new baby in all their early photographs together. As a middle-aged man, Watney (1991) could find no evidence in his early photographs of the fat and ugly child he had imagined himself to be.

Perhaps the depth of emotional association with family photography is best illustrated by the practise of photographing dead children. It is little discussed but it is apparently a common practice (Ruby, 1995). During the 1980s health care officials in the United States began the now widespread practice of taking photographs of stillborn babies. Although opinion remains divided over the practice, they are, now, as one hospital brochure puts it, "a normative part of grief management for parents of still born children" (Ruby, 1995, p. 180). Anecdotal evidence also suggests that, in the United States and Europe, the practice of parents photographing their own dead children is widespread. Unlike other family photographs, these are not publicly displayed, but are kept with birth certificates and wills.

Whether photographic images evoke happy memories or sad ones, they remind us of what we and others looked like. I put this deliberately in the past tense because photographs always represent a moment which has passed. Family photographs are sufficiently real to bring to mind the presence of a loved or absent one, but sufficiently unreal never to allow us to confuse their image with reality. We are always, simultaneously, aware that the figure in a family photograph is real and yet not real. Always, though especially when the image is of a dearly loved one, we are involved through all the associations we have or have had with the figure in real life, but at the same time our involvement is controlled through the certain knowledge that their image, however lifelike, is not, in fact, alive. Family photographs help bring moments back to life, but at the same time they remind us the time has passed and that once cherished circumstances must be relinquished (Hirsch, 1997).

3. Common Characteristics

Chief among the characteristics of family photography are their transparency, selectivity, and conventionality. What family photography shows can seem as transparent as its style is realistic, yet what it shows is highly selective.

3.1. Transparency

Family photography may appear to offer a wholly candid view, so exact do they reproduce their subject matter. They posses what Barthes (1981) calls "an evidential force" (p. 88). Such transparency is reinforced by their technological simplicity; cameras are designed to be simple and reliable. One literally looks through the viewfinder. Using a conventional film camera with a fixed focus and single lens aperture with a wide angle and considerable area in focus, "the subject will be there somewhere in the frame, and very probably in focus, as long as you stand back a bit" (Slater, 1991, p. 52). Control stops the moment the button is pressed. With snaps available within an hour of dropping them off for processing, subsequent steps may seem entirely mechanical and innocent of human intervention. Developing, colour balancing, cropping and printing are each undertaken by a machine that takes negatives at one end and churns out finished prints at the other. Camcorders allow instant replay with sound so that the manipulative processes are even better hidden. Digital cameras also allow instant access, and they greatly increase the possibilities for manipulation. Since home photography appears to report accurately, and to eliminate thought, skill or effort, there may be no sense that it involves quite selective, learned behaviour that is all the more stable for being unconscious.

3.2. Selectivity

What exactly to take a to picture of is learned through long experience with home photography and advertising. Even the folders in which prints are returned indicate what to take. With images of children, the emphasis is entirely on being a family member. Sporting, cultural or religious networks are rarely more than hinted at (Hirsch, 1981). A child may wear a school blazer or a Girl Guide uniform, but even close friends will tend to be excluded from the family photographic album.

Overwhelmingly, pictures of smiling children dominate family photography. Childhood includes crying, bullying, boredom, being ill, fighting with siblings and friends, and frequently testing the boundaries of adult control. But family photography does not document children' s lives; it records only what parents deem to be appropriate. Children may throw tantrums, but the pictures show nothing but contentment. Pictures of

holidays spoilt by rain, spotlight the sunny days. As Chaflan (1987) says, "One does not see a person vomiting in home movies" (p. 59). Scandal and sexuality are relegated to the non-photogenic. Illness and disability are largely ignored, illegitimacy is concealed, and not the slightest hint of abuse is ever allowed to appear. Whatever problems exist within a family, they are hidden in the presence of the camera. Just as there are patterned inclusions, there are patterned exclusions. The dominant theme of family happiness necessitates the repression of other narrative threads of family life. Parents self-censor either at the moment they press the button or later when deciding which images to make public. Nothing unpleasant survives this two-stage selection process.

Eager to capture their child' s first birthday party, or first attempts at walking and so on, parents coach their child into the right kind of photographic behaviour. They direct their children to produce smiles so that their children learn to present themselves as an image. Children reproduce in themselves the qualities adults find so charming, with girls perhaps being especially eager to collude in this way (Holland, 1991). After all, open refusal to co-operate brings parental displeasure and the children' s own unhappiness.

In a series of articles under the general title of "The Child I Never Was," Khun (1991) examines a photograph of herself as a smiling six year-old seated in a fireside chair with a small bird in her hand. As an adult she cannot recall the situation, and she cannot believe that this picture was representative of her childhood. Faced with the evidence of the photograph, she is left to speculate on the degree to which she colluded with her father in contriving the image.

The innocent snapshot is nothing of the kind. Photographing children is influenced by ideas about childhood. And it is embedded in relationships of power that Holland (1992) argues involve an attempt to control the very idea of childhood. We can see why taking family photographs is a struggle when we understand the huge emotional investment parents have in controlling the image of their children.

Holland argues that adults try to gain control over actual children as well as their own childhood, which they mourn for and constantly reinvent. The imagery of childhood has to do with striving to produce an ideal childhood that is clearly distinct from adulthood. Many of what are taken to be the natural characteristics of childhood - spontaneity and playfulness, for example – adults deny themselves, so that childhood becomes for adults an ideal, mythical time when such characteristics can be indulged.

For adults, childhood is associated with nature, the primitive, and emotion, whereas adulthood is associated with their opposites: culture, civilization, and reason. What is denied adults is only achievable in childhood. Thus, adults feel pressure to preserve childhood for their own children, and, for their own sakes, they wish to preserve a sense of their own early life. Childhood is a rich depository for the many qualities that adults need but cannot often indulge as part of themselves. Moreover, adults ask from children what children cannot give them. Adults are always seeking their own past as much as the present, and they have only impoverished ways to express their childhood memories and wishes. When adults take photographs of their own children they are dealing with those memories, or at least they are constructing a narrative of an ideal childhood. Constructing an ideal childhood for one's own children is a way of constructing an ideal childhood for oneself. Pictures of children offer a negotiation between ourselves and our past whereby we bring our own elusive childhoods into line (Hirsch, 1997).

3.3. Conventionality

Far from innocent, family photography involves stereotypical behaviours; indeed, it may be difficult to think of any other form of photography that is less given over to individual improvisation (Bourdieu, 1990/1965). On the one hand, professional family photographs tend to be formal. Family members stand or sit close to one another, overlapping to create the impression of cohesion. They gaze directly at the camera, and, whether smiling or serious, they offer studied emotional neutrality, permitting us to look at the family but not into it (Hirsch, 1981). We learn not so much about how they feel as how they function: who stands at the apex, who at the base, who seems to have power, who submits, and who defies? Families pose against a flat, neutral backdrop that cuts off normal visual cues and concentrates attention on the family. Children who are posed with plant pots and pumpkins are equally cut off from spatial cues, and the children's faces offer the only cues to time.

On the other hand, snapshots are informal, but they are no less conventional. They imply a sense of life as lived, yet they, too, offer only a glimpse. They are never more than split seconds ripped out of a personal history. Home movies and videos provide

more contexts, and, with the aid of sound, they follow the action. They offer the curious experience of reliving past lives in real time.

Snapshot codes typically feature overall sharp focus, fully saturated colour, bright sunshine, full length figures, small groups, and big smiles directed straight to the camera. Figures are usually placed at eyelevel and, by way of stressing their importance, in the centre, which often has the effect of creating accidental edges. Each of these codes helps suggest the transparency of the medium, but even where other codes draw attention to themselves, they imply a lack of mediation. There is a lot of empty space around the figures of central concern, which tends to throw the figures back into the picture making it hard for us to see them. But empty space is an implicitly understood code of home photography, so what in the hands of a professional would draw attention to the medium has the effect of implying the naivete of the photographer and thus the simple, straightforwardness of the scene before us. With older-style flash photography, figures appeared with disconnectedly red eyes and looming black shadows behind them. Again, while these codes distract from reality, in the context of amateur photography, they act as codes of documentation. They therefore have the effect of reinforming the veracity of the image as a whole.

Home videos share many of the same conventions as the snapshot, though they have unique features. Contrary to advice offered in home video manuals, parents appear content not to plan ahead but intuitively to recognize a home video opportunity. When to take out the video camera seems as implicitly understood as when to take a snap (Chaflan, 1987). Rejecting advice offered in articles with titles like "How to Stop Torturing Family and Friends," parents overwhelming tend to dispense with editing or behind-the-scene direction (p. 52). Such effort seems contrary both to the making of home movies as a leisure activity and the expectations of their audience. Like snaps, it is enough that the movies turn out. Consequently, shots tend to start and finish anywhere and to follow one another without apparent order or sequence. This is the temporal equivalent of accidental edges. Long and medium shots are common and, like snaps, are taken with lots of empty space. Typical features include lots of camera movement, panning, jump cuts, and parents fully exploiting the zooming capabilities of their cameras.

Advice manuals urge parents to capture their children impromptu, but, overwhelmingly, children are especially posed for the camera, hamming it up, waving,

and pulling faces. If people simply smile when snapped, video cameras elicit silly behaviour. Children and adults alike frequently walk up to the camera and stare into the lens, as if seeking acknowledgment from the camera (Chaflan, 1987).

Making, selecting and displaying family photography are each intuitively and widely understood. Subordinated to its deep-felt purpose it is a highly determined enterprise.

4. Socio-economic Significance and History

Family photography is both a record of family life and an indispensable part of its ongoing fabric. In turn, families are an indispensable part of the larger social, economic and political fabric. The significance of families is twofold. They are of great economic significance, providing considerable unpaid labor as well as offering a reserve workforce in times of political or economic crisis. Families are also the single most important institution of socialization and are indispensable in producing a skilled and compliant workforce. Never before have families been more important than they are today, especially through the huge symbolic investment we now place in children. Postmodern times have seen the erosion of traditional sources of comfort, from trade unions to the church, so that, whereas we once sought emotional support from stable marriages, friendships, and class solidarity, we now invest in childhood (Jenks, 1996). The idea of family has become problematic - families take many forms - yet they remain the linchpin of social life, and the symbolic investment in children is now greater than at any time in history.

The family dovetails closely with the interests of the state and, yet, it is contradictory. On the one hand, it is regularly and loudly promoted as an arena of life most at a distance from the state (Jenks, 1995). Imbued with an aura of independence and individualism, it is said to be set apart, even over and above the state. While drawing heavily upon actual families for economic and social support, the state promotes families not as a burden but a gift of freedom. The interests of the state are best served by happy and harmonious families, and, as an indispensable tool of family cohesion, family photography plays its part in serving the interests of socioeconomic stability.

This was true from the earliest years of photography. Invented in 1839, photography enjoyed instant commercial success because it served an incessant pre-existing demand for moderately priced portraiture, which, in turn, produced an altogether larger market for inexpensive likenesses (Tagg, 1988). For the upper middle classes portraiture inscribed social identity and, because portraiture was a luxury, it conferred social status. Through their purchasing power they created the economic conditions that sustained ever-greater expansion and brought photography within the reach of all but the poorest. By having their portraits made, the rising social classes could make their assent visible to both themselves and to others. Even in the early 19th century, photography was grounded in the investment people made in the family as the single most important social unit. From families people drew both spiritual and emotional sustenance.

From the outset, portraiture dominated subject matter. In the first few years children were not photographed because exposure times were too long for children to stay still - adults were clamped - but by the 1860s photographing children had already become the bread-and-butter of professional photographers (Gear, 1987).

A wide range of painted backdrops were used that vaguely suggest the country side, classical architecture, or an upper class interior, all of which were derived from aristocratic wall hangings (Mager, 1978). They hardly reflect the life of the children photographed. To affect any semblance of a fit between the children and the originally aristocratic settings dictated that the children wear solemn expressions and hold themselves with restraint. They wear hired, adult clothes and never smile. Some lean against pillars with one leg crossed in font of the other or with hands placed gently on a chair or tucked into a pocket. Their deportment is an imitation of a studied nonchalance that previously had been cultivated by the aristocracy, but too often the children seem unsuited to the role. They pose in unfamiliar ways and stare uncertainly at the camera. The fact that they have been especially dressed for the occasion and pressed into service seems all too obvious.

The pictures were framed and prominently displayed. Even then they were produced in multiples so that copies could be sent to relatives far away, often out to the new world or back home to the mother country. At a time when family unity was under threat from geographic dispersion, photography served to bind emotional ties. Family

photographs served to "publish the triumph of the family over circumstance" (Hirsch, 1981, p. 42).

The role mothers played was especially important. Industrial capitalism, with its strong division between the public world of men and the private, domestic world of women, led women to memorializing the rites of passage of their lives and the personal relationships they enjoyed. Photographs were among the keepsakes that helped them maintain bonds of kinship and friendship and through which they asserted their status as mothers (Ruby, 1995). Denied power beyond the home, women invoked the constant and urgent need of their infants to assert their authority within the home. Motherhood also conferred a social status above that of wife, and, for their part, babies were idolized, a contemporary truism being "Baby is King" (Gear, 1988, p. 420). Photographs of babies were "a kind of union card" that indicated that mothers had entered the ranks of womanhood (Gear, 1988, p. 421). Babies were dressed in their prettiest clothes, pictured alone, and always in an upright position that echoed a tradition of icon portraiture. Instead of creating an emblem of state though, they were emblems of motherhood.

While photography continued to serve family values, towards the end of the 19th century it came also to serve the demands of a society whose economy was increasingly based on mass consumerism (Slater, 1991). The 1880s saw a shift from small-scale capitalist enterprises to monopoly capitalism and from small run productions to mass production. What was true in the textiles, clothing, and household goods industries, was equally true of photography.

In 1888 George Eastman introduced the first inexpensive, easy-to-use roll film cameras. Kodak' s Brownie Box was the forerunner of today' s instamatic and disposables Realising that profits were to be made not by the sale of expensive cameras to professionals, but through cheap film for the general public, he developed cameras that were simple, reliable, and dependent upon film that he supplied, developed, and processed. From the outset, Kodak was based on the idea that photography was something everyone should regularly do. Even the name Kodak indicates Eastman' s broad vision for family photography. He coined the word because he believed it to be easily remembered and pronounceable in all languages. In light of the power of women within the domestic sphere, Kodak' s advertising was aimed at women. It stressed the

simplicity of taking snapshots with the slogan, "You press the button. We Do the Rest" (Tagg, 1988, p. 54).

The Box Brownie was foremost a commodity like any other, but unlike any other it could help record, celebrate and relive the pleasures of domestic life. It dovetailed neatly with the desire to find happiness through consumption, and, by helping to record the happy moments of domestic life, it helped to define domesticity. Kodak's advertising and promotion stressed that only Kodak could offer happiness in the form of a tangible record of happy times. One example included the "Happy Moment Contest" where judges declared, "the simple little snapshot that is bubbling over with natural merriment is preferred to the photograph that has been carefully posed and arranged." Prizes were given for "natural, hearty, spontaneous, unrestrained happiness" (Willis, 1988, p. 128). The photographs that won helped to shape what has become stereotypical fare: mothers playing with children, children playing with their toys by the seaside, the family at leisure.

During World War I the idea of photographing the family at home became part of the war effort. For example, an extensive effort was made throughout Australia to send pictures of families to their fighting men. The YMCA emphasised that such pictures would remind soldiers of their homes, and it even claimed that the pictures would keep a man "clean and decent amidst the temptations of camp life" and "reach his heart more quickly than anything else in the world. It will make him feel what he is fighting for" (cited in Willis, 1988, p. 131). Thus, amateur photography was slipped into ordinary family situations, and it quickly became an indispensable means of experiencing domesticity.

Today, as family life is ever more fragmented, the role of family photography has increased in significance. This is evident with both home photography and the continuing use of professional portrait photographers. Formal photographs indicate a continuing investment in presenting the family as a harmonious social entity. They are evidence of an ongoing desire for what is considered to be a traditional family of strong fathers, nurturing mothers, loving children, and protective homes (Hirsch, 1981). They answer to ancient metaphors of unity and cohesion. On the other hand, the informality of snapshot photography and home videos indicates that the goals of family life have changed. Nowadays, it is as much pleasure as stability that is of central issue, and there

is a concern the family be seen as well adjusted rather than in a state of grace (Hirsch, 1981).

5. Educational Programs

Family photography is commonly employed in elementary schools to bolster a sense of self-efficacy. However, what follows here emerges from a number of school programs that have examined family photography as a cultural form. Instead of simply examining the images for their content, family photography has been examined as a photographic genre and for the roles it plays in the lives of children, their parents, and the wider community.

With the general aim of providing children with knowledge about the conventions of family photography and the conditions under which they are generated, the following activities were undertaken at a number of Australian elementary schools. My students, who included both pre-service and in-service teachers, and both elementary classroom teachers and specialist art teachers, undertook them over several years. Students were required to record their curriculum in action, and my descriptions below are drawn from their written accounts.

5.1. Family Context and Power

First, 10 and 11 year old elementary children examined recent photographs of themselves, and they were asked the following questions: Do you remember where this was taken? What is in the photograph that tells you where it was taken? Who took the photograph? Is there anyone in particular in your family who takes photographs of the family? How would you describe your expression in the photographs? Do you remember feeling this way when the photograph was taken?

Discussion ensued about special times and family life, with many children wanting to relate such long and involved stories that several teachers decided to use the photographs as springboards for the regular early morning show-and-tell activity. It became apparent that the snaps told only a small part of the story in which they were embedded. Children were asked to draw a story or write about a particular photograph of

themselves indicating how it was taken, when, where, and by whom? They were to include all the details they could recall that were not in the picture. Some children drew comic strips involving family arguments about who should take the photographs, who should be in them, and whether they should be taken at all. One boy's comic included the comment, "Gran, its always happy minute time with you. Why do I have to smile when I don't feel like it?" Another boy wrote:

> Dad insists we sit up straight. I don't see why? You can't see lots of things. Like my [older] sister being stupid. I'd like a picture like that to show her boyfriend, if she ever gets one.

5.2. Photographic Intention

In the same class children were divided into two groups: the composers and the stalkers. The composers took instamatic cameras out into the schoolyard and got their friends to pose using expressions they elicited. Their aim was to take pictures, like most family photographs, that presented their subjects in an ideal way, showing their best face. A digital camera was also made available during recess, and children were asked to act as stalkers, waiting until other children gave them the expression or action they wanted. (Digital cameras are especially adapted to this). By contrast to the composers, the stalkers were to attempt to document their classmates as they went about their regular routines. Some children were able to act both as stalkers and composers, and they were asked which approach appealed to them most? Opinions differed. All the children examined the two kinds of photographs and were asked what differences they could see? Most children agreed that their choice about which kind of photography was better depended upon their purpose. Did they want slices of real life or an ideal, a photographic documentary or a photographic construction?

Later, children were required to experiment with taking snaps with different distances from their subjects and with different backgrounds. Towards the end of this activity, many children were becoming critical of typical snapshots and wanting to more carefully construct their images. Others, interestingly, disagreed, arguing that it was the haphazard nature of family photography that was important.

By now some understanding of the codes and conventions of family snap photography were being acquired, so children were asked to take a narrative sequence of photographs on how they thought adults mostly take pictures of children. This gave students the opportunity to act both as adults and observers of adults, with, at times, hilarious results. The instructions to smile in front of the camera with which this chapter began are a typical quote that sprang unsolicited while role-playing.

5.3. More on Photographic Genre

The children also examined different genres of photography involving people, especially children, in advertisements, in documentary photographs of children from other cultures, and in some recent images of very young children by photographer Anne Geddes. Students were required to arrange the different genres according to which they thought were most like family snaps and which were least like. They then had to list the differences and discuss them. They discovered for themselves that some genre are more like snaps in some ways and less like in other ways, and there is considerable variation within genres. The crossovers between home photography and how similar pictures are used in advertising especially intrigued them.

5.4. Deep Personal Significance

Another class of mixed ages talked with elderly people from a retirement village about their snaps of themselves years ago. It was an emotional experience for all concerned, where, in one case an 11 year-old comforted an 91year-old woman who cried over an image of her deceased children. More prosaically, the children examined what the differences are between older and more recent snaps. The children found that, while older photographs were in either black and white or sepia and theirs were all in full colour, there were no other outstanding differences. The children concluded from this that the purpose of family photography had not changed because families had not changed over time.

5.5. Changing Familial Relationships

However, they then examined family photography from the last century, where invariably the poses are stiff and faces are unsmiling. Many children almost immediately saw that these photographs should be compared to contemporary professional family photography and not snapshots. They also examined paintings of families from the 17th to the 19th centuries. They examined, for example, paintings by Velasquez, Rubens, Van Dyck, and Goya, noting differences of formality in poses, facial expression, clothing, setting and action, and what these implied about familial relationships. Students were particularly struck by the formality of aristocratic children compared to the informality of their own snaps. Typical comments included:

> I wouldn' t want to be trussed up like them. Our pictures show us moving about and not caring about stuff. They are really concerned to put on a show.
>
> We put on a show too. We smile even when we don' t want to, because Mum says we' ve got to because, you know, Grandad will think Mum is a bad mother or something if we aren' t smiling.
>
> I like smiling in photographs. Who wants to look like a dag? I' ll bet they would have smiled if they' d been allowed.

By the conclusion of these lessons, children had acquired knowledge of the formal features of home photography, consciously understood its purpose as part of family life, and had even begun to see its importance to society as a whole.

5.6. Power Relationships

In one high school class of 15 and 16 year olds, family snaps were compared to home videos, first by the students making both of their own, and, secondly, by examining home movies their parents had made. There was great hilarity when their teacher dared to show one of her own old family home movies. Some students commented that they thought that family photography often involved an invasion of privacy. Taking this as a cue, their teacher had them examine the words used to describe photography. She pointed out that we say we take a photograph, seek to capture someone on film, and shoot a snapshot. One student responded that taking photographs involved a "bail up and

deliver mentality" that was aggressive, and that taking photographs seemed often to involve an imposition.

5.7. Photographs and Memory

Family photographs were also used as stimulus for discussion and essay writing. For some youngsters the experience was a deeply emotional one, especially where there had been family breakups. Rather than avoiding family photography because of its intense emotional associations however, the teacher took the view that it struck at the heart of issues to do with identity, which is central to the educational enterprise for adolescents. In talking to their class about their most important family photographs, some youngsters felt the need to read a statement, explaining that otherwise they would not be able to speak. And as they spoke, their voices sometimes choking with emotion, it was clear that for many family photography was central to their lives. One girl said of the image she had selected that it was the last before her parents separated and that it reminded her of the good times she had once had with her father. Another girl wrote:

> At home there is a photograph of a laughing baby lying on her back. This is my parent' s first child who died of a brain tumor prior to her first birthday. For me, this image stands for my sister' s existence. I am the youngest in the family and so never knew the child, so this picture is a substitute for the child actually being alive, being present. As a result, my perception of the image is influenced by the love one has for a sister and my parents' love for a child. The image has eventually become the object of these feelings.

5.8. Photography, Family, and Social Control

One senior high school youngster aged 18 investigated the history of his own family' s photographic record, which stretched back to the 1860s. He was able to show that the main technological developments of photographic history were evident in the way his family had represented themselves, including the shift from professional to amateur photography. He demonstrated how changed perspectives on the nature of

family life were echoed through different photographic conventions, and he wrote about the role photography had in maintaining social cohesion.

6. Conclusion

Family photography is a practice of immense personal and social significance. Though mundane to others, to us family photographs are a source of infinite enchantment. They are both powerful and silent, a mediation point between an ideal and lived reality. And never before has their importance been greater to the maintenance of personal identity and, beyond, to the interests of socioeconomic stability. Investigating them in the classroom can be highly emotional and deeply rewarding.

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