Picturing research: drawing as visual methodology offers a timely analysis of the use of drawings in qualitative research. Drawing can be a method in itself, as in the research area of Visual Studies, and also one that complements the use of photography, video, and other visual methodologies. This edited volume is divided into two sections. The first section provides critical commentary on the use of drawings in social science research, addressing such issues of methodology as the politics of working with children and drawing, ethical issues in working with both adults and children, and some of the interpretive considerations. The second section, in its presentation of nine research-based case-studies, illustrates the richness of drawings. Each case study explores participatory research involving drawings that encourages social change, or illustrates participant resilience. These case studies also highlight the various genres of drawings including cartoons and storyboarding. The book draws on community-based research from a wide variety of contexts, most in South Africa, although it also includes work from Rwanda and Lesotho. Given the high rates of HIV&AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, it should not be surprising that many of the chapters take up concerns such as the preparation of teachers and community health workers in the age of AIDS, and the experiences of orphans and vulnerable children. Moving further afield, this book also includes work done with immigrant populations in Canada, and with tribunals in Somalia and Australia. Picturing research is an important resource for novice and experienced researchers interested in employing qualitative methodology that encourages rich (yet low-tech) visible data and that offers a participatory, enabling experience for participants and their communities.
Picturing Research
Drawing as Visual Methodology

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As members of a team of researchers involved in piloting a module titled “Being a Teacher in the Context of the HIV and AIDS Pandemic”, we came into contact with many dedicated teacher educators and teachers in South Africa who were keen to use participatory methods in their classrooms. We dedicate this book to the people who continually inspire us to do this kind of work.
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*Linda Theron, Claudia Mitchell, Ann Smith, and Jean Stuart*
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PICTURING RESEARCH: AN INTRODUCTION

Claudia Mitchell, Linda Theron, Ann Smith, and Jean Stuart

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE QUESTION

We begin this book with a section that offers something of what Jane Miller (1995) describes as the ‘autobiography of the question’ or, in this case, the autobiography of the question of method. With an increased recognition of the importance of the positioning of the researcher, the place of reflexivity in qualitative work, and the emergence of work in autoethnography (Ellis, 2004) and self-study (Pithouse, Mitchell, & Moletsane, 2009), we think it is useful to ‘draw ourselves’ into the research. And in similar vein to Kathleen Pithouse’s exploration in the third chapter of the issue of ‘starting with ourselves’, here we each offer a short ‘how did we get here’ illustration of our work with drawings—how did we each come to be using drawings and compiling a book called Picturing Research? We think it is an important question because none of us started out using drawings as method in our research, and so our accounts may help others to think about the evolving nature of ideas and the dynamic aspect of knowledge production, as well as the significance of method itself. We also offer these short accounts because they are primarily (though not exclusively) located in the southern African context. An impetus for writing the book in the first place was an awareness of the absence of work in an area of methodology that seemed so appropriate to the southern African context. Ardra Cole and Gary Knowles (2008) in their own reflections on how they came to be working in arts-based research cited the work of the artist Martha Rosler: “[If you want to] bring conscious concrete knowledge to your work . . . you had better locate yourself pretty concretely in it” (p. 55). By exploring our own work with drawings historically, geographically, and culturally, we hope that other researchers will similarly embark upon autobiographies of the method.

Claudia Mitchell

My own experience of using drawings in research dates back to the early 1990s when Sandra Weber and I were first working together on studies of teacher identity. It was a bit accidental, really. We had just been thinking about using visual data when one of us, I don’t remember who, noticed in the Montreal Gazette that a local visual artist had put out a call for entries to a competition for school children to draw their teachers, with the prize for the best drawing being a life-size cloth rendition, made by the artist, of the teacher in the drawing. Intrigued by such a call, we contacted the artist and asked her what she was going to do with the drawings when she was finished with them. “Why, you can have them,” she said.
once she learned of our interest in teacher identity. And that was the beginning. It led to our working with collections of children’s drawings and then later to asking beginning teachers to also draw teachers. The project with beginning teachers became the subject of an entire book titled ‘That’s Funny, You Don’t Look Like a Teacher’: Interrogating Images and Identity in Popular Culture (Weber & Mitchell, 1995); several chapters in a follow-up book called Reinventing Ourselves as Teachers: Beyond Nostalgia (Mitchell & Weber, 1999); and several articles and other book chapters (Weber & Mitchell, 1996; Mitchell & Weber, 1996). But more than this, the draw-your-teacher contest led me into a career of using drawings along with other visual data—ranging from coming across yet another drawing competition (this one called “Let Every Child Learn”, sponsored by the South African Post Office, and held right after the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994) to the later use of drawings in a number of my own research projects in Rwanda, Ethiopia, and other parts of South Africa.

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. Does one ask for captions? Does one use the drawing as a type of elicitation? What do the drawings really mean? One of my favourite drawings was created in the “Let Every Child Learn” competition. Very simply, it depicts a teacher with a group of children and shows a drawing on a chart. But the caption in Afrikaans suggests so much more: “Wie weet wat dit beteken?” (“Who knows what this means?”)—showing in and of itself the interpretive possibilities in drawings.

What I also like about drawings is their tangibility, their concreteness. We can lay out 50 or 100 drawings and look at them and touch them. We can scan them and look at them on the computer screen. Everyone can have an interpretation. They seem to me the perfect prompt to elicit even more data. Why does a person read a drawing in a particular way?

But more than this, I like the immediacy of drawings and their potential to move audiences. In some work in Rwanda on developing a policy on violence against women and children, I spent time with young people in all regions of the country. They brainstormed, they performed through role-playing, and they drew pictures. It was their drawings that I shared with policy makers. The drawing “Baby” (see Figure 1.1) highlights the significance of unwanted pregnancy, which is often the result of sexual violence. The person who drew this picture was showing the tragedy and the waste of two lives—the baby in the toilet and the desperate young mother. When I showed this image in a larger-than-life format in a PowerPoint presentation to policy makers, I could see that it was difficult for them to look away. The image “haunts” as Susan Sontag (2003) would have said.
There are challenges, though. I think psychology still has a huge grip on interpreting drawings. Do drawings reveal deep dark secrets? We are used to thinking of drawings, especially those done by children, as being particularly revealing, and we might worry that if we are not trained psychologists, we should not be asking children to draw. Perchance, we will evoke pain and trauma that we are not equipped to handle. But then we run that risk when we conduct interviews. Perhaps, adult participants will think that we are treating them like children. Perhaps, they will not take it all seriously and perhaps we will destroy the researcher-researched relationship. Can we ‘read in’ too much? Do we see a drawing, for example, of an AK-47 as the child’s real expression of violence, or does he simply like to draw AK-47s? I have always valued the participation of other readers in the interpretive process. When I worked with the several thousand drawings from the “Let Every Child Learn” competition, I invited a group of beginning teachers from The University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) to join me in the process (Mitchell, 2004). This taught me something about the richness of the images, their amenability to interpretation, which included the ways in which they evoked childhood memories.

Another challenge is the question ‘But is it art or is it research?’ Does the use of drawings fall into the category of arts-based or arts-informed research? Interestingly, there are many examples of how children’s drawings are positioned as artworks represented in art exhibitions and even in coffee-table books. Drawings
CHAPTER 1

done by adults rarely fall into the category of coffee-table books. How does this problematise ideas about childhood and where we place children? Also, then, what does this say about the creative images of adults?

And the questions go on …

Linda Theron

Recently, I had a meeting with a team of experienced researchers in North West province, South Africa. We have been doing participatory, enabling research together for the last 5 or so years in a project called Resilient Educators (REds). In this project, we work with educators who are challenged by the daunting realities of being a teacher in the age of AIDS. One of the ways that we have generated data in our project has been through drawings. In the recent meeting as we were talking about how we would write up the findings emerging from the data, I noticed that my peers had become a bit uncomfortable. “You use the drawings,” they said, “because you’re the psychologist and so have the right to interpret them. We’re not psychologists.” Their response saddened me, and it dawned on me (again) how misunderstood drawings are as a way of generating data.

Yes, I am an educational psychologist, so my earliest use of drawings was with children and adolescents who had come into my practice for one reason or another. Drawings were a wonderful tool! With shy children, drawings often broke the ice. With boisterous youngsters, drawings regularly stilled them and encouraged them to reflect and gain a different perspective on complex issues in their lives. When my clients were troubled by something that seemed very overwhelming, it helped to concretise the issue as a drawing. Most often, the process of drawing reduced the issue to something that could be labelled, described, or defined. On the whole, this made the issue manageable. My experience of the power and magic of drawings in my practice inspired me to use drawings as a data generation tool. When I first collected drawings (as part of REds), I wasn’t aware of the mushrooming use of drawings as a research method; I was just convinced that drawings were a super-effective way of encouraging people to express what they were thinking or feeling or longing for, or even what they had experienced—the good and the bad.

When we were trained as educational psychologists in the use of drawings as projective techniques, our professor (Elsabé Roets) became suddenly serious: “Never, ever assume you know what your clients’ drawings mean … you are not the expert on their perceptions or feelings or thoughts. Your clients are the experts. So, ask!” She then proceeded to show us a drawing made by a young boy: He was sitting all alone in a garden, hunched over, chin in his hands. In the background, his father was playing with his brother, and his mother was working alone in the kitchen. She asked us to analyse the drawing. We had nothing to go on, except the contents of the drawing. Of course, our analyses were wild—and dead wrong. The little boy had offered the following explanation:

I’m an athlete. I’m training very hard to be in the school team and so in my picture I’ve just been for a run. I’m sitting there in the garden because I’m
getting my breath back. My dad and brother had been waiting for me and cheered me when they saw me round our street’s corner. I’ll go and play with them in a moment, like we always do. My mom is making a special supper so that I will have enough stamina to keep running. She likes doing things like that for us. (L. Theron, therapy session, 2007)

The lesson was powerful. Partly because of this lesson, and partly because I believe in a participatory research approach, I engaged participants collaboratively in making meaning of what they’d drawn when I began to use drawings as research method. When participants are engaged in interpreting the messages that their drawings were intended to convey, the use and interpretation of the drawing moves beyond the enclave of psychologists. Then, drawings become a compelling means to collaborative research. This was what my fellow researchers had not yet grasped that day. This is part of my motivation for this book—to broadcast the message that drawings are an accessible data generation process as long as they are embedded in an ethical, participant-researcher collaboration.

Although I have explained how I came to be convinced of the power of drawings and how I believe drawings should be used in my practice and in research contexts, I have not yet explained how I came to use drawings as a research method. The impetus was quite simple really: I was stuck. In the piloting of REds with educators who were not first-language English speakers, I was at a loss as to how to measure their perception of the HIV&AIDS pandemic. Most rating scales used English that was too complex. My participants’ English was not at the level that we could engage in deep, unstructured interviews about how they perceived the pandemic. I was wary of using an interpreter. In the midst of trying to find a solution, I had a scheduled appointment with a child whom I was seeing for therapy. She was grappling with accepting her parents’ divorce. As part of what we did that day, I asked her to draw her dad as an animal and then her mom as one. She drew a terrapin and then a little bird. When we put the drawings side by side, she started laughing: “But, of course, they had to get divorced: a terrapin and a kiewiet (type of bird) can’t possibly live together.” Her drawing-generated insight was the start of her healing. It was also my eureka moment—I knew what I was going to use to gauge educator perception.

I have used drawings with many other participants, too, such as street children (see Chapter 8 in this volume), orphans participating in my SANPAD-funded project to understand more about their lives and their resilience, youth participating in the ICURA-funded Pathways to Resilience project as an expression of the ecological resources nurturing their resilience, and resilient youth as a means of illustrating the role that teachers played in their resilience. I encourage my post-graduate students to include drawings in their research, as well. My belief in the power of drawings to communicate complex messages in simple but rich ways has been reinforced every time I have presented on drawing-related research at conferences or used drawings in my teaching. I love the fact that drawings are lasting artefacts that can be used to give voice to participant messages. I love also that even though drawings ‘speak up’, each viewer must make personal meaning of what is being communicated.
The preceding discussion does not mean that drawing as research methodology is without challenge. There are procedural, ethical, and interpretive challenges that cannot be gainsaid. Nevertheless, none of these challenges can corrode the rich, persuasive evidence embedded in the apparent simplicity of drawings.

Jean Stuart

My becoming sensitised to the rich potential of incorporating drawings into research began with an entertainment-education intervention in an under-resourced high school in South Africa. As a master’s student constrained by lack of funds, I handed out large sheets of white paper and coloured pencils and asked the children to draw their own drug awareness posters. Spread out across the bleak room, the huge class was effortlessly engaged and their enjoyment as they drew was palpable. Together, we displayed the posters on the wall and each child placed secret and justified votes in a shoebox to indicate which poster he or she considered would be most effective in reducing drug abuse. The display was viewed next by the Teenagers Against Drug Abuse Committee at the school and finally by an older group of volunteering pupils with records of ill-discipline related to substance abuse. Focus group discussions after the drawing display yielded rich dialogue and data as pupils talked with animation about the relevance of the posters.

Shortly after this, I read with fascination of the work of Wetton and McWhirter (1998), who used story and drawing to access children’s knowledge of drugs, and realised how much insight into participants’ perspectives could be gained when drawings were incorporated into health-related research. It is for that reason that I went on to ask preservice teachers to represent their own points of view on HIV and AIDS with simple drawings. Thus began our exploration “From Our Frames: Exploring Arts-Based Approaches for Addressing HIV and AIDS with Preservice Teachers” (Stuart, 2006).

Foregrounding such perspectives was also my purpose in asking teachers and healthcare workers in a rural KwaZulu-Natal project to draw how they saw each other as professionals (see Chapter 13 in this volume). What intrigued me, though, was the disjunction between what each group politely said about the other groups and what hidden prejudices emerged in their drawings and in their discussion of these drawings. And time and time again, I have noticed how participants look at and discuss the issues depicted in their drawings with less inhibition than they do in conventional interviews.

Later, as a teacher and lecturer I realised more fully how drawings can contribute to self-study since they enable their creators to freeze and study their memories, aspirations, or thoughts. Inspired by Mitchell and Weber’s (1999) method for enhancing student’s recall of teachers and Haarhoff’s (1998) use of drawing to recall spaces of significance, I encourage all students in my undergraduate creative writing course to step back into childhood by asking them each to draw a place they valued as a child and to indicate in the drawing some sensory memories of that place. The focused buzz of chatter that always
accompanies the invitation to students to share memories with those around them, and the passionate writing that follows, bears testimony to the power of drawings for self-study.

More recently, I have been using drawings with students who are working to anchor and apply theory. For example, in picturing theory in the honours module “Critical Awareness of Language and Media” at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, our students working with Fairclough’s (1995) Framework for Critical Discourse Analysis diagram (p. 59) have created drawings to understand his theoretical approach and to identify and propose solutions to discourses and social and cultural practices that promote violence in schools.

Working with drawings usually presents ethical challenges but also opens up opportunities. It is always intriguing and humbling to see the creativity of others as they work with drawings and to learn from these participants. This is why I welcomed the opportunity to write alongside others who work with drawings.

Ann Smith

I come to be working on a book on drawings through what a group of my colleagues at a national discussion held at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University on the theme “Can Art Stop AIDS?” termed an interest in the hand-made (drawings, collage, tapestry, paper making) as opposed to the digital (photography, video, and social media) and performance (dance, forum theatre, and other forms of drama).

I run my own business—an educational and corporate training consultancy called Creating Action Spaces Together cc—and I have been employed as an academic since 1979 in one way or another—ranging from the tenured to the part-time—at the University of the Witwatersrand, where I am currently a part-time contract lecturer at the Wits Business School (WBS). In early 2003, I had a very bright young woman—let’s call her Thembi—in my Communication Skills class (which is part of a regular course in management called the New Managers’ Programme [NMP]) that is offered to the public five times a year at WBS. It draws mostly businesspeople who have been promoted recently to, and those who are being groomed for, junior management positions. By 2007, Thembi had been promoted to a senior position in the Human Resources department of her company. She contracted me to run a Business Communication and Presentation Skills course for senior managers.

Now, whereas the academic NMP course at WBS has to be fairly rigidly structured, I had free rein with these corporate participants, and I decided to use, for my opening session, a visual arts-based teaching methodology that I had first employed in an academic setting. This corporate group was made up of 8 men and 3 women who were all within the age range of 34 to 49 years. I could tell that most of them were not too happy to be in the course, and this became even more apparent as I set out my piles of coloured tissue paper, unpatterned coloured wrapping paper, A4-sized pieces of heavy construction paper, and six or seven pairs of scissors and as many glue sticks on the highly polished boardroom table.
The participants were polite—even if only just)—and I caught the odd comment about “kids’ stuff” and “nursery school activities”.

I began this course by introducing myself by name only, without even a word about what I hoped to accomplish, never mind anything about my qualifications or academic affiliation. All I said to them was to “use these materials in any way you like to create a picture of a moment of perfect understanding of any communication transmitted to you in your life”. In response to their near total incredulity and incomprehension of what I wanted them to do, I explained that they needed to think of any occasion in their lives when they had really understood a message transmitted to them. I encouraged them to think about a verbal message or a written one, one that was part of a movie, a song, or an advertisement perhaps or one that had been conveyed by body language or by the way someone was dressed. I told them that this process was called ‘making a collage’ and that the picture or collage they made could be realistic in its portrayal of the actual event or could be representational of how they felt then, or both. I gave them no special instructions, and I made only one stipulation: No religious experiences could be depicted.

The more they thought about the task the more anxious these women and men became. I suggested that they just try to do it and said reassuringly that there were no correct or incorrect responses. Gradually, the tension began to evaporate as these businesspeople got down to completing the task. They spoke very little and then only to ask a colleague to pass over a particular piece of paper, a glue stick, or a pair of scissors. Some participants chose to use the scissors and others chose to tear the paper; others did both. Once the process was under way, I negotiated a time limit with them and withdrew to a corner of the room, pretending to do my own work while covertly observing them.

When the time was up, I invited anyone who wanted to do so to stand up and explain her or his collage to the group. I was thrilled to discover that every single one of them wanted to do this. Here, I will describe only one presentation. A young woman had used yellow construction paper on which she had stuck an oval of crumpled black tissue paper. On top of this, she had depicted an obviously pregnant learner sitting on a chair in a classroom. Next to her was the figure of a teacher extending a comforting hand. The young female participant explained that the black paper showed her despair at falling pregnant towards the middle of her matric year. She believed then that her life was over; all her hopes and dreams of a successful future gone. However, the teacher that she had drawn had told her that she could stay on at school and write the exam even if she was pregnant. The moment of perfect communication, the participant said, had been her teacher’s announcement that being pregnant had to do with her belly and not her brain. The yellow paper represented the sunlight that surrounded her black despair when she heard her teacher’s words and understood perfectly the implications of the message she was hearing. (Incidentally, this young woman told me afterwards that this was the first time she had ever told anyone about her teenage pregnancy. She also told me that her child was 19 years old—2 years older than she had been that day.)

The success of the course as a whole had much to do with this opening activity, I think. In a discussion of the collage-making process, the participants said that at
first the very idea of working with paper and glue at their age and stage of professional life was unacceptable. They all admitted thinking that I must be “crazy”, “out of my mind”, “seriously weird”, and, much worse, “unprofessional”, to expect this. They admitted, though, that as their ideas started to take shape on the construction paper, they became excited and eager to “do this properly and well”. Many participants spoke about having been given the opportunity to say “important things without using words” while “playing with paper and glue” and that this had been a very liberating experience. Throughout the rest of the 4-day course, the participants kept referring back to the opening collage activity to help them articulate answers to questions that seemingly had nothing to do with it. For example, when I asked them to consider why it is so important to profile an audience before making a verbal presentation, one woman replied by saying that if you had to depict an audience in a collage, you would need to make sure that each member of the audience was portrayed differently.

The initial response of these corporate participants to the collage activity was similar to that of the academics with whom I worked in Trinidad and Tobago during a workshop on educational leadership in 2005. I read in their faces that they were appalled that I would even consider asking them to do such a childish thing as making a collage! It seemed not to matter that I was asking them to depict a moment of perfect leadership in their lives: What mattered was that it seemed to them so inappropriate to ask adults to do something like this. But they, too, came round to seeing it as a very valuable way of conveying an experience in a completely wordless picture. It was from this workshop that I learned to exclude any representation of religious experience in the collage-making process: It is impossible to discuss such experience neutrally in a group of people all of whom are not necessarily like-minded.

And that’s how I came to be working with the hand-made.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

_Picturing Research_ draws on community-based and participatory research from a wide variety of contexts, most of them in South Africa, although various chapters include work from Rwanda, Lesotho, and work with immigrant populations in Canada and studies carried out in the context of global issues of displacement. Given the high rates of HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, it should not be surprising that many of the chapters take up concerns such as the preparation of teachers and community healthcare workers to cope better with the challenges of living, caring, and teaching in the age of AIDS and the experiences of orphans and vulnerable children.

The book is divided into two main sections: “The Drawing’s the Thing: Critical Issues in the Use of Drawings in Social Science Research” and “Illustrations From Practice: Drawing From Research”. When we first started thinking of the organisation of the book, we had imagined that it would divide up simply into ‘working with children’ and ‘working with adults’. However, when we began to assemble the various chapters, we realised that the child-adult split did not actually
represent either the chapters themselves or our approach to the whole area of
drawing. Rather, we began to see that in fact there were a number of critical
issues—some of which might pertain to children, some to adults, and some to
both—and we saw examples of projects and genres of drawing that seem to cut
across age divisions.

The Drawing’s the Thing: Critical Issues in the Use of Drawings in
Social Science Research

In Chapter 2, “Drawings as Research Method”, methodology itself is addressed.
Claudia Mitchell, Linda Theron, Jean Stuart, Ann Smith and Zachariah Campbell
consider the ways in which various research approaches converge to form a
framework for looking at drawing in research: arts-based methodologies,
participatory visual research methodologies, and textual approaches to research.
The chapter draws on examples of both the ‘doing’ and the interpretation.

Following from this, in her chapter “Picturing the Self: Drawing as a Method for
Self-Study”, Kathleen Pithouse considers three different published examples of
drawing as a method for self-study to identify some strategies for, and features of,
this research method. Her discussion explores the nature and value of self-study
drawing as a social research method as well as some potential challenges of using
such a method.

Linda Theron, Jean Stuart, and Claudia Mitchell in their chapter “A Positive,
African Ethical Approach to Collecting and Interpreting Drawings: Some
Considerations” approach work with drawing in the context of ethics. Calling on
the work of Mertens (2009) and others, they consider the transformative nature of
research. In seeking to bring about social change, they advocate alternative data
collection methods (like drawing) that give easier voice to marginalised groups or
groups that struggle to express themselves in English. Ethical rigour and allegiance
to Positive Ethics (Bush, 2010), which are aligned with African Ethics (Murove,
2009), are central to this approach. Thus, this chapter outlines a positive ethical
process of (1) collecting and (2) interpreting drawings that promotes beneficence,
respect, and justice. It also introduces suggestions for strategies that encourage the
enabling of research participants through the very findings generated by their
drawings.

In her chapter “Visualising Justice: The Politics of Working With Children’s
Drawings”, Lara Bober considers the relationship between children’s drawings and
processes of redress and reconciliation. In the context of war, children’s drawings
can be powerful documents that help to bring perpetrators of human rights
violations to justice, as demonstrated in the case of drawings submitted as evidence
of war crimes to the International Criminal Court in proceedings against Sudanese
officials. The Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights
has included children’s drawings to document prison conditions for women and
their children. Children’s drawings and poems were submitted to the Australian
Human Rights Commission’s National Inquiry into Children in Immigration
Detention that was tabled in Parliament on May 13, 2004. There are many political,
colonial, and post-colonial perspectives from which to consider the visual production of children, and it is important to recognise that adults have used children’s art to promote their own ideological positions and causes. The chapter considers how the implementation of International Human Rights Law is strengthened when children’s voices are included in institutionalised processes of redress and reconciliation. By exhibiting children’s drawings of conflict at art galleries, universities, and other public venues, this chapter questions how these sites might allow for other forms of redress and reconciliation.

Then Monica Mak, in “The Visual Ethics of Using Children’s Drawings in the Documentary Unwanted Images”, focuses on the visually ethical approach taken by researchers to create a discursive space wherein young people, through their illustrations used in a documentary video context, can freely express their views on gender-based violence in South Africa. This chapter shows how these drawings serve as a secure, comfortable environment for young people’s creative expression. It also reveals how process (i.e., the act of drawing) and product (i.e., the video born of the drawings) are equally significant since each carries a specific reflexive benefit.

Finally, Katie MacEntee and Claudia Mitchell take the idea of children’s collections back to the producers themselves (as well as other audiences) in their chapter “Lost and Found in Translation: Participatory Analysis and Working With Collections of Drawings”. How do we understand data collection and data analysis in reference to children’s drawings? Who has the potential to interpret and be moved by these images? And what is the impact of this project? In this chapter, three archives of children’s drawings are presented as potential data for research into children’s voice and experience during times of hardship and duress. The authors introduce participatory analysis as a methodological concern when researchers are working with the visual texts and discuss the possible clash between conventional aesthetics on the one hand and the agenda of research-as-social-change on the other, which arises when participant-produced art is exhibited. This type of research demands a critical analysis of how participatory, arts-based research fully mines ‘collections’ of drawings, particularly those elicited during fieldwork with participants.

Illustrations from Practice: Drawing from Research

The second section of Picturing Research brings together a series of case studies that exemplify the various ways that researchers are using drawing with child and adult participants. This section starts with Macalane Malindi and Linda Theron’s chapter “Drawing on Strengths: Images of Ecological Contributions to Male Street Youth Resilience” in which they present drawings made by street children that depict the contributing factors to their resilience. Recently, researchers have begun to suggest that some children follow atypical developmental pathways and that in some instances these atypical pathways are trajectories of resilience. This holds true for street children. Despite this budding understanding, it is difficult to engage street children (who typically have low literacy levels) in quantitative research
designs. As an alternative, the authors asked 20 street youth (identified as resilient by impartial, knowledgeable parties like NGOs or welfare workers) to make drawings of what they believed nurtured their resilience. Using current understandings of resilience as a reciprocal, ecologically embedded process, the authors interpret their rich symbols to illustrate which ecological resources nurture street children.

In her chapter “Teacher Sexuality Depicted: Exploring Women Teachers’ Positioning within Sexuality Education Classrooms through Drawings”, Mathabo Khau uses drawings to explore how women teachers position themselves as women and as teachers in order to understand how the two identities of womanhood and teacherhood influence and shape each other in being and becoming a sexuality education woman teacher. The author argues that women teachers choose to perform normative womanhood scripts at the expense of teacherhood, thereby creating impossibilities for effective facilitation of sexuality education, especially within rural contexts. This chapter provides important information on how the female teacher’s body, female sexuality, and contextual gender dynamics are implicated in the effectiveness of sexuality education programs, such that these issues can be incorporated in the planning of programs that will curb further spread of HIV infections among the youth.

Continuing with the idea of having teachers draw, Linda van Laren, in her chapter “Drawing in and on Mathematics to Promote HIV&AIDS Preservice Teacher Education”, is interested in drawing in relation to integrating HIV&AIDS education into mathematics education. In South Africa, the assessment standards listed in the National Curriculum Statement Grades 0–9 (South African National Department of Education, 2002) across all eight learning areas provide many opportunities for such integration. There are many interpretations of what integration/inclusion and mainstreaming might mean and include in relation to HIV&AIDS education. There are also numerous levels of integration. Integration ensures that learners’ experience the learning areas as being linked and related to each other. Furthermore, integration is required to support and expand the learners’ opportunities to attain skills, acquire knowledge, and develop attitudes and values that stretch across the curriculum. This chapter focuses on drawing strategies that can be used to assist preservice teachers to get started by exploring their beliefs about integrating HIV&AIDS education into the Mathematics Learning Area so as to help them overcome any initial uncertainties about integration. Encouraging preservice teachers to explore their own hand-drawn metaphors of how they believe that integration of HIV&AIDS education is achievable paves the way for integrated action in the school classroom situation.

In their chapter “Reading Across and Back: Thoughts on Working with (Re-Visited) Drawing Collections”, Jean Stuart and Ann Smith consider possible further uses of the drawings produced in two projects—From Our Frames and Youth as Knowledge Producers—that were implemented at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) to explore ways in which arts-based approaches can contribute to teacher education and development. Although the projects were different, each began with offering participants the same prompt—’Draw a picture
that represents your view of HIV and AIDS”—which was followed by an invitation to write an explanation of the resulting drawing. The authors suggest here that the lessons learned in implementing these projects could result in further teacher development if the collections of drawings on how preservice teachers and teenaged school children respectively viewed HIV and AIDS were brought together and revisited by the researchers and participants. Stuart and Smith offer alternative interpretations, based on an ‘outsider’ semiotic and content analysis, of some of these pictures and consider the validity and possible usefulness of considering with the participants what they said their pictures represented in the light of these ‘new’ interpretations.

Liesel Ebersöhn, Ronél Ferreira, and Bathsheba Mbongwe, in “How Teacher-Researcher Teams See Their Role in Participatory Research”, describe the use of drawings in exploring how teacher-researchers view their role in participatory research. Whereas Gaventa’s (2006) theory of power provides a theoretical lens, the authors adopt a feminist metatheoretical stance and are guided by a participatory methodological position in exploring this phenomenon. The authors generated visual data with purposefully selected teachers (n=20; 2 males, 18 females) in a longitudinal participatory reflection and action project, as part of the Supportive Teachers Assets and Resilience (STAR) project. This project focuses on the role of teachers in promoting resilience in schools and involves partnerships with teachers in three provinces in South Africa. During a seminar focusing on partnerships between teachers and researchers, teachers worked in six school-based teams to create drawings portraying their views of being participants in the STAR project. The authors used Gaventa’s ‘power cube’ to establish how these themes relate to dimensions of power. They found that the dynamics of power in a participatory project could be influenced by the three dimensions of power, as experienced by teacher-participants.

In their chapter “Learning Together: Teachers and Community Healthcare Workers Draw Each Other”, Naydene de Lange, Claudia Mitchell, and Jean Stuart expand the use of drawings into working beyond education. The authors describe a study that took place in Vulindlela, a rural district in the lower foothills of the Southern Drakensberg, a district ravaged by the HIV&AIDS pandemic. In one area of the district, a vibrant clinic addresses the health issues of the surrounding community as best it can. Adjacent to the clinic lies the ever-expanding Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA) that is committed to finding a medical solution to the pandemic, not only for the world’s benefit but to help this particular community. The many schools in the area are an indication of the large number of young people living in the community, all eager to learn and to make progress in life. However, these same youth are also most affected by the pandemic, compelling the clinic with their community healthcare workers and the schools with their educators to intervene in their lives. Yet, often, these healthcare workers and teachers work at cross purposes or without knowledge of what the other does. Considering this scenario, the authors were interested to find out how participatory methodologies could bring together the various sectors and partners working in the area of gender, youth, and HIV prevention and care in one
community. Their focus was on the local context and the ways in which members of local groups within the same community and working with the same youth see their own work in AIDS prevention and treatment: their interface with the policies and procedures that drive their practices; the tensions, challenges, and barriers to service delivery; and their lived experience of their own needs and the needs of youth within the community they serve. With this in mind, the authors asked teachers and community healthcare workers to draw each other. Using the drawings and discussions about their perceptions of each other, the research team was in a better position to develop a ‘research as intervention’ strategy in this particular rural community.

Eliza Govender and Senyata Reddy express their conviction in their chapter “Drawing the Bigger Picture: Giving Voice to HIV-Positive Children” that assisting HIV-positive children through awareness, treatment, and support still remains a challenge in South Africa. UNICEF reports confirm that 280,000 South African children were living with HIV in 2007. Growing statistics emphasise the crucial need for new and innovative approaches to HIV&AIDS education for children infected by HIV and AIDS in order to raise greater awareness of how these children might be helped to cope with the exigencies of treatment literacy and treatment adherence. This chapter explores drawing as an art form and as a form of participatory Entertainment Education (EE) in the context of knowledge production, knowledge exchange, and knowledge transference as vital to increasing treatment literacy and treatment adherence in HIV-positive children. The focus is on the use of drawings in a project called Hi Virus that was carried out with children from KwaZulu-Natal who are infected by HIV or AIDS. As the authors highlight, the project demonstrated that drawing can be used as a tool to both entertain and educate children in a participatory manner in order to stimulate a greater awareness of the vital role of treatment adherence, to empower them to problematise this issue, and to forge ahead to come up with their own strategies to improve their treatment adherence through an increased critical consciousness of the need to do so and of the benefits of keeping to a regular schedule of pill taking.

In the final two chapters in Picturing Research, the respective authors consider other genres of drawings: cartooning and storyboarding. Catherine Ann Cameron and Linda Theron, in their chapter “With Pictures and Words I Can Show You: Cartoons Portray Resilient Migrant Teenagers’ Journeys”, consider that it can be challenging for young research participants to share the essence of their lived experience so that researchers can gain deeper understanding, transform gained appreciation into theoretical and practical knowledge, and transfer it back to stakeholder communities. In the authors’ international, ecological research with resilient adolescents in transition, they use a variety of visual methods iteratively, including sequenced interviews, a filmed ‘day in the life’ of participants, and photo-elicitation. Each method enhances understanding of the teenagers’ perceptions. One participant volunteered cartoons she had drawn of her journey as an immigrant to Canada from Mexico, affording yet another vantage point for exploring her resilience-enhancing experiences. The authors invited her to choose other experiences to cartoon, and she chose to depict (and subsequently comment
on) her experience of becoming a young woman in the Mormon Church and her aspirations for becoming multilingual. Another of their participants was a boy in Thailand who had migrated from Bangkok to the north of his country. He cartooned the routines of his everyday life. The analyses of what value-added information they gained from these examples of youth expression are the subject of Cameron and Theron’s chapter. Like Hui (2009), who promoted cartooning techniques as mechanisms for creative expression, the authors have evidence that cartoons and discussions of them provide valuable insights that enrich the exploration of youth resilience. The utility of cartooning as a research methodology is confirmed.

_Picturing Research_ ends with a chapter by Claudia Mitchell, Naydene de Lange, and Relebohile Moletsane on the use of drawings in a storyboarding project in Rwanda. Titled “Before the Cameras Roll: Drawing a Storyboard to Address Gendered Poverty”, the chapter looks at how the use of drawing in storyboarding draws on the video-making process. The authors’ idea of community-based participatory video uses the process of ‘making a video in a day’ through the No-Editing-Required (N-E-R) approach. In such an approach, community participants go from identifying which issues are important in their lives and choosing a topic to focus on for a video to planning out a short video (through the use of storyboarding) and shooting and screening it—all in one session. Drawing out the images in a storyboard is just one piece of the process. As the authors describe it here, the storyboarding process can also be visual text in and of itself. The authors describe the somewhat serendipitous discovery of the storyboard as a specific visual text (visual data), and they describe its use in a participatory visual methodologies workshop with a group of 60 adults in Kigali. The authors conclude the chapter with discussion of how researchers might incorporate the storyboard into the repertoire of visual data possibilities.

**NOTE**

1 The NRF national discussion was titled “Can Art Stop AIDS? Exploring the Impact of Visual and Arts-Based Participatory Methodologies Used in HIV and AIDS Education and Intervention Research” and was held at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, on September 15, 2010.

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SECTION ONE

THE DRAWING’S THE THING:
CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE USE OF DRAWINGS
IN SOCIAL RESEARCH
CHAPTER 2

DRAWINGS AS RESEARCH METHOD

Claudia Mitchell, Linda Theron, Jean Stuart, Ann Smith and
Zachariah Campbell

INTRODUCTION

The use of drawings in social research is located within several broad yet overlapping areas of contemporary study. These include arts-based or arts-informed research (Knowles & Cole, 2008), participatory visual methodologies (De Lange, Mitchell, & Stuart, 2007; Rose, 2001), textual approaches in visual studies in the social sciences (Mitchell, 2011), as well as the use of drawings in psychology. For a number of decades—possibly from as early as 1935 (MacGregor, Currie, & Wetton, 1998)—psychologists and researchers have engaged children and adults in activities using varied forms of a ‘draw-and-write’ or ‘draw-and-talk’ technique that have facilitated the rich exploration of children’s and adults’ reflections, perceptions, and views on multiple topics and phenomena (Backett-Milburn & McKie, 1999; Furth, 1988; Guillemin, 2004; MacGregor et al., 1998; Mair & Kierans, 2007). Drawings have long been used by psychologists to measure cognitive development (Goodenough, 1926) and as a projective technique (with adults as well as with children) to explore conscious and unconscious issues and experiences. In a very real sense, drawings make parts of the self and/or levels of development visible.

Working with the visual is far from simple, and there are competing theories of practice about how best to use drawings and other visual texts in social research. Within the art-making community, some will argue that the art or visual text speaks for itself and that the drawing, collage, or performance exists precisely because the idea is not easily expressed in words. As Weber (2008) observed, “Images can be used to capture the ineffable …. Some things just need to be shown, not merely stated. Artistic images can help us access those elusive hard-to-put-into-words aspects of knowledge that might otherwise remain hidden or ignored” (p. 44). As researchers in the area of arts-based methodologies highlight, meaning-making through the arts is full of complexity and the artistic products are themselves texts to be read and interpreted by their producer and their audiences, including researchers. At the same time, the use of drawing as a research method typically involves more than just engaging participants in making drawings, followed by the researcher’s analysis of these artefacts. When drawing is used as a research method, it often entails participants’ drawing and talking or drawing and writing (Backett-Milburn & McKie, 1999; Guillemin, 2004; MacGregor et al., 1998; Mair & Kierans, 2007) about the meaning embedded in their drawing. The drawer’s context (both present and past) colours what is drawn, how it is drawn,
and what the drawing represents. As such, drawing as a research tool is often complemented by verbal research methods (Guillemin, 2004) that encourage collaborative meaning-making that allows the drawer to give voice to what the drawing was intended to convey. This collaboration is vital precisely because the drawing is produced by a specific individual in a particular space and time. This understanding of drawing (i.e., drawing as a participatory research method that relies on researcher-participant collaboration to make meaning of the drawing) forms the focus of *Picturing Research* although, as we point out in this chapter and elsewhere in the book, the richness of visual arts-based methodologies (as modes of inquiry, of representation, of dissemination, of transformation) means that we need to avoid thinking of drawings as a monolithic visual methodology. But why focus on drawings? Notwithstanding the ease (all you need is a pencil and paper) and the low-tech aspects (no need for digital cameras or even electricity), the benefits of the uses of drawings, as the various chapters in this volume attest, are many and include the active engagement of children (MacGregor et al., 1998) and adults (Guillemin, 2004; Stuart, 2007; Theron, 2008) and visible proof of research findings. Burke and Prosser (2008) talked about the ways in which drawings and other visual methods, especially when these are used with children, are really a stimulus for communication, and they argue that using the visual—especially drawings—with children is particularly critical in getting at their inner world: “Children have the ability to capture feelings and emotions through drawings and paintings while lacking an equally expressive written or spoken language” (p. 414). This same point was made by Robin Goodman in one of the opening essays to *The Day Our World Changed: Children’s Art of 9/11* when he wrote:

Special x-ray cameras for examining what children saw and felt on September 11, 2001, don’t exist. The art in this collection, created in the first four months after 9/11 does, however, provide a snapshot of children’s raw and immediate reactions. A private corner of the children’s world of uncensored memories, thoughts and feelings is explored here in their drawings and paintings. (p. 14)

We believe that the use of drawings is also appropriate for getting at the memories, thoughts, and feelings of adults—and that sometimes it is that quick request to ‘Draw. Quickly, just draw. Draw the first thing you think of.’ that captures something that is not easily put into words.

**SOME METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS: ON WORKING WITH THE HAND-MADE**

Our use of the term ‘hand-made’ hearkens back to the national discussion on the role of the arts in addressing HIV and AIDS that was held at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in September 2010 (see also Chapter 1). There, the group of assembled researchers, artists, and arts practitioners struggled to form groups for discussion purposes based on the particular arts-focus. In the end, the emergence of three broad (but, of course, overlapping) categories emerged: the Digital,
Performance, and the Hand-Made. Into the last category fell collage, paper making, tapestry, doll making, quilt making, and drawing. The issues around working with these various texts are many but perhaps the question that we are most frequently asked is one like this: “Help! If I use this work in my research, what do I do with the data?” To answer that question, researchers need, we believe, to locate their work within a methodological community (or communities); this is crucial. As noted above, there are several communities that we see as being particularly relevant, although we note that there are overlaps between and amongst these communities—arts-based or arts-informed qualitative research, participatory visual methodologies, and textual approaches within visual studies. Here, we offer a brief overview of each, and also direct the reader to more extensive descriptions and discussions of this work.

Arts-Based Methodologies

The use of the arts (drawing, collage, drama, dance, photography, and video to name only some of the modes) in qualitative research brings together researchers and artist-practitioners working in such areas as image-based research (Weber, 2008), arts-informed research (Knowles & Cole, 2008), and a/r/tography (Springgay, 2008). Shaun McNiff (2008) offered a useful definition of the domain of arts-based research:

[It] can be defined as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expression in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies. (p. 29)

For McNiff and others working in the area of arts-based research, there is a distinction between studies that focus on the process of artistic expression itself (and hence consider the participation of the artist, the genres of expression, the audience, and the impact of the work) and those that use drawing, collage, performance, and other artistic modes as more conventional forms of verbal data.

Participatory Visual Research Methodologies (PVRM)

This body of work focuses on the use of the visual (photography, video, digital storytelling, drawings) as a participatory methodology and is often regarded as one aspect of community-based research. This area, informed by the study of the visual in the work of such researchers as Marcus Banks (2001), Sarah Pink (2001), and Gillian Rose (2001), combines a focus on the producer and production process and the ways in which producers/participants can be engaged in informing the study of (and, sometimes, the analysis of) issues that are critical to them. PVRM is increasingly used as a critical approach to intervention research in such areas as health, education, community development, and social work and is seen as a way of empowering community members to identify social issues and also to imagine solutions to these. As with arts-based research, the visual in PVRM can serve as a
mode of inquiry, a mode of representation, a mode of dissemination, and a mode of transformation.

Textual Research in the Social Sciences

Although not entirely separate from either arts-based research or PVRM, textual research offers a set of analytical reading strategies that may be applied to visual and other artistic texts as well as to the study of objects, to things, to what Daniel Miller called ‘stuff’ (2010), to documents, and even to the self-as-text. Working across a variety of disciplinary areas including cultural studies, literary studies, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, and art history, textual studies re-frames what counts as data, how it can be read, and where. How can a school playground, a shopping mall, a toilet, a UNICEF document, and, in this case, a drawing, be read? As argued elsewhere (Mitchell, 2011), this does not mean that there is no place for the producer’s voice (see previous section) but rather that there is space for more contextualised readings. How is the drawing read, for example, when it is displayed in a classroom, as part of a community-exhibition in a public space, or on a billboard display promoting a campaign on children and peace-building? Buchli and Lucas (2000), as archaeologists studying material culture, wrote about a child’s drawing uncovered as an artefact left behind in an abandoned British council flat. In their analysis, they attempt to piece together a story of abandonment through the close reading of various texts, including documents, the spread of children’s toys, and a drawing.

Critically, as researchers who are interested in the transformative potential of research suggest (see, for example, Boydell, 2009), the engagement of participants may go well beyond ‘data collection’, thus signalling a value-added component to the work in terms of therapeutic potential but also a cautionary in relation to what drawings may stir up. Although this book is not specifically framed within an art-as-therapy approach, we need to remember that much of the arts-based literature of Cole and MacIntyre (2008), Conrad (2006), and Gray and Sindig (2002) highlights the potential for a research space to also be a space of healing. In work in the area of PVRM, there is often reference to empowerment, engagement, ownership, and agency—all aspects of work with drawings that suggest an afterlife to the research.

ALL ABOUT METHOD

In this section of the chapter, we focus more on the actual ‘doing’ in social research involving drawings. We include attention to data collection, to working with the drawings, and, finally, we remind the reader of the positioning of the researchers—ourselves—in visual studies.

Part 1: Pointers to Using Drawings in Visual Research

We start by noting that there is not a single, prescriptive approach to using drawing as a data generation tool. In some studies, participants were invited to make simple
line drawings individually (e.g., Guillemin, 2004; Stuart, 2007); in others, participants were invited to produce metaphoric or symbolic drawings individually (Theron, 2008); and in still others, participants produced group-generated symbolic drawings (see Chapters 12 and 14). More recently, researchers have adapted the ‘draw-and-write/-talk’ technique to include story-boarding (see Chapter 16) and cartooning (see Chapter 15). Nevertheless, even as it is apparent that drawings lend themselves to flexibility as a data-generation tool, there are a number of preferred ways of engaging participants in the making of drawings, particularly if ethical and participatory ideals are to be upheld. The following points offer some recommendations in this regard, based on our experience of using drawings as data generation tools.

A reassuring invitation to draw. Not all participants are confident about their talent for drawing, even when they are willing to draw. For this reason, when we are inviting participants to draw, the invitation needs to reassure them that the focus is on the content of their drawing, and not on the quality of it as a drawing. Researchers need to emphasise this when they first broach the possibility of a participant’s engaging in a study that will entail making a drawing (or drawings). Researchers need to repeat this assurance in the letter of information, on the consent form, and again when the drawing activity commences. The importance of setting participants’ minds at rest about the lack of emphasis on artistic talent is independent of the type of drawing that participants are invited to make (e.g., an individual simple line drawing, a group-generated drawing, a cartoon, a metaphoric drawing).

A choice of drawing tools. Drawing tools really depend on the demographics of the invited participants. If, for example, the participants are suburban children from a well-resourced primary school, paper and coloured pencils will be familiar apparatus. If, however, the participants are adult villagers from a remote, rural area, these tools could invoke anxiety. In this latter context, drawing on the ground (using sticks or sharpish objects) might be more appropriate.

Ideally, participants need a choice of culturally and contextually congruent drawing paraphernalia (e.g., coloured pencil crayons, lead pencils, felt-tipped markers). Some participants prefer more ‘artistic’ media, such as pastels or chalk. Regardless of the medium chosen, in our experience, colour facilitates richer expression and often affords participants a greater sense of satisfaction, both with regard to the process of creating the drawing and the completed product.

The type and size of paper will be influenced, in part, by the anticipated dissemination process: If participants’ drawings will (with their permission) form part of a public display, then larger and more durable paper (e.g., thin cardboard) might be more feasible. However, some participants are intimidated by poster-size pieces of paper, so participant comfort should be factored in. Overall, it might be best to provide participants with a choice of paper.
A leisurely pace. When data generation includes the visual, researchers need to respect the maxim of ‘going slowly, taking time’ (Galvaan, 2007, p. 156). Participants who agree to participate in drawing activities preferably need the time to engage with the researcher prior to drawing. We recommend (as does Guillemin, 2004) that researchers spend at least one session getting to know research participants before engaging them in a drawing activity: Participants are often more comfortable with drawing when the researcher is more familiar to them.

![Image of a South African soccer player](image)

**Figure 2.1.** Example of a written prompt that stimulated the drawing of a South African soccer player.

When some rapport has been established, and participants have been reminded that the quality of their drawing is not important, the drawing activity (already agreed on in a prior ethical procedure—see Chapters 4 and 6) can be initiated. Although researchers have been known not to provide a specific instruction, prompt, or drawing brief, many do (Carlson, Alan Sroufe, & Egeland, 2004). In our experience, a specific prompt provides structure and contributes to richer data generation. It is often preferable to give both a verbal and written prompt (see Figure 2.1) and then to allow participants the opportunity to process the prompt.
and visualise their responses. “Going slowly, taking time” (Galvaan, 2007, p. 156) applies to the drawing activity too: Participants need enough time to visualise and to draw—making the drawing is contingent on a process of reflection and of finding a way to express this pictorially.

The leisureliness of the pace will understandably be influenced by the prompt. If, for example, participants are asked to produce a group-generated symbolic drawing or visual metaphor, this would probably take longer than meeting a request for an individually produced simple line drawing. If participants are asked to produce a series of drawings (as in a storyboard or cartoon), this could probably translate into a number of hours of reflection and drawing, which could mean that researchers should provide participants with the prompt and the drawing materials and return at an agreed time to collect the completed drawings.

A shared analysis. When psychologists use drawings to make human experience, perception, or emotion visible, a clinical analysis of the drawing alone is never sufficient. To make meaning out of what they are seeing, more astute psychologists engage their clients in a participatory manner and ask them to collaborate in the process of analysing and understanding the drawing. In other words, a clinical analysis of the drawing itself (the visible) is insufficient to provide deep understanding. In a very similar manner, drawing as a research method is more than just engaging participants in making drawings, followed by researcher-based analysis of these artefacts. When drawing is used as a research method, it entails participants’ drawing and talking (or writing) (Backett-Milburn & McKie, 1999; Guillemin, 2004; MacGregor et al., 1998; Mair & Kierans, 2007) about the meaning embedded in their drawing. This collaboration is vital precisely because no visual product can be neutral: The drawing is produced by a specific individual in a particular space and time (Rose, 2001). The drawer’s context (both present and past) must colour what is drawn, how it is drawn, and what the drawing represents. As such, drawing as a research tool must be complemented by verbal research methods (Guillemin, 2004) that encourage collaborative meaning-making and allow the drawer to give voice to what the drawing was intended to convey. When the analysis is shared in this way, valid knowledge production occurs. In other words, once the drawing is completed, it is vital to ask the participant to describe and interpret the image. This needs to include what the drawing is illustrating (i.e., what the drawing means), and, if colour was used, what meaning the participant attaches to the colour. It can also be useful to ask the participant to comment on the spatial organisation of the drawing (Guillemin, 2004). This interpretive description can be done verbally (and audio-recorded) or in writing. In our experience, verbal explanations are best provided out of earshot of other participants so as to prevent one participant from influencing another. We have also learned that when written explanations are provided, it is a good idea to read these in the participant’s presence to ensure mutual understanding.

A discussion of what the drawing means, and/or clarification of the explanation, often prompts further relevant data generation. These data add to the emerging understanding of the phenomenon in question. For example, the 16-year-old boy
who drew the picture in Figure 2.1 explained his drawing as follows: “I want to play soccer when I am big. I want to have money. I want to play for the national soccer team, for South Africa.” This explanation (and the subsequent conversation) helped the researchers to understand that the street youth who made this drawing believed that soccer and playing for a national team meant having enough money and a better life. Only once the participant was invited to interpret his drawing, did the deeper meaning of soccer as an opportunity for a better future and a chance to dream become apparent. The chapters in this book often refer to how participants helped researchers make sense of the drawings (see Chapters 8 and 11, for example) and, in many instances, how this shared analysis encouraged richer researcher understanding of the phenomenon in question (see Chapter 15, for example). When drawings are group-generated, the clarification of the drawing could also be group-generated (see Chapter 12 for an example of this).

The preceding collaborative process informs the analysis of the drawings as collective. So, when the researcher then engages in a process of analysis (e.g., content analysis, thematic analysis) of all the drawings generated in a research project, this collective analysis encompasses both the drawn contents and the participants’ interpretations of their drawings. Once the researcher has identified patterns and themes emerging from the collective drawings and the participants’ interpretations, the researcher needs to return to the participants and ask their opinions on the emergent findings. In other words, the shared analysis occurs in the initial interpretation of the drawing and again in the analysis of the collective drawings. In this way, the participants are acknowledged as knowledge producers and respected as the experts that they are (Mertens, 2009).

A civic dissemination. The old sayings ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’ and ‘a picture tells a story’ foreground the power of drawings. Drawings are veridical, and are often easily comprehensible advocates. They broadcast pressing social messages in irrefutable ways. They give voice to the traditionally voiceless (see Figure 2.2, for example), encourage expression, and demand attention. For all these reasons, drawings are ideal dissemination tools: They can be displayed as collages, as individual posters, as themed exhibitions; they can be reproduced on banners, t-shirts, shopping bags or turned into screen-savers. Regardless of how they are used, their use makes knowledge accessible. More importantly, using drawings (with the participants’ permission) as a means of making study findings known facilitates public dissemination at community level. ‘Research as social change’ (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) is subsequently potentiated.
As noted in Chapter 4, a civic dissemination necessitates participant participation: Participants need to be sure that they want their drawings made public; they need to lead the process of deciding which drawings are displayed, where they are exhibited, and the form such an exhibition should take. In this way, participants continue to express ownership of their drawings, even if these drawings are no longer in their personal possession. Finally, if a decision is made to archive the drawings in a public space, following their use in some form of unrestricted dissemination, participants need to sanction this, particularly since it implies the potential for public use over which participants will have no control. Another possibility, as is taken up in Chapter 7, is the idea of a restricted site where the drawings are seen and explored only by the participants and research team.

To illustrate the above suggestions, we refer to the study “Resilient Educators (REds)” conducted by Theron, Geyer, Strydom, and Delport (2008). In this study, the researchers wanted to understand whether participation in the REds program (an intervention aimed at encouraging educators challenged by the HIV&AIDS pandemic to function resiliently) enabled educators to adapt positively to the challenges of the HIV&AIDS pandemic. One of the ways in which the researchers set about determining this was to ask participants to make specific pre- and post-
REds symbolic drawings. The researchers implemented the recommendations described above, as summarised here in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. REds: A case study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Application in REds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A reassuring invitation to draw</td>
<td>Teachers who volunteered to participate in REds knew from the outset that they would be asked to draw, as part of the REds pre- and post-testing. The researchers emphasised that although teachers were invited to draw, they had the right not to draw. If teachers chose to draw, how well they drew (or not) was unimportant because the researchers were interested in what would be drawn—the researchers made this clear during the consent process and again just before teachers made drawings. This reassurance was repeated in the written prompt printed on the pages given to teachers to draw on: ‘Draw in the space below (remember: it is not about how well you draw but about what you draw).’ The researchers did not provide erasers in an attempt to discourage participants from trying to produce ‘perfect’ drawings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A choice of drawing tools</td>
<td>Participants were handed blank A4 pages and a variety of coloured pencils. In some instances, participants were also offered felt-tipped markers. What the participants chose to draw with was entirely up to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A leisurely pace</td>
<td>REds researchers asked participants to sit comfortably and visualise how the HIV&amp;AIDS pandemic had affected them. Participants were asked not to sit too close to one another. The researchers did not rush this stage of the process and allowed participants to reflect quietly and independently. Participants were then asked to draw what came to mind. The following specific prompt was given: <em>When you think of how the pandemic has affected you, what symbol comes to mind? Draw your symbol in the space below.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. A shared analysis

Participants were asked to make meaning of their drawings by writing a couple of sentences on a second sheet. Researchers made this request verbally and repeated it in writing at the top of the second sheet: *Write 2–3 sentences in this space that explain your symbol.* The REds participant wrote the following in explanation of Figure 2.3 above:

Due to high death rate as a result of HIV/AIDS pandemic thousands and thousands of children are left orphaned as a result of this pandemic. Many children are left with no one to look after them, they end up begging for food in the streets. They become our (teachers) problem. They affect me.

Alternatively, participants were asked to complete the following sentences:

- My symbol is …
- I chose this symbol because …
- What my drawing is saying …
- The colour … represents …

Participants who preferred not to write an explanation talked the researcher through their drawings while the researcher recorded and transcribed the explanations.

In their analysis of the drawings collectively generated by REds participants, researchers went back to some of the participants and engaged them in consensus discussions around themes emerging from the contents of their drawings and initial participant interpretations (see, for example, Theron, 2008; Theron et al., 2010).
5. A civic dissemination

A community-focused dissemination of drawings generated by REds participants is currently in process. Drawings like those in Figures 2.2 and 2.3 are being used to create themed posters to raise public and government awareness of the need to support teachers who are affected by HIV and AIDS. For example, Figures 2.2 and 2.3 form part of a poster that illustrates teachers’ empathy for learners who are HIV+ or affected by HIV and AIDS and how this empathy has the potential to jeopardise teacher resilience if teachers continue to be unsupported in their efforts to care for learners made vulnerable by the pandemic. Teachers who participated in REds and post-graduate students who acted as REds facilitators are collaborating with REds researchers to finalise the choice of themes, the selection of pictures to illustrate these themes, and the logistics of the public displays.

We have used here the example of one project that used drawings, but how to use drawings as a data-generation tool is not cast in stone. Nevertheless, because the value of drawings (both as knowledge production and as dissemination tool) is foregrounded in researcher-participant collaboration, any use of drawings that does not start with participatory process may invite criticism.

Part 2: Working with Drawings as Visual Images

As the preceding example of the REds project illustrates, there are many points of entry for working with the drawing process, ranging from (1) a consideration of what the individual participants themselves say about their drawings (either during interviews or in their captions), (2) an analysis of the shared discussions, (3) a thematic analysis of key issues (with supporting evidence of the drawings and commentary), (4) the responses of audiences at the time of civic dissemination (Who says what? Which images are particularly compelling to community audiences and to broader audiences? Are there thematic aspects that can be explored in audience response?), and of course, what is most desirable, and (5) the triangulation of these various data sources. But if there is no one right way to elicit drawings as research data, there is also no one way to work with the data. As pointed out in Chapter 7, the participants themselves can be involved in working with visual data with their own collections of drawings, but there is also the possibility of working across collections. Although in the preceding section we make it clear that drawing is a visual participatory methodology and relies on the engagement of participants, this does not mean that there is no place for analysis that runs across collections (not always possible for the participants) and analytic approaches that involve third-party audiences.

The illustrative case studies in the second part of Picturing Research draw attention to the various ways that different researchers generate and work with visual data. These case studies also highlight the multi-genred nature of producer
generated data—from straightforward drawings to metaphorical productions (see Chapters 9 and 10) to such genres as cartooning (Chapter 15) and storyboarding (Chapter 16). Although the bulk of the images that are presented are done as individual drawings, work done in the area of storyboarding is often carried out in small groups, raising new questions about capturing the process as well as product and follow-up discussion.

In the REds project, civic dissemination is collaborative work between teachers and post-graduate students that leads to negotiated themes and poster development. Content analysis may be useful when a third-party audience, such as the research team, is looking for the emergence of themes or key issues across a large number of drawings or across collections of drawings created by different age groups and cultures or conducted at different times or in different geographical locations. These drawings might be from the same prompt, or they may be from collections from different categories of participants. For example, if researchers and peer educators look across teacher and learner drawings of HIV representations to see how HIV and AIDS is seen (Chapter 11), they might work towards solutions appropriate to what the drawings depict. According to Rose (2001), though, the method is challenging in that it requires the analyst to consider only what is actually in the drawings and to develop interesting and coherent coding categories that do not overlap. Even when conclusions are reached by a third-party audience through content analysis, it is still possible and often desirable to take the findings back to the participants for their comments and suggestions on ways forward or indeed to work with this method to develop the codes themselves. Although the approach is useful for looking systematically across a large number of drawings to see what is in them, it is often important to think also about what is not in them and to ask questions like ‘How is gender represented and why?’ or ‘Who is not in the picture?’ or ‘Why does this group’s drawings never depict living positively?’ Something to bear in mind with content analysis is that it has its roots in quantitative analysis, and in its mechanical way may fail to provide a means of going beyond coding and counting, which is why approaches that are more interpretive (and ideally participatory) seek to study context.

A combination of interpretive methods for analysing drawings with participants or even third-party audiences (see Chapter 11) can also be considered. This is because beyond the drawing itself, its meanings and its value lie partly in the socio-cultural context from which the drawing arises, with the individual(s) who created the drawing, or in the social practices and discourses that may have shaped the drawing. The ‘draw-and-write’ technique and collaboration with participants ensures that the producer’s intended meaning is central, but may not be able to take into consideration broader social constructions.

Discourse analysis pays attention to drawings as social constructions. According to Fairclough (1995), discourse practices are the mediators between texts (in our case, drawings) and social practices, and they can shape and be shaping. One of the most effective ways to activate discourse analysis would be through developing questions that facilitate thinking about the relationships between the drawings as sites of meaning on the one hand, and the social and cultural practices that relate to
them, on the other. So, one might ask of a drawing, ‘How does this drawing reproduce or change practices of stigma?’ or ‘What does this drawing say about social and/or sexual relationships?’ Questions that call attention to the composition and interaction of elements in each drawing will contribute to taking a semiotic perspective on drawings themselves. Working with an audience of viewers and looking at a drawing that represents HIV through tombstones, rain, and sad faces, one may ask, ‘What does this drawing mean to you?’ or ‘How do these three elements in this drawing combine to convey a strong message?’

Following from this, we also note the ways in which the research process might focus on the actual ‘doing’ of the drawing or, as Goodman called it in the 1980s, “kidwatching” (Goodman, 1985). As Wright (2007) observed in her work with young children’s drawing-telling, there is a rich ‘action’ going on during the drawing process that can also be studied and analysed:

In children’s drawing, for example, the assembled signs can include graphically produced images (e.g. people, objects), which might also include written letters or words, numbers, symbols (e.g. flags) and graphic devices (e.g. ‘whoosh’ lines behind a car). In addition, this graphic content may be accompanied by children's sounds (e.g. expressive vocalisation) and imitative gestures to enhance the meaning. Hence, when children draw, they construct and interpret a range of verbal and non-verbal signs with reference to the conventions associated with this medium of communication. (p. 38)

Her work along with the work with children’s drawing-telling-writing by Dyson (1990) adds an ‘in process’ dimension to the analysis, at least with the drawings of young children. Campbell’s analysis “Two Boys Drawing” demonstrates kidwatching in action as he describes the art making of a 6-year-old and a 9-year-old. This type of observing, as Campbell explores, highlights the place of intertextuality and the performance element of drawings and the notion of ‘you have to be there’ as researcher in order to see (and hear) what is happening. Even the child’s name may be woven into the drawing. This work also highlights the importance of video and audio recordings (something that is also emphasised in Chapter 13). Clearly, this is work that must be approached sensitively and with a concern for not being too intrusive.

**“Two Boys Drawing”**

Based on the sessions I spent drawing with the boys, a six-year old and a nine-year old, there are certain things I noticed, though I can’t help feeling that there is a lot that is not represented by that experience. Certainly my role as both an adult and an ‘art instructor’ of sorts must have influenced the dynamic, as opposed to how the boys might draw and construct images on their own. It did, however, unlock memories from my own childhood, and remind me of how drawing techniques were often treated among my peers. Perhaps because of my background and formal training, I tend to see a bigger

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DRAWINGS AS RESEARCH METHOD

schism between the way kids often draw at earlier ages, and the visualisation and observation process that defines drawing at more ‘advanced’ levels.

One of the things that struck me in particular was the relative lack of visualisation or reference based on sight. In one sense, it could be said that the act of drawing is, for them, not really drawing at all in the traditional sense, but something more akin to writing. Rather than describing an actual specific object, or referencing it from a sort of three-dimensional awareness in the mind’s eye, it seems to be about a formula that, if followed properly, yields a specific result. The result is not necessarily an approximation of a particular person or familiar object, but an icon. It is a visual shorthand, a pictogram rather than a picture, constructed from abstract shapes, and concealed into a recognisable symbolic form.

Naturally, the act of drawing from observation can also be seen as a system of symbols, albeit on a more microcosmic level. Committing a three-dimensional object or space to a two-dimensional medium involves a certain degree of abstraction, and a system of visual codes understood between the artist and viewer. In observational drawing, one learns that specific types of mark-making can be used to describe those certain surfaces or edges that go together to create one’s image, and on the receiving end, the viewer should understand these cues. Sometimes calculations are involved, to ensure that things such as proportion and perspective are maintained, in spite of the imperfect guidance of our eyes.

Images are also not necessarily meant to convey a whole idea. Often they are visual aides to facilitate talking points. The picture does not tell a story . . . it comes with a story. After the drawing is complete, the experience becomes a performance, in which the visual elements of a drawing become linked together by a verbal narration. A drawing can end up being the preparation for the main event, which is the performative explanation of the drawing.

When a child learns to draw a truck, or a dog, it is often according to a step-by-step recipe of shapes. This recipe may be passed on from schoolmates or an instructor as the ‘right way’ to draw these things, following a prescribed order. In this way, drawing becomes about building a vocabulary of these tricks and codes. “Do you know how to draw an airplane?” is a request for a simple formula to denote ‘airplane’ that may be added to one’s repertoire, and repeated as needed. This pictorial language is highly imitative, but also very holistic. Television cartoons, comics, picture books, and other children’s drawings all become sources for drawn/written symbols, such as text, onomatopoeic sound effects, movement lines, word bubbles, dust clouds to denote speed, or even diagonal rays to distinguish a sun from other circular objects. However, most of these methods are integrated from existing systems, rather than invented on the spot, and as such tend to be a few degrees removed from the act of looking at the object or person they seek to represent.

Six year old D talks about his friend at school who draws knights in armour, though in this case, the image is traced from a book photograph. D’s own drawing of his friend’s knight incorporates many of the details from the original tracing, but without any knowledge of what those details are meant to represent. The shapes are simply there because they were in the original tracing.

Nine year old J tells me about his friend from school who is very good at drawing army tanks, and offers to show me how this friend draws them. The result is a methodical exercise in formula, executed with the care and attention a student of calligraphy might use to trace out the form of a cursive capital “G”. One always starts with the same oval,
followed by the circles within the oval, the box on top, followed by the smaller oval, and
topped with the rectangle of the cannon and the lines to denote treads.

If asked to draw a truck, J will draw the same two-dimensional profile of a truck he was
shown how to draw, without significant variation, again and again. The type of truck, or
the angle it is observed from doesn’t change, though it may grow or shrink, or gain
colours or insignia. The basic visual components, however, remain the same. When asked
to explain why those components are present, or what they represent, the child may not
have an answer. For him, some of these visual details don’t have a practical correlation to
the original object; they are merely one of the codified components of the icon. Some
forms have an easily recognisable function and purpose, like the wheels on a car. Others
might be more obscure, like the bands on a knight’s suit of armour, and as such become
parts of the symbol without requiring first-hand knowledge of how they relate to the
original object. The object becomes abstracted even as it gains a certain symbolic
universality.

Part 3: Drawing Ourselves into the Research: Self as Text

Finally, there is also the possibility of considering the positioning of the researcher.
With an increased recognition of the importance of reflexivity in qualitative work,
and the emergence of work in autoethnography (Ellis, 2004) and self-study
(Pithouse, Mitchell, & Moletsane, 2009), we think it is critical to ‘draw ourselves’
into the research. In Chapter 1, we consider the backstory of how we ourselves
came to be working in the area of drawing and how that influences what we focus
on in this book. Readers might look, then, at these accounts in Chapter 1 as
examples of our ‘drawing ourselves’ into the analysis. In Chapter 3, Kathleen
Pithouse explores more broadly the issue of ‘starting with ourselves’ and the uses
of self-study in participatory research, and we direct the reader to this chapter for
further consideration of the researcher-self in participatory research.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we provide a foundation for considering the critical issues and
illustrative case studies that follow. Drawing as a research methodology has often
been overlooked by researchers in search of more high-tech (and sometimes more
abstract) approaches. The simultaneous simplicity and complexity of drawing,
however, are key for both beginning and experienced researchers. Drawing, as we
show in the REds example, can be used as a single research tool, or, as can be seen
in other chapters, may be one of several research tools used in tandem. In our
concern for method, we are convinced that drawing as a participatory visual
methodology offers researchers in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere a rich entry
point for engaging participants in issues that are important to them, for studying the
act of representation itself, for reaching multiple audiences, and ultimately, for
social action.
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CHAPTER 2


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