ONE

Introduction: Getting the picture

A few years ago Ardra Cole and Maura McIntyre, researchers at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Canada, embarked upon a long-term study of adult caregivers caring for their elderly parents suffering from Alzheimer's disease. *Living and Dying with Dignity: The Alzheimer's Project* (Cole and McIntyre, 2006) focuses specifically on the fact that relatively little is known about the experiences of caregivers, particularly taking on the role of 'parent', and, critically, what kind of support they need to sustain themselves in their care of their parents – a care that cuts across legal issues, health care, emotional care and public education. In their work, Cole and McIntyre conducted many single face-to-face interviews with the caregivers, along with interviews of support groups, social workers and physicians. They translated their findings into an exhibition first shown in the foyer of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Headquarters in Toronto. This exhibition was comprised of a number of installations, one of which was titled *Life Lines* (2008) and was made up of a gigantic clothesline spread from one wall to another with undergarments and adult-sized diapers hanging from it. The website of the Centre for Arts Informed Research describes *Life Lines* as follows:

> *Description*: A free standing clothesline about 20 feet in length is held up by ropes and secured by concrete blocks at each end. Astro turf carpeting represents the grass below; a chair invites the viewer to sit and relax. The clothes on the line are blowing in the breeze. The undergarments are ordered from left to right according to the time in the life cycle at which they are worn. (*Life Lines*, 2008)

Another installation, *Still Life 1*, included a series of refrigerator doors, each with a different arrangement of fridge magnets holding a variety of artefacts: a school photo of a child (a grandchild), reminder notes about medication, and so on. In another of their exhibitions set up in Halifax there was a voice-activated tape recorder where viewers could sit and tell their own 'caring for' stories. Yet another installation, *Alzheimer's Still Life 2*, contained a series of visual images taken from family photograph albums of the two artist-researchers, both of whom themselves are adult caregivers who looked after their mothers suffering from Alzheimer's. As

their curatorial statement expressed, the particular photos 'were chosen because they so clearly signify the mother–daughter connection over a life span and poignantly elucidate the role reversal that inevitably occurs when Alzheimer's interrupts, confuses, and redefines a relationship' (*Alzheimer's Still Life 1*, 2008).

Their work demonstrates some of the complexities related to what is actually meant by visual methodologies, showing, for example, the multiple forms of visual data: domestic photos taken from family albums and items taken from material culture (adult-sized diapers, fridge magnets). Their work also shows the multiple ways of working with the visual. Working with the visual is about both representation (transforming the interviews into visual representations through the use of material culture) and dissemination (creating a visual exhibition that drew the attention of the public as well as health care researchers and health care policy makers), but is also, as we see in the second level of interviews with the participants, a mode of inquiry (a type of data elicitation). But there are two other aspects of the visual that are also critical. One relates to epistemology and how it is that we come to know what we know (and how to account for subjectivity). Cole and McIntyre are inside their own experience as caregivers as much as they are studying the experiences of the hundreds of other caregivers who they have interviewed and met through their exhibitions. The other aspect relates to broader issues of engaging in social science inquiry in the first place and the question, 'What difference does this make anyway?' For Cole and McIntyre (2008), and for an increasing number of researchers engaged in social research, the idea of how data collection can in and of itself serve as an intervention and be potentially transformative is key. Given the impact of these installations, people with a personal connection to the topic are 'provoked' to tell their own stories (Knowles and Cole, 2008). And if visual data can mobilize individuals or communities to act, it may be possible to think of the idea of visual research and social action.

Participatory Visual Approaches

'Draw a scientist'; 'Take photographs of where you feel safe and not so safe'; 'Produce a video documentary on an issue "in your life"'; 'Find and work with seven or eight pictures from your family photographs that you can construct into a narrative about gender and identity'. Each of these prompts speaks to the range of tools that might be used to engage participants (children, teachers, out-of-school youth, women farmers, community health care workers) in visual research (drawings, simple point-and-shoot cameras, video cameras, family photographs) and suggests some of the types of emerging data: drawings, the photographic images and captions produced in the photovoice project, the video texts produced in a community video project, and the newly created album or visual text produced by the participants in an album project. In each case, there is the immediate visual text (or primary text as John Fiske, 1991, terms it) – the drawing, photo

image, collage, photo-story, video documentary/video narrative, or album, and that can include captions and more extensive curatorial statements or interpretive writings that reflect what the participants have to say about the visual texts. In essence, participation does not have to be limited to 'take a picture' or 'draw a picture', though the level of participation will rest on time, the age and ability of the participants and even their willingness to be involved. A set of drawings or photos produced in isolation of their full participatory context (or follow-up) does not mean that they should therefore be discarded, particularly not in large-scale collections (Mitchell, 2005). Each of these examples can also include what Fiske (1991) terms 'production texts' – or how participants engaged in the process talk about their work, regardless of whether they are producing drawings, photo images, video narratives, or 'reconstructing' a set of photographs into new texts. Production texts are often elicited during follow-up interviews.

Each of the visual practices noted above and described in more detail throughout this book brings with it, of course, its own methods, traditions and procedures, ranging from approaches that are relatively 'low tech' and can be easily carried out without a lot of expensive equipment to those that require more expensive cameras; from those that are camera-based to those that provide for a focus on things and objects (including archival photographs); from those where participants are respondents to those that engage participants as producers; from work where researcher and participants collaborate to those where it is the researcher herself who is the producer and interpreter. The constant is some aspect of the visual as a mode of inquiry and representation, and as a mode of dissemination and engagement.

About *Doing Visual Research*

As the title suggests, this book focuses on the 'doing' of visual research. If the book had a subtitle, it would surely be something like 'Taking it personally'. The approaches that I take and the examples that I draw on come out of close to two decades of visual research, working primarily with photography, drawings, community video, collage, and more recently digital storytelling, with the focus on participatory research. The 'taking it personally' seems to me to have an obvious link to the nature of participatory visual research, in relation to both the researcher and the participants, and in relation to reflexivity as a critical feature of visual research.

There are, of course, many visual approaches, only some of which are addressed in the book, and many cross-cutting themes, including ethical concerns in the doing of visual research, the management of visual data and the ways in which doing visual research can contribute to policy change. Here, I offer examples that are mostly drawn from my own work and the work of the various research teams and graduate students I have had the privilege of collaborating with in a variety of contexts and geographic locations. Much of the work comes out of studies in

sub-Saharan Africa, an area that as a function of history and circumstance is home to some of the most challenging health and social issues in the world but also some of the most generative work when it comes to the optimism for what *can* be done through the visual.

This book is made up of ten chapters organized into three main sections. In the first section, there are two chapters. In Chapter 1, 'Getting the picture', I simply try to provide something of a map of what constitutes visual research. Chapter 2 deals with ethical considerations in working with the visual. It may seem odd to offer a chapter on ethics at the very beginning of the book. Isn't that what one usually thinks of towards the end of a book, or something one includes after all else has been done in planning a project or research study? Ethical concerns, however, make up one of the three main sets of questions that I am repeatedly asked about in relation to doing visual research and, as such, seem like a good place to start. The other sets of concerns that underpin many of the subsequent chapters in this book relate to the questions, 'How to do this?' and 'What do I do with the data?'

Part II, 'Visual Methods for Social Change: Tools and Techniques', is made up of three chapters, each focusing on a specific method but located within a particular research area. The first chapter in this section, 'Not just an object', examines the uses of material culture in visual research. The issues of objects and things in visual research is one that is sometimes debated. However, the fact that even the tools and products of visual research (cameras, photographs, digital images) are objects and things suggests to me that they belong in a book on doing visual research.

The next chapter focuses on community-based photography and draws on an analysis of a number of photovoice projects with young people and adults in a variety of research settings and geographic locations. The third chapter (Chapter 5) in this section is on community video-making.

Part III, 'On Interpreting and Using Images', is meant to provide theoretical and practical approaches to working with visual data. Far from offering hard and fast rules for analysis, the various chapters in this section suggest a broad framework for what can be done with visual images. The section starts with 'Working with photo images: A textual reading on the presence of absence'. In this chapter, I offer what might be described as a situated reading of a set of photographs produced in one photovoice project in South Africa between 2004 and 2006. What I highlight here is the significance of developing a conceptual framework for analysis that complements method. The chapter uses the idea of loss – presence and absence – as an organizing framework for studying what's there and what's not there in the picture.

The next chapter, 'Data collections and building a democratic archive: "No more pictures without a context"', responds to the need for approaches to storing, managing and using visual data in ways that can be participatory. In so doing, it draws on recent work in the area of building digital archives and related studies on the use of technologies that make it possible to engage in participatory archiving with the actual 'producers' in community-based research. This makes it possible to add the dimension of participatory analysis to working with participatory visual studies.

The following chapter, 'Look and see: Images of image-making', is meant to draw attention to studying visually the producers themselves (and the process) in participatory and community-based research. What can we learn from 'looking at looking'? How do participants take pictures or work with video cameras, and how can a study of looking help to deepen an understanding of visual research?

Chapter 9, 'What can a visual researcher do with a camera?', builds on the work of visual anthropologist Jay Ruby and his essay in *Picturing Culture*, 'Researching with a camera: The anthropologist as picture taker' (Ruby, 2000b). In this chapter, I describe and analyse the idea of the composite video as an analytical tool (in its production), a tool of dissemination (in working with communities) and as a tool of inquiry (in generating new research questions with communities).

The book ends with a chapter titled 'Changing the picture: How can images influence policy-making?' There is probably no area within visual research, at least in the context of participatory research, that is more compelling than the area around the question of 'So what?' or 'What difference does this make?' (Mitchell, 2009c). The chapter provides examples of how the visual has been used in policy-making frameworks and, as such, offers some strategic possibilities for this work. Inevitably there is overlap between and among the various chapters. Many of the examples cited in relation to visual ethics have their root in photovoice work and work with participatory video. Consequently, a similar point will be argued in more than one place. For the reader this overlap will, I hope, help to emphasize certain points.

Critical Issues in *Doing Visual Research*

Working across genres of visual methodologies

One of the challenges of writing a book that sets out to provide something of a comprehensive look at some of the key aspects of doing visual research and which is segmented into chapters is that it might suggest a set of discrete approaches: this is photovoice, here is video, or this is what one does with drawings. In actual fact, much of this work cuts across genres. Drawings might be used as an entry point to working with video or photography, and, indeed, in one project with several of my colleagues in Rwanda, storyboarding (or using drawing in planning out a video) was the main activity with the participants, followed by the various groups performing their stories (Mitchell et al., in press). Thus, although 'video' was in the imagination of the participants from the beginning (what would this issue look like as a video?), the ways of enacting the issue came through the mode of drawing and performance.

Participatory engagement itself also varies, as a case study from Swaziland demonstrates. *The School Teacher* is a play written by two secondary-school teachers in a rural school in Swaziland as a way to highlight the situation of teachers (mostly male) who sexually harass and abuse students (mostly young women). As studies

such as the Human Rights Watch *Scared at School* (HRW, 2001) study attest, the issue of teachers as perpetrators of violence is one of the various challenges of making schools safe. The play focuses on a male secondary-school teacher who singles out one of his students, Emma. In the drama, we see the teacher calling on Emma all the time, touching her face, handing out special favours and candy – all in front of the other students who are quite aware of his intentions. He regularly keeps Emma after class, invites her to his house and notes that it is really Emma who he loves and not his wife. His wife finds out that Emma has visited the house and points out to her husband the absurdity of this situation because in addition to everything else, they (the husband and wife) are both HIV positive. Meanwhile, Emma is in trouble with her parents when they discover that she has been at the teacher's house, and a visit from the teacher's wife further complicates the situation. In the final scene, which also involves the Principal, the full implications of the situation are realized with the teacher being fired.

The School Teacher is a good example of what Goldstein and others would describe as performed ethnography in that it draws on an emerging body of data on sexual violence in and around schools in Swaziland: sexual harassment of female students by teachers, non-monogamous relationships, power abuses, and so on. The term 'performed ethnography' as used by Tara Goldstein (2000) suggests ways that performance and drama can be used in a 'research as social change' framework, a feature which draws on the work of Clifford and Marcus (1986), who have proposed an agenda for ethnography that encourages more innovative, dialogic, reflexive and experimental writing, which can reflect a deeper self-consciousness of the workings of authority, power and the partialness of truth. In response, there has been both a literary and a performance turn in ethnography (Cole and McIntyre, 2004; Denzin, 1997; Goldstein, 2000; Gray, 2000; Gray and Sinding, 2002; Gray et al., 2000, 2001a, 2001b; Mitchell, 2004; Weber and Mitchell, 2004).

While the issues that are presented in the play are serious, the mode of delivery is melodramatic and uses greatly exaggerated physical movements. Although much of the play is spoken in Siswazi, it is not difficult to follow the storyline because so much of it relies on physical gestures. The play was originally staged outdoors and in front of a live audience made up of the entire student body of the school. Because of its melodramatic style and the familiarity of the various local characters in the play, it was received with hilarity and great applause. The actual comments of the actors afterwards were also very revealing in that they made it quite clear that schools should be safe places for all learners, and one could see how their enthusiasm from participating in the play was translating into commitment to doing something about the issues. The two teachers who were interviewed afterwards also spoke of how important it is for teachers to address these issues. Indeed, their work is a good example of the uses of performance as a tool for self-study through visual arts-based methodologies more generally (see Mitchell et al., 2009; Weber and Mitchell, 2004).

But *The School Teacher* did not stop there. Because I was working with a video-production team at the time that *The School Teacher* was staged (as part of a strategy

of videotaping for UNICEF and the Ministry of Education's various youth-focused initiatives on sexual violence), it seemed useful to see if the live production could be converted into a video recording, with the idea that perhaps it would lend itself to a broader audience if it was available on video. At the same time, we recognized the limitations of video production. While live drama requires space, props, the availability of the actors and so on, it generally 'works' in relation to personal engagement. Producing engaging narrative on video is more challenging. In this case of video production, these limitations included the production quality itself (because the footage was all acquired in an outdoor space as opposed to a studio, where sound quality might have been more easily monitored) and, of course, the attention span of a television- or film-viewing audience as opposed to the attention of a live audience. We decided that the 45–50-minute span of the original drama production was too long as a video production. We also decided that because the mini-production of *The School Teacher* was to become part of a longer video documentary on youth speaking out against sexual violence, there was some necessity to signal that this segment of the documentary required a different stance in terms of viewing. For that reason, we produced the entire sequence of *The School Teacher* in black and white, using subtitles throughout to compensate at times for the quality of the sound (and also to make the production accessible to both English and Siswazi-speakers). The result is that the final production has the look of a print-text photo-story or photo-novella (see also Stuart, 2004).

At the same time, we experimented with various filmic conventions of filming a live production that would add something of the 'taking action' possibilities for future audiences. Drawing, for example, on the 1975 (Shikaneder and Bergman) film production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, we included shots of the audience from time to time 'artfully engaged' in viewing (laughing, applauding and so on) and a final line-up of the actors coming out on the stage one by one to take a bow. We also included shots of one or more of the film crew shooting from a different angle from time to time, so that we are reminded, as the audience, that we too are part of the production. At the end of the actual play but before the very end of the production, we switched back into full colour mode to include interviews with each of the characters and the teachers who wrote the play. How did 'the school teacher' himself, a young man in Grade 12, feel about the play and what messages did he want to get across? What did it mean for the Emma-character to play a sexually abused school girl? How does an 18-year-old play Emma's father, and how does taking on such a role contribute to a new understanding of the issues? And what difference did it make, we asked them, to see themselves on the big screen?

The point here is simply that the participatory aspects of participatory research can vary even within one project. The genres of the visual also vary. In this case, play-writing, performance, video production and the use of filmic conventions converge. Each component could be studied: final video production; the views of the actors playing the various roles; the producers (in this case the two teachers who wrote the play and the film crew); and, of course, the various audiences (the original live audience but then the various cinema audiences since the video can

travel) – and there could also be the perspectives of the funders who had identified the issue of sexual violence in the first place.

About visual methodologies and technologies

I would be remiss if I did not say something about technology right at the outset. When I first started working in the area of film, as I describe in the last chapter of the book, my students and I worked with a cumbersome Super 8 camera that we had on loan for a short time each month, over the school year, from the National Film Board of Canada. Some of my most recent work with participatory video has involved a small Flip camera the size of a mobile phone, and the 'footage' can be immediately downloaded onto my computer for viewing. Close to a decade ago, when I first started doing work in the area of photovoice with communities, I worked entirely with disposable cameras or simple easy-load point-and-shoot cameras. In an urban setting, we were able to have the film processed at a one-hour or two-hour photo shop, and in a rural setting, we had to wait close to a week to see the prints.

Much of the recent work has been with digital cameras, where participants 'on the spot' create PowerPoint presentations and digital stories of their work and then as a group look at the images on a big screen. And up until recently my office was full of file cabinets full of prints and CDs and DVDs, as well as cardboard boxes full of drawings. And although increasingly these collections have been digitized, ways of working with digitized collections have still often been a challenge. Now, as I describe in Chapter 8, I have access to software that allows me to begin to study visual data related to a theme such as safety and security across three–four years. And even better, the participants in the rural community where our team works in South Africa can themselves access, code and work with the data. Even cost is a major consideration. A small Flip camera can cost a fifth of the price of a regular but modest camcorder. Moreover, many participants will already be steeped in the visual through their own use of mobile phones. As many recent news reports have pointed out, there are now eye-witnesses who have managed to capture visual data that would not have existed several decades ago. I mention all of these developments in visual research because they could be a little daunting in relation to what can be said about method, particularly in recognition of the fact that by the time this book is published, there will be other technologies that I haven't even thought of and indeed that might not currently exist.

However, beyond thinking about technology in a more general way, it is also important to note, as media expert Henry Jenkins (2006) indicates, that the approaches themselves often represent a type of convergence, particularly in the context of new technologies. A mobile phone, for example, can be a multimodal text in itself capable of producing still photographs and videos that are easily uploadable to Facebook or some other social networking space, which then becomes yet another visual text. For this reason, I focus on process and in particular highlight more the interpretive aspects related to the visual.

Interpretive processes and visual research

There is no quick and easy way to map out the interpretive processes involved in working with visual research, any more than there is a quick and easy way to map out the interpretive processes for working with any type of research data, although Jon Prosser (1998), Marcus Banks (2001), Gillian Rose (2001) and Sarah Pink (2007), among other researchers working in the area, offer useful suggestions and guidelines. Some considerations include the following:

1   At the heart of visual work is its facilitation of reflexivity in the research process, as theorists on seeing and looking such as John Berger (1972) and Susan Sontag (1977) have so eloquently discussed. Indeed, as Denzin (2003) and others have noted, situating one's self in the research texts – taking it personally – is critical to engaging in the interpretive process.
2   Close-reading strategies (drawn from literary studies, film studies and socio-semiotics, for example) are particularly appropriate to working with visual images. These strategies can be applied to working with a single photograph (see Moletsane and Mitchell, 2007), a video documentary text (see Mitchell et al., in press; Weber and Mitchell, 2007), or a cinematic text (Mitchell and Weber, 1999).
3   Visual images are particularly appropriate to working with drawing in that participants themselves are central to the interpretive process. In work with photovoice, for example, participants can be engaged in their own analytic procedures with the photos: Which ones are the most compelling? How are your photos the same or different from others in your group? What narrative do your photos evoke? (Similarly, with video productions as part of community video, participants can be engaged in a reflective process, which also becomes an analytic process: What did you like best about the video? What would you change if you could? Who should see this video?) The interpretive process does not have to be limited to the participants and the researcher. Communities themselves can decide what a text means. Because visual texts are very accessible, the possibilities for inviting other interpretations are key. The process of interpreting visual data can benefit from drawing on new technologies. Transana, for example, is a software application that is particularly appropriate to working with video data (Cohen, 2007). Digitizing and creating metadata schemes can be applied to working with photovoice data (see, for example, Park et al., 2007).
4   The process of working with the data can draw on a range of practices that may be applied to other types of transcripts and data sets, including content analysis and engaging in coding and developing thematic categories.
5   Archival photos (both public and private) bring their own materiality with them and may be read as objects or things. Where are they stored? Who looks after them? (See also Edwards and Hart, 2004; Rose, 2001.)
6   Visual data (especially photos produced by participants) is often subjected to more rigorous scrutiny by ethics boards than most other data because it is so

accessible. There are many different ways of working with the visual, and the choice of which type of visual approach should be guided by, among other things, the research questions, the feasibility of the study, the experience of the researcher and the acceptability to the community under study.

7   Working with the visual to create artistic texts (e.g., installations, photo albums, photo exhibitions, video narratives), as we saw in the case of Cole and McIntyre noted earlier, should be regarded as an interpretive process in and of itself. This point is a critical one in understanding the relationship between visual studies and arts-based research (Bagley and Cancienne, 2002; Barone, 2001; Denzin, 1997; Eisner, 1995; Knowles and Cole, 2008).

On the limitations and challenges of doing visual research

'By a more visual social science', writes Luc Pauwels, 'is meant a social science that not only looks into visual phenomenon but also tries to integrate visual approaches and techniques in its processes of research and communication' (Pauwels, 2006: 152). Lister and Wells (2001) stress the unprecedented importance of imaging and visual technologies in contemporary society and urge researchers to take account of those images in conducting their investigations. Over the last three decades, an increasing number of qualitative researchers have indeed taken up and refined visual approaches to enhance their understanding of the human condition. These uses encompass a wide range of visual forms, including films, videos, photographs, drawings, cartoons, graffiti, maps, diagrams, web graphics, signs and symbols. Although many of these scholars are located within visual sociology and anthropology, cultural studies, and film and photography, or media studies, a growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship is incorporating certain image-based techniques into its research methodology.

Research designs that use the visual raise many new questions and suggest new blurrings of boundaries: Is it research or is it art? Is it truth? Does the camera lie? Is it just a 'quick fix' on doing research? How do you overcome (or highlight) the subjective stance? The emergence of visual and arts-based research as a viable approach is putting pressure on the traditional structures and expectations of the academy. Space, time and equipment requirements, for example, often make it difficult for researchers to present their work in the conventional venues and formats of research conferences. But there are other questions that interrogate even further the relationship between the researched and the researcher. Do we as researchers conduct ourselves differently when the participants of our studies are 'right there' – either in relation to the photos or videos they have produced or in their performance pieces? How can visual interventions be used to educate community groups and point to ways to empower and reform institutional practices? What new ethical issues come to the fore in these action-oriented studies? How do we work with such concepts as 'confidentiality' and 'anonymity' within this kind of work (for example in research where stigma itself is a major issue)?

Clearly, some studies lend themselves to one type of visual data more than another (archival photos over video production, for example), and not *all* questions are best answered through the use of the visual. Using visual methods is not the only approach and not all audiences or recipients of research (funders, policy makers, review boards) are equally open to qualitative research generally or visual research specifically. At the same time, the preparation of new researchers in this area (postgraduate students, for example) relies on access to methodology textbooks and other course material that offers them full support for making informed choices about methods. It is incumbent on those who are teaching courses in research methodologies to ensure that students are exposed to a variety of approaches, and even if the students do not choose to work with the visual, they should be able to evaluate critically those studies that draw on visual methodologies in the same way that they can evaluate critically interview studies, case studies and so on. Concomittantly, it is critical that those of us whose research is grounded in visual methodologies ensure that we contribute to broader debates within and beyond our institutions about the kind of support that is needed, along with attention to critiques.

Changing the Picture?

'Why are there no white people in the film?'

'Why did you choose this talking head genre? Wouldn't it be more effective to create a storyline or a drama?'

'Where did you get the statistics about boys being at risk? Are those numbers true?'

'Could you help us do research?'

'Why can't we produce something like this right here in KwaZulu-Natal where the problems are even greater than in the Western Cape?'

The first three questions in this list may sound like the kinds of questions that would be raised by an external reviewer of a journal article, or the kinds of questions asked by a film critic. The last two questions, however, suggest a different relationship; they are questions that demonstrate a very specific purpose. These were questions posed to me at a Youth Day event in rural South Africa a few years ago by members of the audience, young people from the area, who had just viewed *Fire+Hope* (2004), a documentary that I produced (with Shannon Walsh as director) with young people in Khayelitsha, a township just outside Cape Town. *Fire+Hope* draws on a 14-month project on creative approaches to addressing HIV and AIDS and makes use of interviews with the participants, interspersed with statistics on the issues and performances by several well-known poets, such as the Common Man. As I stood on the stage and attempted to answer the questions posed to me, I think I would have preferred to have faced an external examiner or a film critic. They are tough questions because

they raise an important point about research and social change. As has been noted by Burt and Code (1995), Gitlin (1994), Schratz and Walker (1995), Smith (1999) and many others, the issue of research accessibility is a critical topic within institutional practices. It becomes especially critical when the topics of the research are as vital a part of the social situation as health care, rural development or education, and where issues of power, control, regulation and access are ones that are central to policy development. Why are there no white people in a video addressing youth and HIV and AIDS in South Africa? Why is the situation of finding the solution to a social issue always the responsibility of those most affected?

Notwithstanding my struggle to provide appropriate answers when I was on the spot, what this event highlights is the 'migration' of the views of one group of young people (in this case from the Western Cape province of South Africa), as represented in *Fire+Hope,* to another group of young people in another part of South Africa (in rural KwaZulu-Natal) – through the visual. What this event also highlights is the dissemination of research findings about youth activism and HIV and AIDS to another group of young people who are attending a community programme on youth and HIV and AIDS on Youth Day. What started as research (a project studying youth activism and HIV and AIDS) and included a visual text (a 16-minute video documentary *Fire+Hope*) became an intervention (a screening and discussion at a Youth Day event) that yielded more research questions, both for the research team and the audience (who in turn also wanted to make their own video documentary). This example of engagement and transfer of knowledge suggests a type of social networking that while pre-dating Facebook and YouTube is no less striking for what it can inspire (see also Mitchell, 2006a).

Doing Visual Research, as a whole, is about changing the picture and the various approaches to social research that are meant to be in the service of community research, social action or social change – areas that are, of course, open to wide debate. Which communities? What constitutes social change? Is it necessarily positive? Who decides? What counts as sustainability? What are the risks in communities? Do we as researchers pay enough attention to the potential harm? At the risk of seeming to make exaggerated claims for visual methodologies, what this book sets out to do is lay bare some of the key elements of working with the visual as a set of methodologies and practices in social research. It is meant to address the possibilities for research at a time when questions of the social responsibility of the academic researcher (graduate students as new researchers and experienced researchers expanding their repertoire of being and doing) are critical. In so doing, it seeks to ensure that the term 'visual methodologies' is not simply reduced to one practice or tool and, at the same time, it seeks to ensure that the methodologies and practices of the visual are appreciated in their full complexity.