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Using Participatory Visual Methodology to Work with Young Women in Rural KwaZulu-Natal

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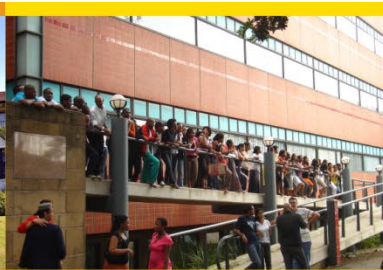
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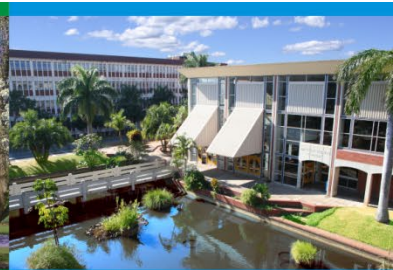
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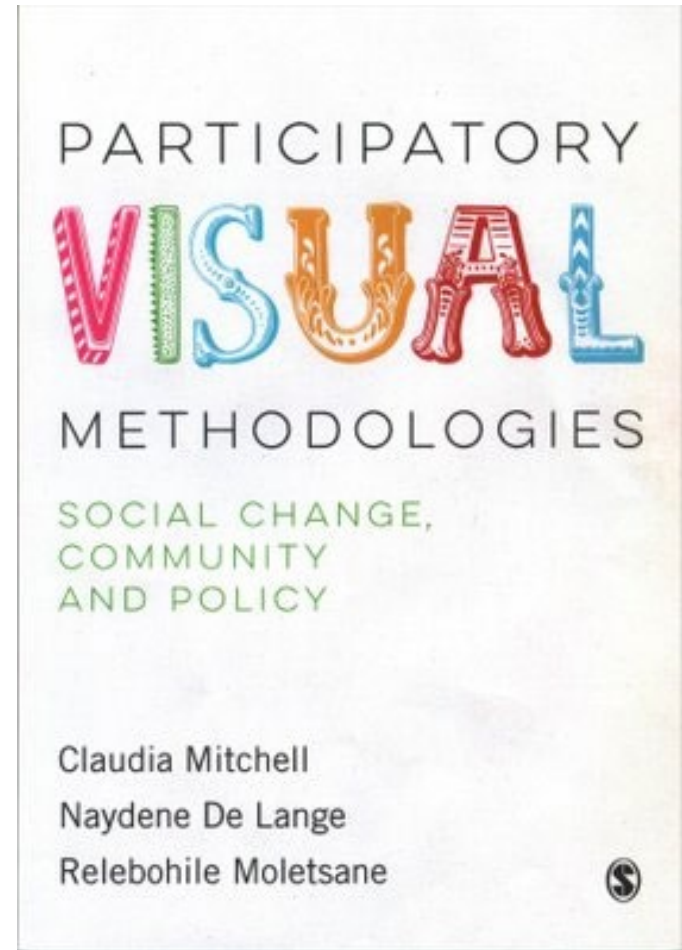
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UKZN INSPIRING GREATNESS

- **PARTICIPATORY** Visual Methodologies (PVM) also participatory visual research (PVR)
- Participatory Research
 - Theoretical foundations, principles, assumptions
- WE-SAY project visual methods & data analysis



Theoretical Foundations

- Theoretical foundations:
 - **Action research** (Lewin, 1951) & Freire (1970) **Pedagogy of the Oppressed**
 - **Social constructionism & postmodernism:**
 - Foucault: scientific knowledge often has **little relevance** in people's everyday lives, but instead serves to **maintain existing** institutional arrangements that **limit power** to members of economic, social and political elites (Rodwell, 1998)
 - **Critical Theory** (research as social change; methodology serves as intervention)

Participatory Research

- Umbrella term: approaches that share a commitment to **active & meaningful collaboration** between researchers & participants throughout the the research process (Macaulay, 2017; Bradbury, 2015)
- Knowledge:
 - **socially constructed** within a complex cultural & historical context
 - by patterns & structures of **power** privilege certain kinds of knowledge over others (Mertens, 2009)
 - situated, subjective, value-laden, & mediated by power relations
- **more equitable sharing of power & control** (lower the power gradient/negotiate power differences) in the research process (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995)

Participatory Research

- ...is a **subjective and reflexive** form of qualitative data production... Complexity, partial truths, & multiple subjectivities (Lather, 2007)
- **Co-Researcher Participants (CRPs)**
 - are recognised as **experts in their own lives and the phenomenon under study**
 - who hold and are co-producers of valuable & legitimate knowledge about the phenomenon
 - people we work with = researchers themselves, in pursuit of answers to the questions of their daily struggle and survival (Pant, nd)

Assets & Agency

- a strength- or asset-based rather than deficit perspective
- recognise different kinds of **agency** & ways of exercising it
- **resources** available to CRPs internally & in their communities
 - Challenge/nuance the narratives about black women in the global South Social Change
- power relations, social, cultural, & economic **constraints** on CRPs

How participatory is your participatory research?

- **actively & meaningfully** engage participants in as much of the research process as is possible
- CRPs have more **control** over the research process & outcomes
- Reality = huge variation in the extent & nature of participation
 - from little more than representation to full participation & collaboration in the entire research process
- Control rarely given entirely over to the community and/or participants **do not necessarily always want it** (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Wilkinson & Wilkinson, 2018).

Voice, Representation, Relationships

PARTICIPATORY VISUAL METHODOLOGY

Why the Visual?



Photo: Naydene de Lange, a view from her kitchen window Saturday 14 January 2016

PVM: Research as Social Change

- Constructedness, Collectivity, Reflexivity
- taps into 'let's do something' creativity & has an element of fun
- **Create space** for
 - work towards lowering the power gradient
 - exploring the 'democratizing' &/or decolonizing potential of PR (Mitchell et al., 2005; De Lange, 2012)
 - CRPs to take ownership of &/or lead the process
 - people's **voices to be heard** in participating in social dialogue about issues affecting them
 - **express, enhance, share & analyse** their knowledge of life & their circumstances, & to **plan and act** upon these (Chambers, 1994)

PVM: Research as Social Change

- the process of doing **research** does not have to be separated from **intervention**
⇒ **Tool** for: inquiry, representation, & taking action
- CRPs part of the **interpretive process/data analysis**
- Policy-making can start at the community level
- collaborative knowledge production **process** ⇒
nuanced, situated understandings of the phenomenon under study & contribute to transformation & challenge existing social & material circumstances

The Process & the Product

- stimulate **communication & dialogue** with & among CRPS & with broader audiences including policy-makers as the **first step towards social change**
- sense of **ownership** over the data & process of collaborative meaning-making (Didowsky, Ungar & Liebenberg, 2010).
- help to facilitate discussions about sensitive topics which participants might find difficult to talk about using other methods such as interviews and focus group discussions.
- language barriers
- Answers to questions we didn't know to ask
- Foreground the voices of the participants
- Voice & Representation

Curatorial Statements

Understandings of Women's Work in SSA

This exhibition comes from a drawing activity conducted as part of a Participatory Visual Methodology (PVM) workshop. The drawings in this exhibition were produced by a group of co-researcher participants from the United Kingdom, Nigeria, and South Africa at a workshop on 08 December 2020.

The prompt for the drawing activity was, “Draw a picture that represents your current understanding of young women’s work in SSA”. The facilitators explained the prompt and talked about how drawings are symbolic or representations of things.

The drawings in the exhibition tell a story of experiences of discrimination... In essence, the aim was to explore the way in which people experience different forms of discrimination in different ways. Our drawings and discussions suggest that ... (ADD SUMMARY)

By PVM Workshop Participants...

ETHICS IN PARTICIPATORY VISUAL RESEARCH

Ethical considerations in PVM

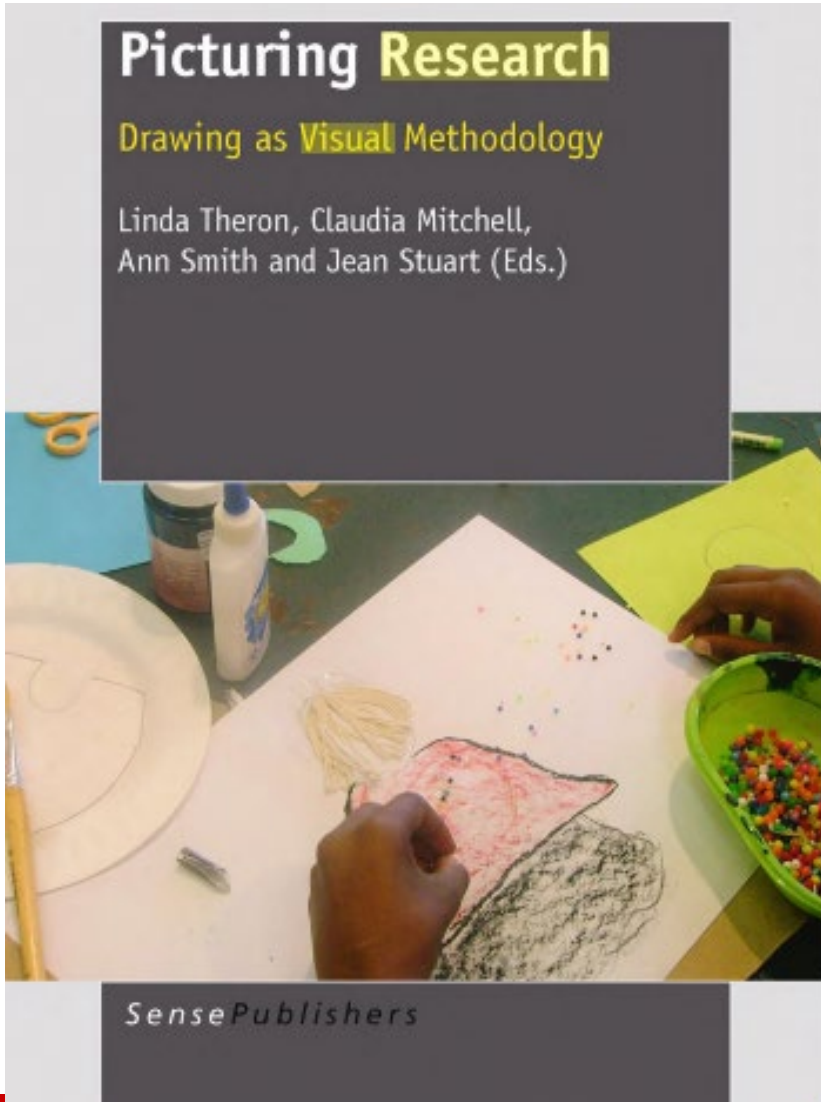
- Do most good
- How informed is informed assent/consent?
(release forms)
- Anonymity, confidentiality, ownership
 - Being recognized in visual products
- Visual/digital literacy
- Choice of method/technology
- Relationships
- Voice, representation



The methods we used in WE-SAY

- Methods: drawing, photovoice, cellphilm, participatory community mapping, policy posters & action briefs
- PVM workshops run in very similar ways regardless of particular method
- It's the discussion of the visual artefacts that is the most important, i.e. what do CRPs say about their drawing/cellphilm/other, what it means, & what it communicates

Drawing



- Accessible and inexpensive: quick, unthreatening and fun
- Suitable data collection tool with both children and adults. Often useful with participants who have limited literacy skills
- Can be powerful as visual metaphors → Entry point into a vast range of critical issues
- Provides insight into the participants' points of view
- Makes use of the meanings that participants give to their images, rather than “reading in” your own interpretations

Reflections on Drawing as Method

“What I like about drawings, as method, is their simplicity. All you need is paper and a pencil or pen. But if there is simplicity in collecting the data, there is complexity in the interpretive process ... What I also like about drawings is their tangibility, their concreteness ... But more than this, I like the immediacy of drawings and their potential to move audiences.” (Mitchell, 2011, p. 2)

- Flexible data generation tool - can adapt the approach: age, topic, context

Photovoice

- Participatory Photography – Paulo Freire
- Photovoice – Caroline Wang (Wang & Burris, 1997)
- ‘putting cameras in the hands of participants’ – to produce photographs that document their perspectives on their lives, and their realities:

The process of taking a photograph provides an opportunity to **develop a story that was previously rejected, silenced, or overlooked**... the photograph’s narrative becomes a participatory site for wider storytelling, spurring community members to further reflect, discuss, and analyse the issues that confront them.

(Singhal & Devi, 2003, p. 7)

- Often an explicit social/policy change objective, e.g. Wang

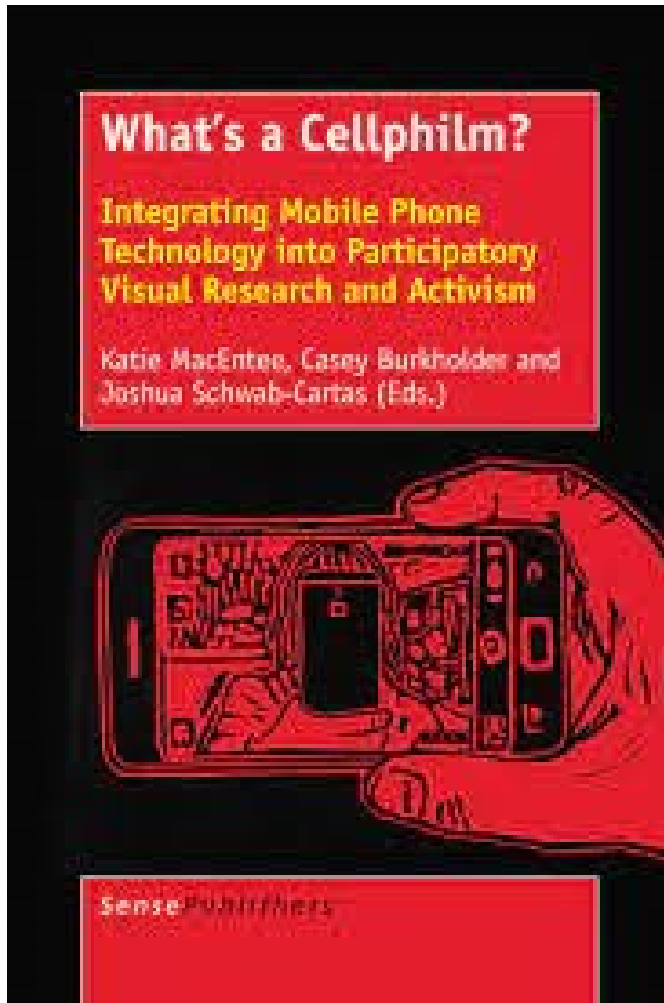
Images

Images contribute to how we see ourselves, how we define and relate to the world, and what we perceive as significant or different. **The lesson an image teaches does not reside in its physical structure but rather in how people interpret the image in question.** Images can influence our definition of the situation regarding the social, cultural and economic conditions that affect women's health.

(Wang, 1999, p. 186)

Cellphilm

- Pioneered by Jonathan Dockney and Keyan Tomaselli (2009) in South Africa 🇿🇦
 - Cellphone + Film = **cellphilm**
 - **Short** films created on a cellphone/smartphone/tablet
 - Ubiquity of the cellphone (smart phone, tablets)
- ➡ familiarity, democratise the research process, available after we leave



- Can articulate **nuance** through: framing, body language, silences, music, etc.
- Different genres
- **Immediacy**: production, analysis
- FUN!

Some things to think about...

- No post-production
- We try to not be involved
- Anonymity
- Who will see them? What are they for?
- Embodied
- What happens when things go too far/get uncomfortable?

Participatory Community Mapping

- Builds on asset mapping pioneered by John McKnight and John Kretzman (1993)
- a process of documenting the **tangible & intangible resources** of a community by viewing the community as a place with **strengths or assets** that need to be preserved and enhanced, not just deficits to be remedied (Kerka, 2003)
- reconfirm their capabilities & discover possibilities for mobilizing to meet their interests & needs, & to fulfil community aspirations (Rossing, 2000)
- Useful as a rapid visual analysis of the topic (Burgess-Allen & Owen-Smith, 2010)
- Turning away from a deficit/saviour/missionary logic: The complex narrative
- Collaborative problem-solving

Policy Posters & Action Briefs

- Policy posters:
 - designed by CRPs in response to a prompt
 - typically include an image, usually drawn or photographed by CRPs
 - simple, clear message directed towards a particular audience (often policy-makers and/or –implementers)
- Action brief:
 - “a short, targeted document that maps out a particular social issue and offers recommendations for change” (Mitchell, De Lange and Moletsane (2017, p. 158))

Policy Posters & Action Briefs

- explicit purpose of being used as tools for awareness-raising & advocacy towards the goal of social and policy change
- easy to consume, easy to distribute, & can stimulate discussion and debate
- Process helps CRPs to think more practically about
 - how the problems they identified could be described & explained
 - who should be involved in addressing these problems
 - how we could go about getting support for & facilitating action.
 - clearly articulate the nature of the problems experienced by girls & young women from their own perspective

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- Product can be used to demonstrate to stakeholders (e.g. parents, community, & the traditional leadership) that
 - CRPs are more than capable of understanding & analysing their lives and community
 - their understanding of certain dynamics, norms & practices cannot be assumed to be the same as that of the adults in their lives
 - they are perfectly capable of speaking in defence of their position

What counts as data?

- Brainstorming list of issues/ideas/challenges in the community
- Audio recordings of brainstorming sessions
- Audio recording of the explanation by the producers of the videos before and after viewing
- Cellphilm
- Audio recording of the discussion from the audience Other?
- Storyboard

Participatory Data Analysis...

- Layers of textuality in analyzing texts: Three 'layers' of analysis (**John Fiske, 1987**):
 - *Primary* texts: e.g. cellfilm
 - *Production* texts: what the creators say about primary text
 - *Secondary or audience* text: viewer or audience responses
- **How we do it**
 - Group tells us about their 'philm'
 - We watch it
 - Discuss it – Themes? Questions?
 - Final Discussion after all 'philm' screened
- **Continual & iterative process, starts during the workshop**