

Visual Methodology and Ethnographic Un/Knowing

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Abstract

Current research directions in education and the social sciences have led researchers to focus almost entirely on research outcomes and implications for policy and practice. A focus on the end product of research over data generation interactions and interventions occlude full consideration of knowledge generation processes in the research. In this paper we delineate the pedagogic dynamics of image production in a research project involving refugee young people in Brisbane, Australia. The Narrating our World (NOW) project drew our attention to the theoretical lacuna and restricted understanding of the opportunities and limits afforded by visual research, and to the need to theorise approaches that do not fetishise images or research outcomes as objective commodities independent of people, contexts and political agendas. In examining the interface of data generation and interpretation beyond that of methodological discussions about objectivity and subjectivity we reflect on our project as an ‘activist ethnography’ (Luttrell, 2003: 147). Activist ethnography addresses the concepts of remembering, ambivalence and related epistemological tensions, and is informed by postcolonial theory. It acknowledges the changing dynamics of the research encounter in relation to how we see and represent others. From this perspective activist ethnography is not simply about reporting findings as if they relate directly and simply to a ‘real world’. Rather in conceptualising research as an engaged and tentative practice of knowledge making and unmaking, it remains open to articulating possibilities for new imaginings and ‘what’s never been’ (Monk Kidd, 2002: 120-121).

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"I don't know if I'll have much of a future either."

"Why not? You're not an orphan."

"No". he said. "I'm a Negro."

I felt embarrassed. "Well, you could play football for a college team and then be a professional player."

"Why is it sports is the only thing white people see us being successful at? I don't want to play football," he said. "I wanna be a lawyer."

"That's fine with me," I said, a little annoyed. "I've just never heard of a Negro lawyer, that's all. You've got to hear of these things before you can imagine them."

"Bullshit. You gotta imagine what's never been." (Monk Kidd, 2002: 120-121).

Introduction

In a culture dominated by visual images (Barnard 2001), awareness and understanding of the use of visual methodologies and methods in education is sparse. The neglect of visual and image based methodologies in social research in general is not simply a straightforward consequence of the ambiguities of the image, but a particular historical conjuncture involving the advent of science and the association of photography in the 19th century with journalists and political movements agitating for social change.

Contemporary reliance on text and numbers to generate data is often based on the mistaken assumption that quantitative and survey research methods have a closer relation to empirical reality, uphold higher standards of methodological rigor and generate more robust and trustworthy forms of data and analysis. We challenge the veneer of scientific objectivity associated with 'evidenced based' research (where 'evidence' is code for statistics and surveys), and argue for the need to theorise approaches that do not fetishise images or research outcomes as objective commodities independent of people, contexts and political agendas (Matthews and Singh under review).

To pursue these arguments further this paper opens with a political reading of the epistemological issues relating to the neglect of visual research. This is followed by a consideration of how 'activist ethnography' (Luttrell 2003) is able to illuminate pedagogical elements of data generation. In particular the concepts of *remembering*, *ambivalence*, and *epistemological tensions* are used to highlight the context of knowledge making and replication of symbolic boundaries between the researcher and researched. While the symbolic boundaries between researcher and researched may shift during different stages of the pedagogic encounter, they do not just disappear as is often implied in participatory, photo-elicitation, photo-voice approaches.

Visual research

Visual research is an interdisciplinary approach used to generate data in two main ways:

- a) through studies which produce visuals and images to investigate cultures. In this approach visual records are generated by a researcher, or in collaboration with the

researched. Methodologies and methods encompass ethnographic and documentary film and the production of photographs in photo elicitation and photo-voice.

- b) through studies of pre-existing or found visuals and images which are analysed to advance knowledge about cultures. In this approach, visual records such as advertisements, media representations, graffiti, websites, artefacts, icons and spatial arrangements are collected or located by a researcher.

What both approaches share are unresolved and interrelated issues involving the ambiguities of visual/image based data. On the one hand this concerns the subjective imposition of researcher interpretation and analysis on the data, and on the other the capacity of researchers to provide accurate depictions without replicating essentialised and totalising meta-narratives (Lather 2006). Since the 1990s these debates have been taken up as questions of cultural identity concerning who is able to represent and speak for whom.

We do not subscribe to the view that the neglect of visual research in education is a straightforward consequence of its openness to subjective and ideological manipulation. Rather, as we observe elsewhere (Matthews and Singh under review) a particular set of historical circumstances has led researchers to regard visual methods such as films, photographs and illustrative material as dubious and uncertain (Becker 1995: 7). Interestingly, the use of images and photographs in anthropology and sociology managed to evade such concerns through claims to empiricism. It was not until the 1980s that the representational practices of anthropology were challenged with the allegation that the anthropologist Margaret Mead had been duped by her informants (Freeman 1983). It was claimed that Mead's data were generated from limited access to members of the Samoan community, namely, women's groups and her representation of this data was based on romanticised notions of the native 'Other'. In other words, Mead's account of Samoan society was critiqued as 'imaginary' rather than reflective of empirical reality. The representational turn of the 1990s marked the point where it no longer became possible to assume a stance of researcher objectivity and political innocence. Even those practices that sought to painstakingly and faithfully represent the 'other', through participatory and 'giving voice projects', were caught in profound contradictions and moral/ethical dilemmas involving unintentional cultural appropriation and epistemic violence.

The rise of global digital cultures led to a new politics of representation. In Baudillard's (1988) terms the image shifted from being a reflection of the real, to a representation of the real, to masking absence of a basic reality, to render a situation of pure simulacrum which bears no relation to a reality outside of itself: it is reality. The 'hyper-real marks the point where the division between the representation and the thing being represented has collapsed' (Baudrillard, 1988). Images, sounds, and words are digitalised and uploaded onto websites to be relayed across the globe generating multiple realities. Through rapid global flows these digital/virtual realities are disembedded from local contexts to float free of 'empirical reality'. Meaning is not simply constructed through reference to a 'basic empirical reality' outside the virtual/digital world, but rather through internal reference to other virtual realities which no

longer require an origin, and whose effects are just as ‘real’. On this point Appadurai (1996: 4) argues:

... electronic mediation and mass migration mark the world of the present not as technically new forces but as ones that seem to impel (and sometimes compel) the work of the imagination. Together, they create specific irregularities because both viewers and images are in simultaneous circulation. ... both persons and images often meet unpredictably, outside the certainties of home and the cordon sanitaire of local and national media effects. ... the work of the imagination, viewed in this context, is neither purely emancipatory nor entirely disciplined but is a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern.

Recognition of the ‘ambiguous and polysemic’ nature of data (Lather 2006) opened the door to research approaches that actually expect data and ‘text’, in the sense of signifying structures comprising speech, writing and visuals, to be ‘unreliable as a source of factual information’ (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001). In education, researchers turned to experimental and postcolonial approaches which worked within and against these limits. Postcolonial, discourse analytic and ethnographic studies paid close attention to the cultural politics, negotiations and power struggles of hybrid racialised, sexualized subjects (Matthews 1998; Singh and Dooley 2001). Many of these studies sought to establish validity in relation to the context and internal narratives of data, as well as research reflexivity, sensitivity and awareness of the production and the use of the image (Mason 1984). Other approaches included efforts to incorporate into visual research, forms of numerical quantification and measurability such as undertaken in some forms of semiotic, content and discourse analysis.

A final and problematic approach to the dilemmas of representing ‘the real’ is to divorce research entirely from this debate by locating it in a particular relation to evidence based data and the ‘real’. But to avoid visual research, or denounce its struggles with negative, deficit simulacrum as distasteful, is to miss the point that Langton (2008) astutely illuminates - that simulacrum actually produce the real. In a culture increasingly dominated by simulacrum: Youtube, Myspace, Second Life, and WWW, images of Indigenous Australians, refugees, and Islamic Australians jostle up against each other to construct public conversations about issues that have direct consequences for those represented in such terms. Image based data such as photographs are neither the creative imaginings of individual consciousness, nor the empirical representation of objects. Things are captured by visual images to become the object of reflection. Visual images mediate the thing and the thought. The image is simply a frozen perception which provides the ‘armature for ideas’ (Buck-Morss 2006: 22) and its meaning arises in the context of their use through joint interactions and the understandings of people who use them and attribute meaning to them (Becker 1995: 5).

The point to note here is that visual images are ambiguous because they are not themselves ‘‘pure’, ‘raw’ data, uncontaminated by human thought and action’; they are the product of social interactions and their significance depends on ‘the architecture of corroborating data’’ (Freeman et al. 2007: 27). Like field notes, documents, interactions and other artefacts, they are cultural, historical and theoretical interpretations made by participants and researchers.

Data and information only become evidence when a) it is recognized as data, and b) it is subject to systematic analysis turning it into evidence directed towards a question or argument (Lincoln 2002: 6 cited in Freeman et al 2007: 27).

The problem occurs when we mistake visual images for data and the objects they seek to represent. The object of visual research is not to establish universal claims to meaning that stand for all time everywhere but to appreciate the capacity of images to generate and transmit meanings (Buck-Morse 2006). In other words, data are not something researchers collect for later analysis. Rather, as the ethnomethodologists have long argued, data are co-constructed in the interactions between researchers and researched. We propose further that these researcher-researched interactions can be theorised as pedagogic communication. Following Bernstein (1996) we define pedagogic communication as constituted by interactional and locational rules. The locational rules refer to the spatial relations regulating who enters into pedagogic communication and how they are positioned to speak. People do not enter into pedagogic communication as equals. Rather, the locational rules constitute 'highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination' (Pratt 1992: 4). While these power relations are historically constituted, they are also contested, challenged and negotiated in day-to-day pedagogic engagements. The interactional rules refer to the temporal relations of who says what, when and how during the pedagogic encounter. Thus, it is through the interactional rules that power relations are negotiated. Researchers entering into pedagogic communication with research subjects often have to deal with sets of moral dilemmas. On the one hand, researchers are expected to teach research subjects about Western research traditions and practices in order to produce and re-present data to a wider academic audience. On the other hand, researchers need to be respectful of the cultural, language and religious difference of the research subjects even as they interpret these research subjects through Western epistemologies. We define moral dilemma as "a dilemma in which the options involve consequences that are both good and bad" (Buzzelli and Johnston 2002: 3).

Narrating Our World (NOW), Pedagogic Communication and Research Tools

The NOW project was intended to generate visual narratives of the educational experience of refugee young people using three visual research methods: sand tray, digital photography, drawing and painting. We turned to visual methods because we felt that they would encourage young refugees with limited English language skills to express their views. While we were interested in generating visual images for later analysis, our main objective in adopting this approach was its capacity to generate convivial communicative relationships.

Photo-elicitation (Harper 2002) methodologies introduce photographs into research interviews to elicit more information, and photo-voice approaches use photographs to encourage minority groups to communicate their experience and concerns in order to facilitate change (Chio and Fandt 2007). Our approach generated photographs and used sand tray and drawing to facilitate a safe environment for communication and dialogue. It was not directed towards the immediate goal of facilitating community activism.

We pursued an image-based ‘enabling methodology’ which sought to facilitate the creative production of individual and group accounts and narratives (Gauntlett and Holzwarth 2006: 84). Such an approach resonates with the lives of young people in a visually mediated culture. It does not rely on instant language-based responses but on creativity and reflexivity (Gauntlett and Holzwarth 2006). The use of sand tray was an innovation that has not to our knowledge been applied to research settings. Commonly used in one-on-one therapy and in counselling it involves placing miniature images in a tray of sand to create narratives. We used the sand tray to enable small groups with limited communication skills in English language to create group stories.

The project was conducted with a group of fourteen volunteer newly arrived refugee students enrolled at state high schools in Australia. A project researcher and research assistant met with the students after school at a youth centre for two hours once a week over five weeks. Eight participants were from Liberia, three from Sudan and individual participants were from Ethiopia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. The young people were divided into three groups of four and each group used a different media each week. Those working on sand tray for example, would spend the session producing a joint sand tray narrative, while those on digital camera and painting would discuss forthcoming photographs or paint and draw. The young people chose a different theme each week from a list which was intended to focus their thinking about schooling and included: my friends, fun places, unfriendly places, powerful people, difficult people, my hopes for the future, and a perfect school.

The NOW project was one aspect of a broader project entitled *Schooling, Globalisation and Refugees in Queensland* whose overall aim was investigating how policies, schools and local communities meet the educational needs of refugee background young people.¹ Interviews and focus groups were used to generate data from policy makers, youth and community workers, school principals and teachers. We expected the NOW project to generate a number of images that could be discussed and subjected to the rigors of qualitative data analyses in relation to participants’ choice and use of objects, artefacts, aesthetic preferences, role models and events. We hoped that our discussion would inform the production of visual narratives of the schooling experiences of refugee students and thus be useful for teachers and policy makers.

In many ways, our project design followed a similar format to that chosen by Wendy Luttrell (2003) in her study of the schooling experiences of pregnant teenage girls (mostly African-American and Hispanic) in a southern state in the US. Luttrell (2003) designed a number of activities to elicit the girls’ self-representations. These activities included ‘weekly journal writing: ‘Who Am I?’ media collages; improvisational role plays of their ‘pregnancy stories’; and a collaborative book of self-portraits accompanied by texts’ (Luttrell 2003: xiv). Luttrell (2003: xiv) argued that she was particularly interested in ‘the questions the girls asked one another, the free associations they made about others’ self-representations, and the concerns they expressed about how others would view these materials’. The girls were asked to formally present their artwork to the group to explain the meanings they intended to convey, and classmates were ‘encouraged to ask questions about the self-representation’ (Luttrell 2003: xiv). Luttrell (2003) suggested that she had chosen this research methodology because

‘traditional’ forms of data collection such as individual and focus groups interviews failed to engage the students. Thus, Luttrell (2003: 151) designed research methods that built on the activities that the girls appeared to be enjoying in school to generate data.

Role playing was part of the girls' informal interactions, a way they communicated with one another so I drew upon this form first. The teen magazines used for the collages were routinely circulating among the girls, often being read "undercover" when one was supposed to be reading or copying notes from the board. The book-making project was the most traditionally school-based in the sense that it drew on creative language arts activities (illustration and writing) and the more conventional, art class exercise of self-portraiture (Luttrell 2003: 151)

We were also aware that projects seeking to prompt refugee student's self expression had been undertaken in some schools and we believed that the NOW project could serve multiple purposes. First, it would enable us to generate data for the project, where conventional research tools had failed. Second, it might enhance the learning experiences of students, particularly in terms of developing English language proficiency. And third, it could provide opportunities for the students to connect with others who might be experiencing similar social and educational issues.

What arose however, during the course of the project were a number of instances that drew our attention to the pedagogic dynamics of the project and threw into relief the racialised and radically unsettled postcolonial context of contemporary Australia. The following anecdote illuminates the interruptive moment of Black bodies in ‘white spaces’. To thank students for participating in the project we took them to the beach for a swim and lunch. It was a beautiful Queensland day; blue skies and blue sea. Two boys did not go into the water but stood under the palm trees amidst picnicking families and playing children. At one point two little blond girls skipped by hand in hand. When they saw the tall, baggy clothed African boys they stopped dead in their tracks, staring for a long frozen moment. Slowly they walked backwards, turned and continued on their way at some distance from the visual interruptions to their lives. The boys must surely have noticed. How did they feel, what did they learn? We recalled the searing moment described by Fanon (1986): ‘Mama, see the Negro! I’m frightened!’ (112). Fanon explains how he came to recognise himself as a fearful and dislocated object: “‘Negro’, ‘nigger’, black”:

I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered, my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave ships and above all: ‘Sho’ good eatin’ (Fanon 1986: 112).

Fanon speaks about the capacity of terms like ‘Negro’, ‘nigger’ black’ to interpolate ‘black’ bodies into abjection through colonial regimes of knowledge and power. While the terms have been partially reappropriated in popular culture, often by those they were intended to denigrate, the conditions of knowledge and power which create and sustain racialisation of

non-western and frequently non-white others have not gone away. However, as demonstrated in the anecdote above, racialisation does not require a word to be spoken.

The figure of the refugee has simply been added to a long list of depictions that sweep forth to ‘silence distinctive historical, cultural and individual conditions and obliterate humanity’ (Said 1978: 27). We turn to Said’s work and postcolonial theory because it pays attention to representational forms often deemed peripheral to matters in question. By examining pre-existing historical formulations and categories postcolonial theory challenges modes of thought and ontological expressions which configure ‘others’ in essential terms and thereby occlude consideration of conditions that were not wiped away by formal processes of decolonisation (Iverson 2002). As on the beach the arrival of ‘black’ bodies in Australian schools recalls colonial stereotypes. In ‘activist ethnography’ concepts like *remembering*, *ambivalence*, and *epistemological tensions* enable us to further explore the historical context of power and racialised relations between researchers and researched.

Remembering:

Re/membering is a cry of defiance in the face of that which would steal our past, predetermine our future, cut short our present, challenge our humanity, render our lives meaningless, and make us invisible. It is our refusal to be silent, our rejection of oppression (Holland 1996: 99).

In the NOW project we asked the refugee young people to remember and re-tell experiences of schooling and everyday lives. And yet we were surprised by the images selected by the young people, and the narratives recounted in front of the whole group. There were few images of schools, and very few negative images. We propose that the process of remembering for young people is ‘always selective, always ambiguous, and always about trying to make meaning out of present lives and social conditions’ (Singh 1997).

Indeed, as researchers of ‘colour’ we are aware of our own personal selectivity in telling tales of exclusion, discrimination, race and racism. Such remembering risks dismissal and further exclusion for having a ‘chip on your shoulder’, but importantly it also risks ossifying the situation as ‘real’ and beyond the possibility of imagining differently. We came to realise that while refugee young people undoubtedly experience racism and discrimination in and out of school, their immediate priority was to appreciate and enjoy being a young person in Australia, to be young, and to enjoy living their new lives to the full (Ramirez and Matthews 2008)

Ambivalence:

Relatedly and following Ang (1996) we argue that ambivalence operates at two levels, at the structural level and at a more subjective level. At the structural level, ambivalence can be located in relation to the educational and social policies produced to assist refugee young people settle into Australian society. Limited recognition is given to the cultural, linguistic, religious and educational diversity of refugee young people. Moreover, this diversity is

‘contained’ within existing educational practices so that teachers, social and youth workers are expected to ‘manage’ and ‘tolerate’ the diversity of this group within existing resources. Refugee students are anxious and eager to learn, and teachers are anxious and eager to support them, but schools and education departments have little capacity to muster the resources, time and new structures sufficient to overcome years of missed schooling.

Ambivalence also operates at the subjective level in the micro-politics of everyday encounters. It is not that people do not know how to deal with difference; it is that they deal with difference ambivalently through a mixture of ‘contradictory or mutually exclusive’ emotions (Flax cited in Ang, 1997: 44). The concept of ambivalence was originally elaborated by Bhabha (1983) in his discussion of Fanon’s work. Bhabha argues that the stereotype depicted in Fanon’s narrative is not simply an arrested and negative object of fear, but a power/knowledge relation of ‘self’ to ‘other’ by which emotions and meanings are projected onto an ‘other’ to establish both binary positions; self and other:

It is through this notion of splitting and multiple belief that, I believe, it becomes easier to see the bind of knowledge and fantasy, power and pleasure, that informs the particular regime of visibility deployed in colonial discourse. ... the recognition and disavowal of 'difference' is always disturbed by the question of its re-presentation or construction. The stereotype is in fact an 'impossible' object. ... Stereotyping is not the setting up of a false image which becomes the scapegoat of discriminatory practices. It is a much more ambivalent text of projection and introjection, metaphoric and metonymic strategies, displacement, overdetermination, guilt, aggressivity; the masking and splitting of 'official' and phantasmatic knowledges to construct the positionalities and oppositionalities of racist discourse (Bhabha 1983: 33-34).

Diana Fuss (1995) delves deeper into the untenable psychic condition of those whom stereotypes and negative depictions seek to pinion in particular ways, in particular places, through particular languages:

Space operates as one of the chief signifiers of racial difference here: under colonial rule, freedom of movement (psychical and social) becomes a white prerogative. Forced to occupy, in a white racial phantasm, the static ontological space of the timeless ‘primitive’, the black man is disenfranchised of his very subjectivity. Denied entry into the alterity that underwrites subjectivity, the black man, Fanon implies, is sealed instead into a "crushing objecthood". Black may be a protean imaginary other for white, but for itself it is a stationary "object", objecthood, substituting for true alterity, blocks the migration through the Other necessary for subjectivity to take place. Through the violence of racial interpellation – ‘Dirty nigger!’ Or simply, 'Look, a Negro!' - Fanon finds himself becoming neither an ‘I’ nor a ‘not-I’ but simply ‘an object in the midst of other objects’: ‘the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye’ (B, 109). ... ‘Fixed’ by the violence of the racist interpellation in an imaginary

relation of fractured specularity, the black man, Fanon concludes, is "forever in combat with his own image (B, 194). The black man (contra Lacan) begins and ends violently fragmented (Fuss 1994: 142)

Our field-note observations identified several activities where some of the refugee young people referred to themselves as 'nigger' or 'my nigger'. This usage suggests an ambivalent and contradictory dealing with stereotypes intended to insult and dis-locate. First the terms are pressed into articulating with American rap culture, which for refugee young men in particular is admired for its association with fame, wealth and power, and second they take control of the image by playing with excess, by taking it to its limit with a vengeance, by owning and becoming the 'negative' image by defusing, possessing, and re-configuring. Contrary to Fuss and Fanon, this self referentiality does not simply fragment, fracture, objectify to prevent the occupation of either an 'I' or 'not-I', rather it appears to ambush objecthood and enable both 'I' (the speaker/self and object of derogation) and 'not-I' (the addressee/other and object of the derogation) to coexist ambivalently.

Epistemological Tensions

To understand what is going on in fieldwork comprises two distinct ways of ethnographic knowing, namely, by way of detachment and analysis and by way of 'being an emotional participant in what one is seeing' (Luttrell, 2003: 163). We needed both "ways of knowing". We needed to have the 'analytic distance, and to be present, able to acknowledge powerful emotions' (Luttrell, 2003: 162). Crucially, we tried not to reconcile these tensions, but hold them simultaneously as we engaged in the fieldwork, debriefed about our research encounters, and represented the narratives in public representations.

What one learns as a researcher through this process is a schizophrenic practice of remembering and forgetting, of being immersed, confused, and lost in the context where meaning is wholly dependent on sifting through one's own intellectual capacities, and often at the same time, of withdrawing, observing and denoting in objective concept laden explanations. We also note that these epistemological tensions are generated in and through the pedagogic communication of the research encounter. Here we had to negotiate the locational and interactional rules of the pedagogic/research process. Refugee students as research subjects voluntarily entered into pedagogic communication with the researchers. The power relations were asymmetrical and hierarchical, and based on different histories of access to knowledge, resources and opportunities. As researchers we outlined the objectives of the research project and expectations about how we wanted to conduct the research activities. We were clear about the importance of ethical consent and the rights and responsibilities of the research subjects. Students, however, constantly contested the whole research exercise.

We soon realised that many of the students entered into the research encounter to be able to 'hang out' in safe spaces with other refugee students, to improve their English language skills, to gain access to resources that they might not get in other spaces, and to have fun. We worried whether we would get the data that we needed for the research project, and at the

same time, whether we were doing the right thing by the students who urgently needed educational assistance. Luttrell (2003: 164) explains her own emotional anxiety as a researcher in the following way:

I think it is fair to say that the creative arts activities and my 'restoring the artist' approach was my way of reducing a host of anxieties. It helped soothe my feelings of powerlessness in the face of the girls' hardships and suffering and gave me a way to respond to powerful emotions (both the girls' and my own). Bringing creative activities into an otherwise restrictive school day enabled me to feel empowered, even if minimally, to subvert the educational practices that limited the girls' everyday learning. And, the art-making activities, but especially the book-making project, which produced such beautiful, precious, and artful objects that the girls cherished and that were so well received by others, enabled me to 'give back' to the girls in a concrete and immediate way (Luttrell 2003: 164)

Conclusion

Our consideration of visual methodology and ethnographic knowing/ unknowing seeks to move away from the idea that visual images comprise objective commodities – independent of people, contexts and political agendas. It seeks to examine the pedagogical processes comprising the the interface of data generation/interpretation beyond that of methodological discussions about objectivity and subjectivity which problematically limit the questions we ask of research. Questions of whether research is objective or subjective or the ways epistemological rationale map into methodology and methods have come to dominate methodological discussion to the exclusion of other debates. We challenge issues because we want to argue for visual research craft in education that pursues new directions and resists political forces which would standardise and scientise research scholarship (Freeman et al. 2007; Davies 2003). Subjectivity, variability and iteration, are intrinsic elements of knowledge generation and meaning making in research. In highlighting processes of *remembering, ambivalence, and epistemological tensions* in research we have sought to delve deeper into these processes, and in doing so challenge the turn to evidence based methods which risk, obscure or conceal meaning-making and intrinsic elements of data generation

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