WITHIN REACH: CREATIVE WAYS TO ENGAGE AND WORK WITH COMMUNITIES

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REQUEST TO SHIFT THE LENS

Social scientists explore other peoples lives
Asked to share my own journey today
Shifting to the other side of the lens
Contextualising my later research
NOTHING IS MORE TELLING THAN A STORY

The story I was invited to tell

BIOGRAPHY’S BEQUEST

Rejecting ‘hard to reach’

Listening to communities

Going beyond the surface statistics

Appreciating complexity

Informed policy and provision
CREATIVE METHODS

Photoelicitation
Collaging
Sandboxing
Mapping
Narratives
Film
Artwork
Music
VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY — A HISTORICAL LENS

19th Century
Photographic methods
Analyses and represent ‘other’ cultures
Embedded in power relations
Imperialism
Photography became part of the objectifying gaze of the colonial project
THE COLONIAL PROJECT

A picture held us captive…

Reductive realism

Regulatory system

Hierarchical ordering of race

Pseudo-science

Authorative evidence

Photograph is a construction of culture

Truthfulness of the appearance of things

The indignity of speaking for others
The ability to create written and especially printed records depends on a number of social, political and economic factors.

Tight binds between literacy, archives and the colonial authority in making of history.

Oral cultures are dominated by power.

Invisibility marginalised groups.

Or high visibility of demonised caricatures – ‘porn poverty’.

(see Byrne et al 2016)

Spatial folk devils (Mannay 2015)
VISUAL VOICES

Material products that emanate from the domestic activities of women, such as needlework, pottery and other crafts, serve as a testimony of their lives and achievements in the same way in which written documents produced in a formal political environment provide information on administrative and legal processes.

‘I quilt because I don’t want my history, my story to die. Quilting gives me a voice when I can’t write or speak’ (Goggin 2003)
ROBERTA BACIC

Politically-significant stories

Arpilleras - Pinochet's Chile - tapestries or quilts sewn by women that 'speak out' visually about political repression and human rights abuses through their stitches

Convey processes of resistance, memory and the search for truth and justice in a context of repression
PARTICIPATORY-PRODUCTIONS

Participatory-productions — social scientist as the participatory facilitator
Research ‘with’ not ‘on’ participants
Participant led
Presenting the everyday lived realities rather than the sensationalised
Engenders a space for empathy
Empowering marginalised groups
Participatory or partially participatory?
Critical ‘easy marriage’ visual and the participatory
PHOTO-ELICITATION AND ONLINE ANALYSIS
PHOTO-ELICITATION AND PHOTO-VOICE
MAPPING AND DRAWING
COLLAGING

IN DEBT

Crime

Family

Shopping

Saturday
STICKER ACTIVITIES
Suitability and ‘childishness’

Artistic ability

You will do my ‘participatory’ method!

Suite of methods

Flexibility

Drawing or collaging or photo-elicitation or narratives or film or objects orsandboxing or just interviews?
CURRENT WORK WITH YOUNG PARENTS

Photoeliciation, collage, collaborative sandboxing, timelines, emotion stickers
Service engagement, health, everyday experiences
Opportunities versus access denied
Mobile phone – monitoring
Wider societal discourses and everyday interactions
Other ‘older’ mothers
Not being listened to
WORKING WITH VISUAL DATA
VISION OR VISUALITY?
VISION OR VISUALITY?
The audience, then, actively make their own meanings from an image. Yet, if the research is interested in the ways in which people assign meanings to pictures the study of images alone as, as data whose meaning is intrinsic, is a mistaken method (Banks 2001)

The reading of visual images then suggests that the message lies within the visual image

Analysis provides the opportunity for the image to speak?

But cultural assumptions, personal knowledge and the context guide our reading
HOW THEN CAN WE KNOW THE IMAGE?

To gain an understanding of the internal narrative of the image

Imperative to acknowledge the role of the image-maker

The notion that the most salient aspect in understanding a visual image is what the maker intended to show is often referred to as auteur theory (Rose 2001)
ASSUMPTION AND EXPLANATION
Tina: You probably would have mentioned the college and the driving... and my Mum's house obviously but you wouldn't have known anything about the way I feel about the night
Tina offers me an insight into aspects of her world that I would not have considered salient and reveals a subjective relationship with the night sky that I have no prior knowledge of (Mannay 2010, p.100)

Images then can be understood not as simple windows to the truth but rather as contested and subject to multiple readings; and asking participants to interpret their images has become standard practice for many social science researchers (Luttrell 2010)
ETHICS, ANONYMITY AND IDENTIFICATION

Cautionary tale of Vidich and Bensman’s (1958) study ‘Small Town in Mass Society’

Publication of the study was met with an angry response from the participants

Recognise themselves and others in the research despite the use of obligatory pseudonyms (Clarke 2006)
Visual data production

Artistic interpretations and photographs documenting the immediate local area, participants and their friends and family

Concerns such as concealed identities and preserving anonymity become methodologically challenging
Payne (1996, p. 19) argues that ‘humans see as well as hear and think. If the locality is relevant, then it is even more important than in other walks of sociology to see what it looks like’

BUT Crow and Wiles (2008, p.9) contend, although research that only includes ‘safe’ photographs can be accused of losing ‘something of the discipline’s edge’ once research data are placed in the public domain and re-worked in the media the impact and interpretation of visual images become extremely difficult to control
WHAT ABOUT PARTICIPANTS WHO WANT TO BE SEEN?

My name is Anne-Marie and I am 19 years old. I have a daughter called Emily who is 5 years old and another baby due in November 2008. I have been with my partner for 3 years now and we rent a house together. He works full time and I finished working full time back in March, when I found out I was pregnant again.

I fell pregnant with my daughter when I was 13 years old from my 'first time'. Everyone thinks it won't happen to you but it did, to me. The father didn't want to know. My family didn't find out until I was 5 months pregnant. It was very tough but I didn't want to give up my baby or my schooling so I managed to have both. I went back to school when Emily was 4 months old and completed my GCSE's, coming out with 10 A-Cs.

I moved in with my partner after my GCSE's but I still continued at sixth form and gained 3 A levels and an AS level whilst running a house and looking after a family. This enabled me to start working for a high street bank.
‘ETHICS OF RECOGNITION’?

This approach though, is not suitable to all types of research data, especially in a study such as this where the majority of the participants want some level of anonymity.

Sensitive topics - domestics abuse, abortion, violence, divorce

Images cannot speak – whose voice?

Time immemorial

How can images be disguised ethically?
DO THESE DISGUISES WORK?
DISSEMINATION WITHOUT THE PICTURES

Poetry - I like rough pubs (Mannay 2013)
Dialogic epistolary form – letter writing (Carroll 2015)
Play – Under us All – (Richardson 2015)
Visual re-representations
VISUAL RE-REPRESENTATIONS

http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/cascade/looked-after-children-and-education/
https://www.youtube.com/user/ministryoflifetv
SUMMARY

Visual methods can enable;
Participatory relationships
Introduce new topics and issues; and ‘fight familiarity’
Resist the ‘social work’ interview
Ways to work outside the confines of language
Inform policy and practice agendas
But need to take a mosaic approach, consider interpretation and enable ethical yet impactful dissemination
REFERENCES


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Richardson, M. 2013. Embodied intergenerational family position, place and masculinity. Gender, Place and Culture, ifirst edition http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2013.855710


Thank you for listening!