WHEN THE VIDEO DATA SET BECOMES AN ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD

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We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people who are the traditional owners of this land. We pay our respects to Elders both past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

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OUR CURRENT THINKING

- Video data that is rich and complex - not just big - and which researchers engage with in a reciprocal way, can be re/constructed as an ethnographic field.
- Video can not just be *in* the field and *of* the field, but also *be* the field.
- Video as 'data' is fundamentally different from video as 'field' – the presence/absence of the researcher in the field is different from that in the data.
- Re/constructing video as a field depends on researchers looking at the video in a particular way – a specific way of seeing.
- This way of seeing enables a bodily-mental and spatio-temporal presence in the video as a field.
- This presence and the field are co-constitutive.
- Whether and when video data becomes a field is a methodological issue.

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STUDY DESIGN

- Six single sessions in a specially designed learning classroom (Science of Learning Research Classroom) at the University of Melbourne with 10 wall and ceiling mounted video cameras with zoom and tilt capacity, and eight radio microphones, controlled from a room with visual access.
- Session plans consistent with the Year 7 curriculum were developed and negotiated with the teachers who took their own class (24 students) for one hour.
- Single sessions were conducted for the topics of: distance, weight and force in levers; energy transformation in toys; flower structure and function; and day/night and seasonal cycles on Earth.
- Students were posed with representational challenges that they attempted to solve through collaborative object exploration, modeling and representing (e.g. drawings, iPads), with teachers offering gentle scaffolding.

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VIDEO DATA – MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

Table camera
(front on)

Teacher camera
(front on)

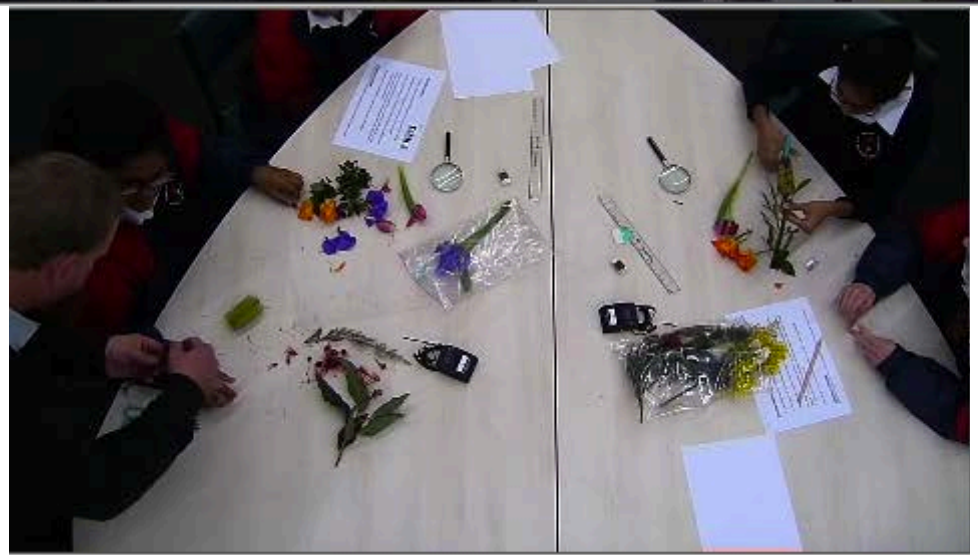

Table camera
(top down)

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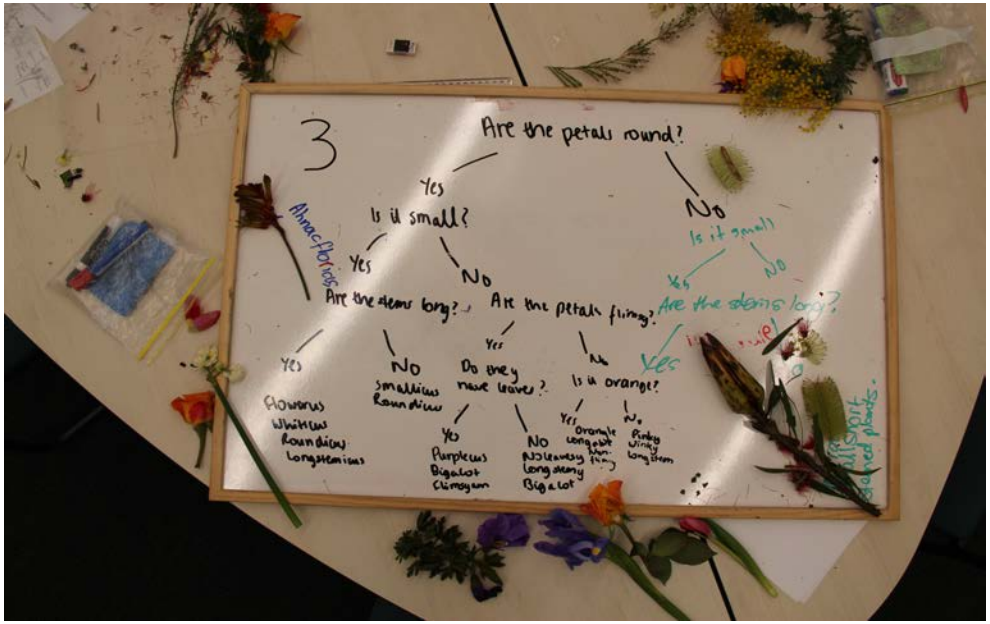
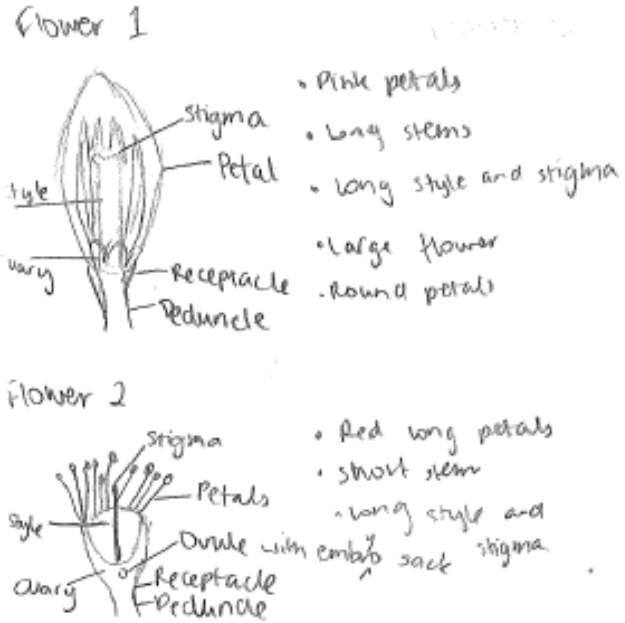
ARTEFACTS & TRANSCRIPTS





GS1: And then we draw the diagram?
T: Yeah and then develop your scheme.
GS1: What's a scheme?
T: So you've gotta…
GS1: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
T: The classification scheme.
BS1: Hey, do we have to dissect all of them or just six [*points to the plants*]?
T: Just, just six different flowers that are there.
GS1: Is this the actual flower [*picks up plant 'a'*]?
T: You tell me [*head shake*], that's what you've gotta figure out. Does it have structures [*points to plant 'a'*] that you've seen before?
GS1: I don't know; it doesn't look like it [*looks at part of plant 'a'*].
T: You guys discuss it.

RICH & COMPLEX DATA

- Sessions set up to create a productive learning context with use of conceptually rich and open-ended representational tasks.
- A very large, rich and complex data set was generated: Six sessions with 10 cameras and eight microphones (recording 12 pairs per session for at least one hour) = 60 hours of footage; 559 pages of transcripts; 226 artefacts.

METHODOLOGICAL & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Micro-ethnographic analysis (Erickson, 2006) rather than longitudinal analysis (session only one hour), with video/audio data and student artefacts used to establish how meaning is constructed by groups and individuals.
- Socio-cultural approach of Vygotsky (1962; 1978), pragmatist semiotics of Peirce (1998) and the representation-construction approach (e.g. Tytler, Prain, Hubber & Waldrip, 2013) framed the design and implementation of the sessions.
- Massumi's (2002) and MacLure's (2010) notion of the 'example' informed our engagement with the data and the analysis process.

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RESEARCH PROCESS

- Two members (Joseph and George) had intimate knowledge of the video data through extended viewing.
- Transcripts were made of example groups where the dialogue and actions were clear, illustrative of commitment to learning and likely to lead to insights.
- Videos of each group, and artefacts, were repeatedly viewed and discussed by the team (including invited critical friends).
- Relevant literature and theoretical perspectives were explored.
- Ideas for key questions, papers and possible lines of inquiry were generated and these led to further noticing of emergent themes.
- This dialogic and iterative process involved video, artefacts, theoretical perspectives, literature, and team experience.

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FROM DATA TO FIELD

- The video data was so rich and extensive, and responsive in its digital nature – indeed it pushed back at us - that in conjunction with the other elements of the research process we constructed it as an immersive experience.
- As we viewed and edited the video data, and simultaneously engaged with the other parts of the research process, we re/constructed it as a field. It was no longer only data to render meaningful through analysis, but also became an ethnographic field – a space and time we could inhabit with our minds and bodies.
- We began to acquaint ourselves with the people and objects of this field with greater familiarity and in greater detail with each visit – Joseph and George were 'adopted locals', Russell and Radhika were 'visitors' and the students and teachers were our 'guides'.
- We did not simply look at the video, but rather enacted a particular 'way of seeing' that enabled the video to become more than data – a field in which we were present.

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A DIFFERENT WAY OF SEEING

- In the tradition of Barker, 1969; Sobchack, 1992; Marks, 2000; and MacDougall, 2005, we did not just see what was occurring on screen, but were transported to that time and place in mind and body - a 'corporeal' seeing.
- We were able to have a spatial, temporal, mental and bodily presence in the field by seeing in this way – and indeed this way of seeing made the field.
- This scopic regime is significantly different from many ways of seeing that have traditionally operated in ethnography and video-based research in education.
- By employing an alternative way of seeing, and challenging the dominant scopic regimes, we seek to critically engage with the inherently ocular nature of video based research (Jay, 1988, 1993; Jenks, 1995; McKnight & Whitburn, 2017).

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PRESENCE IN THE FIELD

- We were coeval (same time) and cohabit(?) (same space) with the students and teachers, both in the SLRC and the video as a field.
- We had a bodily and mental presence (with spatial and temporal dimensions), not just in the SLRC and in our offices as we viewed the video, but also in the video as a field.
- The presence of the students and teachers was different from our own – they were spatially and temporally 'frozen' in the video. But each time we viewed the video, the students and teachers were made present in different ways.
- Presence in video as data is fundamentally different from this presence in the video as a field.

REIMAGINING THE FIELD AND VIDEO

- We take up de Freitas' (2015; 2016) challenge to radically reconsider how we can relate to video for the purposes of educational research – what ways of seeing provide new opportunities to explore teaching and learning through video?
- How can we enact video-based methodologies - including ways of seeing that challenge traditional scope regimes - while also critically engaging with the ocular nature of video? Is ocularcentism an inherent component of working with video? If so, how can such video-based methodologies be made inclusive?
- We want to contribute to the ongoing debate concerning the meaning of the ethnographic field and what it means to do fieldwork – if video can be a field, then what of the traditional idea of a field and what are the ramifications for Malinowskian fieldwork?
- When does video data become a field?
- What is the importance of video as more than data; as a field?

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UPCOMING BOOK!

Video-based research in education – Cross-disciplinary perspectives

Editors: Lihua Xu, George Aranda, David Clarke

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