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# Children Framing Childhoods and Looking Back

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## Introduction

This chapter draws upon my longitudinal research, *Children Framing Childhoods and Looking Back*, which put cameras in the hands of thirty-six children growing up in working-poor and immigrant communities, inviting them to document their lives and schooling over time (at ages ten, twelve, sixteen and eighteen).<sup>1</sup> The research has generated an extensive audiovisual archive housed on a password-protected website: 2036 photographs; sixty-five hours of video- and audio-taped individual and small group interviews of the thirty-six participants talking about their images; and eighteen video diaries produced by a sub-set of participants from ages sixteen to eighteen.

Elsewhere I have written about specific analytic moves I think are necessary for understanding the children's meaning making through photography (Luttrell 2010). These moves include the following: (1) an inventory and analysis of the *picture content*; (2) a consideration of different *picture-viewing* contexts and audiences (e.g. what the children tell an interviewer and what they discuss among their peers); and (3) an examination of the conditions, limitations and affordances of the children's *picture taking* (ibid.). These three 'sites' of meaning making have often been pulled apart, as Gillian Rose writes (2001, p. 16). But in practice, these sites are interwoven through histories, ideologies, politics and theories that guide people's use of cameras, the pictures they take, the meanings these images hold and the experiences that bring particular photographs to life. In this chapter I want to reflect on my research process and identify some advancements in theory building that I offer to enrich what I consider an under-theorised approach to visual methods with children and young people that has burgeoned in

educational research over the last twenty-five years (Clark-Ibanez 2004; Clark 1999; Cook & Hess 2007; Kaplan 2013; Luttrell & Charfen 2010; Mitchell 2011; Orellana 1999; Prosser & Burke 2007; Thomason 2008; Tinkler 2008; Yates 2010;).

## Sociology, photography, family and childhood

There is an important historical legacy that is too often neglected in discussions about photography as a form of educational research. Before describing my research process, I want to situate it and pay tribute to early-20th-century reform-oriented sociologists who used photography to study the plight of immigrants, industrial workers (Harper 1998), child labour (Jacob Riis & Lewis Hine) and African American childhood (W. E. B. Du Bois). Sociologist Howard Becker drew attention to this earlier tradition forty years ago (1974) when he noted that photography and sociology share the same birth date and a common agenda – the exploration of social life and individual agency/resilience. It was common in early issues of the *American Journal of Sociology* for photographs to be published as part of scholarly articles. But, as the split grew between those who saw photography as 'documentary' and those who saw it as 'art', sociology, in its drive to become more science-like, relied less and less upon photography. Becker was interested in bringing sociology and photography into conversation with each other again, but with careful attention paid to the theories (broadly defined) that guide people's particular use of photography. Becker encouraged sociologists to think about photography as a *social activity* in which the photographer's and the viewer's eyes and visions are guided by social institutions and organisations that support specific ways of seeing through specific codes and conventions; for example, to question why the same photograph is viewed as 'art' if it is housed in a museum but as 'news' if it appears in a newspaper.

The rise of photography has also been associated with the creation of modern childhood. Penny Tinkler (2008, p. 255) quotes Robson (2001, p. 131) who writes, 'seeing the history of photography and the history of the child through the same view finder is not only possible, but inevitable'. Tinkler notes that photographs of children, dating from the 1850s through to the present, have attracted much scholarly attention. Depictions of children have evolved and continue to be contested to this day – from understandings of children as indistinguishable from adults; to the child as naturally sinful in need of discipline and correction; to being innocent in body and mind; to be

in need of protection from or, alternatively, as threats to adult society; and finally to what Higonnet refers to as the contemporary image of the 'knowing child' (1998).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Lewis Hine's photographs of child labourers were powerful precisely because they depicted scenes of hardship that defied the norms of what was considered acceptable for a good childhood.

W. E. B. Du Bois's pioneering attempt to re-create a theory of African American childhood through photography stands out in this regard. In 1923, Du Bois called for submissions of photographs 'of interesting children, not necessarily pretty and dressed-up, but human and real' ('Children's Number'). Michelle Phillips writes that Du Bois's effort was to build not only a 'more democratic imagery but a more democratic imaginary' of African American childhood and personhood (Phillips 2013, p. 597). In contrast to the 'many and singularly different ideas' of childhood at the time, from the child as 'bond slave', 'automaton', 'Item of Expense' and parental 'personal adornment', Du Bois sought to offer what 'few people think of': 'the child as Itself – as an Individual with the right and ability to feel, think and act; a being thirsty to know, curious to investigate, eager to experiment' ('Opinion' 250 in Phillips 2013).

In light of this history, it is curious that so few 'giving kids cameras' studies consider the codes, conventions and theories that guide children's photography, or comment on the constructions of childhood that young people in these studies are reflecting, rejecting or inventing.<sup>3</sup> According to Sharples et al. (2003), many of these projects treat the children as 'apprentice adult' photographers thus carrying forward a view of children as simply learners of adult culture or adult ways of seeing.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, it is often hard to distinguish between children's own intentions or 'readings' of their photographs and those of the adult researchers who seek to represent them (Piper & Frankham 2007). In both cases, a form of 'adulthood' (albeit sometimes unwittingly) underlies the practice. There is a nagging and hard-to-answer question when adult researchers give kids cameras: what imaginary of childhood and personhood is brought into focus, from whose perspective, and with what purpose in mind?

While I do not claim to fully answer this question in my project, I offer some strategies that allow for a fuller appreciation of what the children in this project were doing with their cameras, which I argue counters deficit and stigmatised visions of their childhoods, families and schools.

## The research and analytic process for *Children Framing Childhoods*

*Children Framing Childhoods* began in 2003 and took place in a kindergarten through sixth grade (K–6) public elementary school in Worcester, Massachusetts. Worcester is the second-largest city in New England and has a legacy of being an immigrant, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, 'working-class' city whose labouring class dramatically diversified from 1880 to 1920 and then again from 1990 to present. In describing the school, the principal identified its racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity as a point of pride and challenge for her staff as they searched for strategies that would foster greater inclusion of immigrant children and their parents into the school culture. I saw this as an opportunity to join interests – the school's and mine – and designed a project that would bring the children's experiences and perspectives about immigration, social and cultural differences, and family-school relationships more fully into view.

The school enrolled 370 students, of whom 92% were eligible for free school lunch; 37% of students were White, 10% were Black, 18% were Asian, and 35% were Hispanic.<sup>5</sup> I was curious to know what role, if any, gender, race, immigrant status and economic (dis)/advantage would play in the children's representations of and reflections about school, family and community life.

The children who participated represented the linguistic, racial and ethnic diversity of the school. They were each given a disposable camera (now ancient technology) with twenty-seven exposures and had four days to photograph their everyday lives. The overarching prompt was: *You have a cousin moving to Worcester and attending your school. Take pictures that will help him/her know what to expect.* In addition to the prompt, the children brainstormed a list of more specific prompts, including *take pictures of what you do after school, where you feel comfortable, people you admire*, and so on. After the photographs were developed, either I or a research assistant met with each child to talk about the images and why he/she had taken them; whether there were any photographs they wished they had taken but couldn't; and which photographs they would want to show their peers, teachers and a larger public. Then we met in small groups with the children as they discussed each other's photos without adult direction. Both the individual interviews and small group discussions were audio and video recorded. The same process was followed when the children were twelve but with a single prompt: *Take pictures of what matters to you.*

At ages ten and twelve the children produced more family photographs than images of school or community life. These family snapshots revealed a choreography of people, possessions and activities – moms in kitchens, babies being cuddled, family members snuggled on sofas, intergenerational groupings of family members posing in living rooms, siblings and cousins playing, girls doing domestic work (laundry, child minding, cleaning), pets, home dwellings inside and out, furnishings and decorations, cherished belongings neatly displayed, birthday parties, and religious celebrations, to name a few.

Sociologist Erving Goffman would characterise these photographs as 'private pictures':

The special properties of private pictures as part of our *domestic ceremonial life* are worth considering ... [these properties] mak(e) palpable to the senses what might otherwise remain buried and tacit in the structure of social life. (1979, p. 10, italics original)

In one sense, it could be argued that the children embraced the prescription that 'cameras go with family life', reflecting what is said to be the earliest use of photography – the establishment of the 'family album' (Sontag 1977, p. 8). And, as Laura Wexler has argued, this history of the 'family album' has been politically fraught:

A century and a half into the abundant store of photographic images of American domestic life, it is well to remember that the American family album was severely out of balance from the start. The paired questions of who takes the pictures and who is in the pictures are not the only issue. The evidence from slavery suggests that the formal principles of family photography can only evolve in relation to the political principles that govern the recognition of families in the first place. Who would gain control of the domestic signifier through photography has been an issue ever since the medium was invented in 1839. (2000, p. 3)

Taking control of domestic signifiers to represent their families with pride and dignity is a key feature of the children's use of their cameras. Their pictures and explanations communicate their place in communal webs of care (including their own and others' care work), revealing what otherwise might remain buried about the organisation of family life, including, for example, the value the children placed on their mothers' roles in 'feeding the family' (DeVault 1991). Of course their

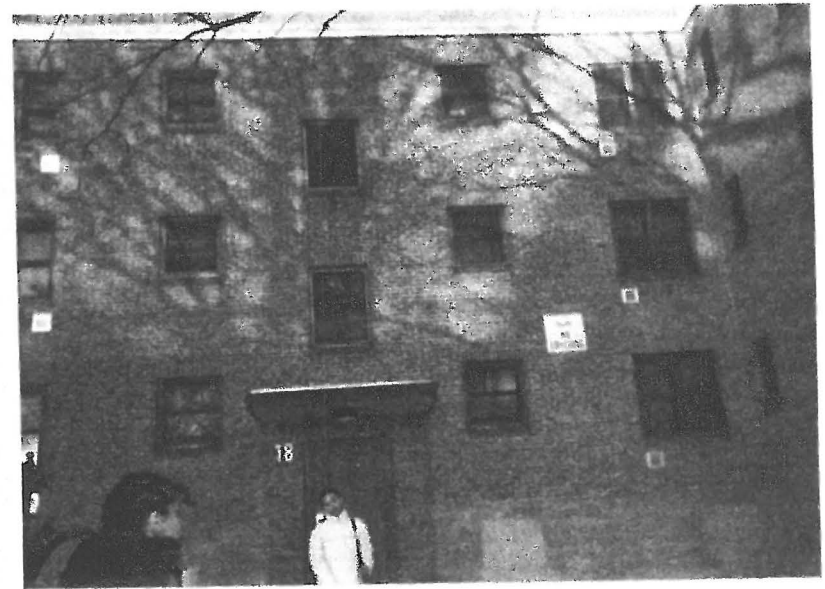


Figure 10.1 Kendra: 'This is where I am comfortable and where I feel respect'

photographs can be read as evidence of familial ideology – presentations of harmony, togetherness, unity and happiness (Chalfen 1987); or as creating an illusion of family coherence set against a 'flow of family life' that does not match up with what the children imagined their viewers might expect or that they themselves wanted to represent (Hirsch 1997, p. 7). Indeed, the most common reason the children gave for taking a picture of a family photograph was to 'show my whole family' when parents (most often fathers) or other extended family members were unavailable to be photographed for numerous reasons ranging from the demands of shift work to incarceration, death, divorce and migration.

Kendra's photographs and discussion are a case in point, illustrating what I have come to call counter narratives of care and belonging expressed through the children's pictures of *homeplaces* – a term coined by bell hooks to speak about spaces that actively nourish rather than negate and devalue the knowledge, experiences and *very being* of people who traditionally have been marginalised or excluded (hooks 1990). Two-thirds of Kendra's pictures were taken of and inside her home, a powerful statement of what she chose to be identified with, what she

wished to commemorate and, perhaps most important, what might be beyond expressing in words.

Kendra took a photograph of her apartment building, Terrace Gardens. During her interview, she explained to me, 'This is where I am comfortable and where I feel respect'.

But upon viewing the next photograph of her stuffed animals, Kendra changed her mind. 'Oh, this is where I feel comfortable' (*pointing to the photograph shown in Figure 10.2*).

She named each stuffed animal and doll, explaining that 'Tigger' (the bright-yellow striped tiger) is most recent – a Christmas gift from her mother. In the photograph, Kendra displayed these items to 'show my cousin' (following the photographic prompt to take pictures to show one's cousin what to expect), and then added, 'but they aren't usually lined up like that'.

Throughout our conversation about her photographs, Kendra established the emotional landscape of her surroundings, her comfort, sense of belonging and respect. She placed special value on her mother, whom she had photographed twice, and explained why she admires her mom – 'she's thirty-three, married, pretty and loves to read, I know that'.



Figure 10.2 Kendra's toys

Weeks after our interview, Kendra and five other children were looking through each other's photographs, saying what they noticed. Allison picked up Kendra's photograph of her stuffed animals and exclaimed that she, too, has Tigger. Kendra was grinning from ear to ear, as this was the photograph she had chosen as one of her five 'favourites' to share with her peers. Kendra said Allison was welcome to bring her Tigger to come play at her house after school. Allison said, 'But my mother won't let me go to Terrace Gardens. She says it isn't safe'. Kendra responded swiftly and matter-of-factly, 'That's not true; it is the safest place that I have lived', and grabbed the photograph from Allison's hand as if protecting her cherished possessions. Allison embraced this response just as quickly, saying, 'Good, then I will tell my mom that I can come to your house'.

Both girls' conversational agility to surmount the negative perception of Terrace Gardens, a public housing project, is noteworthy. Allison's view, spoken through her mother's voice, is a commonly held perspective among white, Worcester residents, and in many other urban settings. Allison's family lived in a 'three decker' building across from the school. 'Three decker' apartment buildings are common throughout New England, built during the late 19th and early 20th century to house large numbers of immigrants coming to work in factory mills. 'Three deckers' are typically light-framed, wooden structures with each floor serving as a single apartment, and sometimes two apartments. Allison, who is white, lived with her family of five on one floor, her grandparents lived on another floor, and her mother's sister's family lived on the third floor. Allison's extended family has resided in the 'three decker' building for all of her life. Kendra's family, who were African American, had moved five times in search of affordable housing. Terrace Gardens was the third public housing unit in which her family of four had lived. Both the spatial isolation and racial residential segregation of the Worcester public housing units (known as the 'blocs') served as axes of social difference to be navigated by the child participants. And this was one among many exchanges between the children where pictures of personal belongings – stuffed animals, games, toys, brand-name clothing – served as a means for them to both uphold and reject social differences between themselves and their peers (Buckingham 2011; Pugh 2009). In this case, both girls avoided the sting and scorn of difference (living in 'public housing'), with the trace of Tigger in the photograph serving as the valued social glue.

At ages ten and twelve, Gabriel's composite set of photographs, like Kendra's, featured his *homeplace* over school images. His first photograph

was an exception (Figure 10.3), and 'show[ed] Spanish in my school that makes me proud'.

But the rest centred on life at home – his mom in the kitchen baking cupcakes; his mom and sister curled up together on the living room daybed; a photograph of a collection of family photos framed together hanging on the living room wall; his mother's parakeet brought from Puerto Rico; his video-game console and a photo taken by his mother showing him playing in the room he shared with his little sister. His interview about the photographs focused on his mother: 'I admire my mom cause she's creative with food'. He described 'cook day' at home when she taught him how to make chicken that was 'juicy from adding wine'. He gestured with his hands, describing her delicious food, tenderly stroking the photograph, and with palpable emotion, he said, 'I love her so much I could explode from too much'. He continued to declare, 'I love her very much because she helps me with a lot of things, teaches me things'. When asked what else she helped him with, he responded, 'She helps me with my homework but mostly she helps me with being a child. ... With momma's rules, do this, do that, clean up your room. But I don't mind because I love her'. Gabriel used his camera to communicate

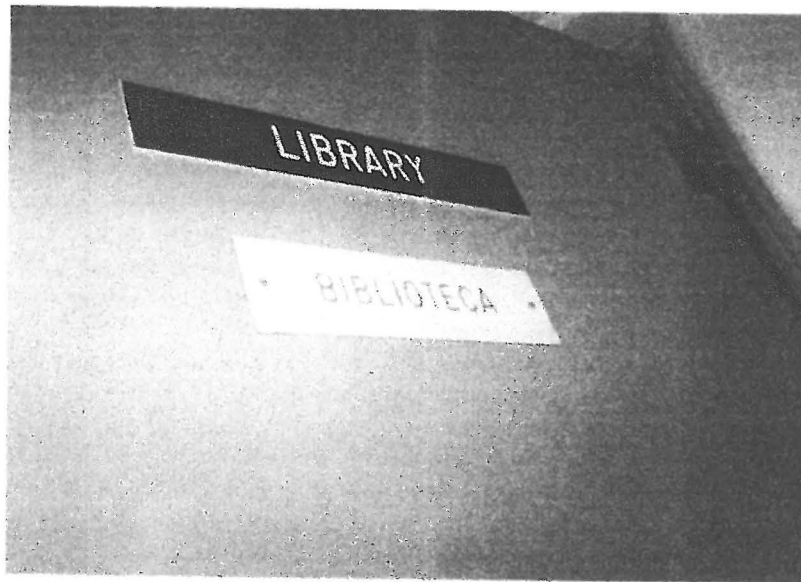


Figure 10.3 Gabriel's school library

his love for his mother in another way as well. When speaking with the interviewer about a photograph he had taken of his church, ten-year-old Gabriel turned away from the interviewer and gazed into the video camera that was taping the conversation. He held up his photograph and spoke directly to his mother: 'Mommy, I took this picture for you, I'm sorry it is blurry'. He then turned to the interviewer and explained that he took it because 'it means so much to her'.

Elsewhere I have discussed the efforts the children, like Gabriel and Kendra, took to photograph their mothers and to extol their care-giving and educational value (helping with homework, being lovers of reading) as if to manage or protect their mothers' image in the face of others (school officials, teachers, researchers) who might judge them negatively (Dodson & Luttrell 2011; Luttrell 2011, 2012).

But in conversation with his peers, Gabriel emphasised that he had taken the picture of the church because it was where he went to 'hang with the teenagers' who invited him to join their activities, even though he was 'only in fifth grade', highlighting the dual worlds children inhabit as they seek belonging and status with peers.

I want to suggest that the children's family photography was far more complex and layered than at first glance and that the conversations in different picture-viewing contexts helped to draw these complexities out. I have called this distinctive feature of my approach 'collaborative seeing' through which the complex evocations of the children's images and their context-dependent meanings can be preserved (Luttrell 2010; Fontaine & Luttrell 2015). Theoretically speaking, collaborative seeing allows us to engage what Weis and Fine (2012) call 'critical bifocality', which links individual meaning making to larger discourses, public policies and conditions that 'come to be woven into community relationships and metabolized by individuals' (Weis & Fine 2012, p. 174). Allison and Kendra's conversation about Terrace Gardens is such an example of competing ways of seeing that can generate counter narratives of care and belonging from the children's lived experience and perspective.

I also want to suggest that these different picture-viewing contexts also help to fill out the 'embodied sense of seeing and feeling', and the 'emotional geography' of caring and 'togetherness', to use Gillian Rose's (2004) terms, of the children's photography. First, not only do the pictures and their content evidence the *theme* of care and belonging, but their pictures also embody this theme in terms of bodily proximity portrayed in the photographs, and just as important, the way the young people engaged their pictures through touch, gestures, and intensity, as if the photograph carried the presence of the person, cherished object,

or activities shown. Rose's article about the relationship between mothering and photography prompted me to consider more closely the children's photographs of mothers in *homeplaces*. First, Rose suggests that to fully appreciate family photography, we must understand the everyday, embodied practices – the doing of things, like posing, developing, curating, framing, displaying, sharing with relatives, and so on, that are part of how family photographs are viewed and received. Second, Rose suggests that the taking of family photographs, especially photographs of young children, might serve to assuage the mixed feelings – the strain, guilt, and irritation as well as joys – that most mothers feel toward children, especially in a culture that valorises what Sharon Hays has called 'intensive mothering'. Indeed, Rose notes that children are photographed most often during the time they are most demanding of their mothers, and thus when mothers are most likely to experience ambivalence. For the mothers she studied, 'looking at photographs, then, may produce a proximal space in which the ambivalence of a certain kind of mothering can be encountered on its shifting ground' (2004, p. 561).

There is ample evidence of the children doing things related to care and caring in their photographic practice; for example, Kendra's 'lining up' her stuffed animals for the picture, or Gabriel taking a photograph for his mother. Their practice of picture taking was embedded in the very context of care and communal networks, including handing their cameras to others who asked to document important family events, and finding creative ways to represent the traces of people no longer in their lives. Insofar as the children's photographs symbolised and reiterated the integration of extended family units, it is important to recognise their own active participation in fashioning these units, including the directions they gave to various members about posing, what to wear (e.g. many children wanted to take photographs of their mothers in their 'work uniforms' to 'show they have good jobs'), where to stand, and what symbolic resources to use to convey extended kin relations (e.g. pictures of clothes and gifts given by loved ones) as well as showing themselves doing family chores. Similarly, perhaps the children's picture taking of moms served to assuage their mixed feelings – the strains and discomfort as well as the admiration, gratitude and pride associated with the demands placed upon their mothers, as well as themselves. Such mixed feelings have been documented in Marjorie Falstich Orellana's (2009) account of immigrant children's translation work for family members and by Linda Burton's (2007) discussion of children growing up in low-income communities who perform family duties otherwise

associated with adults. My point is that the children made visible the 'emotional geography' of growing up in wage-poor families, and in a school culture that relies upon the hidden and unacknowledged work of mothers and children, and in fact, often punishes children for meeting these family demands, this is a critically care-conscious insight.

The children's photographs of *homeplaces* offer what 'few people think of' – the working-class, historically marginalised child who is caring and is cared for, and this defies deficit and stigmatising views about their lives.

### The research process and analysis for *Looking Back*

In 2009, I was able to contact twenty-six of the thirty-six original participants, who were attending six different high schools in Worcester. All agreed to be interviewed about their childhood photographs and to reflect upon the ways in which they and their lives had and had not changed.

In looking back on his photographs taken at ages ten and twelve, Gabriel, who now had chosen a new pseudonym, as Juan,<sup>6</sup> was most drawn to pictures of his younger self, expressing both embarrassment as well as delight in his haircut, clothing and old video games. He carefully studied the blurry photograph of the church, reminiscing about when he had the time to go to church, a time of 'freedom' from 'grown-up' responsibilities. He did not remember why he had taken the photograph of his mother in the kitchen, or what he had said about his explosive love for her. What he did say was that he had framed and given the photograph to her: 'She still keeps it on her dresser'. He took notice of the 'togetherness' of his mom and sister on the daybed: 'They are still so close, like best friends'. The shifting ground of his relationship to his childhood, family and mother now included increased responsibilities and demands. Working two jobs after school hours in order to help make ends meet curtailed his participation in the next phase of the project.<sup>7</sup>

Twenty-two participants agreed to continue by taking photographs as they had in the past, and to also document their contemporary lifeworlds with a Flip camcorder. The decision to introduce video was based on the young people's own enthusiasm and preference. In the short span of time, technological advances had made taking photographs commonplace and disposable cameras were a relic of the past. Many, but not all, of the young people had cell phones with cameras and regularly posted photographs they took on Facebook. Nonetheless, we used

disposable cameras because not everyone had cell phones, and for some, keeping up with their cell phone service bills was not guaranteed. Flip camcorders were new and exciting, and introduced the medium of 'our generation', in the words of one participant.

At ages sixteen and eighteen the young people took more photographs of school and work settings in almost the same proportion as the photographs they took at home. But as 'private pictures' the photographs continued to 'commemorate special occasions, relationships, achievements, and life-turning points, ... of a familial or organizational [in this case mostly school] kind'. (Goffman 1979, p. 10). The videos, however, generated a different kind of imagery, linked to different codes and conventions, and evoked different registers of feeling. Whereas the children used their cameras to produce family albums that communicated communal webs of care and belonging, the videos were linked to the imaginaries of social media and YouTube and the diversity of the spaces. As a participant named Danny put it, 'Well you have to understand, you're looking at a guy who grew up watching thousands of YouTube videos. So when I got a [video] camera – this was my first camera – I just thought well I guess I'll do what I saw'.

Like others studying youth and digital media, I found that the young people were using digital media that they had learned from their peers, not teachers or adults, and 'notions of expertise and authority ha[d] been turned on their heads' (Ito et al. 2009b, p. 2). Far from being introduced to new skills and technology through the research project, the young people were instructing *us*, the researchers, about their reconfigured contexts for communication, self-expression, and the performative and interactive quality of the kind of identity work they were doing online. Indeed, the young people were well versed in creating computer-mediated identities online, in ways Watkins has described as 'theatrical and aspirational' (2009, p. 42). They crafted flattering personas, often sexualised and gender specific,<sup>8</sup> and, at times, exaggerated aspects of their lives – their incomes, social statuses, ages and activities. As one participant said of his video, 'I didn't just want to show my normal life because it's pretty boring'. Asked what parts of his video were out of the ordinary, he replied that going to the arcade was very unusual for him. He said that most people would be surprised to see him there because usually he is at home with family, doing homework (Luttrell et al. 2012). Whereas the children's family albums depicted their place in communal webs of care and support, the young people's videos featured mediated friendships and forms of emotional support that were linked on- and offline (Boyd 2014; Ito et al. 2009a; Lange

2014); I argue that these serve as their updated communal webs of care and belonging.

There is much to unravel in the layers of meaning making that the young people were doing through video. A discussion of their 'critical bifocality' and the 'emotional geography' of teenagehood portrayed by their videos needs to be grounded in the codes and conventions that guide digital photography and its uses: ways of seeing and interpreting moving images compared to photographs, the young people's different levels of access to and participation on- and offline, and media constructions of urban 'teenagers' and their prior experience in the *Children Framing Childhood* project, to name but a few. The hard-to-answer question is what imaginary of racialised, immigrant, 'urban' teenagehood and personhood is brought into focus by the young people in the *Looking Back* project?

### Concluding thoughts

I undertook visual research with young people for three compelling reasons: because of what visual images can communicate about human values and social conditions; because this approach is known to introduce topics that might otherwise be overlooked or poorly understood by 'outsiders' and can surface local knowledge – in this case, children's knowledge; and because I wanted the research to build and support young people's agency, to give them maximum control, authority and say over their self-representations. Offering the young people multiple opportunities to make meaning of their own and each other's images in different contexts, and over time, generated both individual and collective insights that challenge a reigning discourse of deficit and blame and showcased their efforts to navigate dual worlds and differences. My goal for this chapter has been to deepen the dialogic, reflexive and theoretically informed analysis that guides visual research with children and youth so that we can more fully see their *homeplaces* as they see them – as more than material shelter, but also as shelter for the people, things and activities that make their lives meaningful and worthy. In the context of the current schooling regime, 'the child of school' (Popkewitz 1998) is understood to be an object to be targeted, labelled, blamed, explained, worried about, remediated and fixed so it can perform to expected standards. It is perhaps all the more striking then that the children's photography went beyond this imagery and brought attention to things unseen and unrewarded in school about 'being a child' and growing up in wage-poor households.

## Notes

1. See Luttrell (2010, 2012, 2013); Lico & Luttrell (2011); Luttrell et al. (2011); Luttrell et al. (2012); Fontaine and Luttrell (2015).
2. Higonnet contends that for the first time in the history of art, children are being endowed 'with psychological and physical individuality at the same time as they [are] recognize[d]... as distinctively child-like'. (1998, p. 12).
3. See Wagner (1999) for his introduction to a special issue about how childhood is seen by children through photography that set the stage for doing visual research *with* not just *about* children.
4. See Cavin (1994) for a compelling exception to this rule.
5. These are the labels and percentages provided by the school; they do not publish records of the immigrant status of the children. Students are eligible for 'free and reduced lunch' in U.S. schools if their family income is at or below 185% of the federal poverty line. The percentage of students in a school receiving free and reduced lunch is an indicator of the socio-economic status of a school.
6. One of the challenges of doing longitudinal research and giving young people as much authorial control over their representations has included their desires to rename themselves. Gabriel/Juan is not the only young person who wished to do so.
7. This was the case for three other youth participants.
8. Girls visual self-representations often 'reinforce many of the strict codes of femininity in popular media culture', and boys often 'subscribe to tried and true notions of masculinity' (Watkins 2010, pp. 43–44).

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## 11

# On 'Gods' and 'Kings' in the Tutorial Industry: A 'Media Spectacle' Analysis of the Shadow Education in Hong Kong

Aaron Koh

## Introduction

There is something spectacular about the visual ecology of tutorial centre advertisements that is circulating in the mediascape of Hong Kong. It is difficult to miss these scintillating, attention-grabbing advertisements. They are everywhere in the public spaces of Hong Kong. Not only do they appear as huge billboards erected on well-trafficked avenues, and public transport such as MTR and double-decker buses, they are also circulated in social media platforms like YouTube and more traditional media formats, such as TV commercials and full-page newspaper advertisements.

Called 'shadow education', these tutorial centres are multimillion-dollar industries. According to Mark Bray and Chad Lykins (2012, p. 20), the market size of the tutoring industry is estimated to be around HK\$1.984 billion (US\$255 million). The sheer size of the industry invites many curious questions about this thriving enterprise. The analytic focus of this chapter is, however, limited to the analysis of multimodal tutorial centre advertisements.

This chapter is situated within a growing body of research on the global phenomenon of shadow education (see e.g. Manzon & Areepattamannil 2014; Aurini et al. 2013; Mori & Baker 2010; Lee et al. 2009). Specific to the private supplementary education in Hong Kong alone, there has been a sudden surge of research interest indicated by numerous recently published literatures (see Koh 2015; Bray et al. 2014; Chan & Bray