The SenseCam as a research tool for exploring learner experiences in an urban classroom space

Carmel Chetty

In this article[1] I describe an ethnographic exploration into the daily school life of Grade 6 learners at an urban school that serves impoverished areas in Durban. The school is representative of the racial demographics of the country. The study explores how Grade 6 learners experience education, and probes how human experiences are mediated through everyday classroom practices and interaction, taking into account the complex influences from the community in the life of the school and, in particular, the lives of the learners. Photographic evidence obtained through the use of a discreet SenseCam, worn by the class teachers and by me, the researcher, in turn, is an essential part of the large data collection that also includes observation notes, interviews, and historical records. I explain the use and value of the SenseCam as a research tool. I demonstrate that learners undermined their own learning and that a multiplicity of factors had an impact on learning and the way the learners experienced school life. Complex social relationships extended beyond the confines of the school.

Keywords: ethnography, everyday, learner positioning, photographs, poverty, space and time

Introduction

In this article I describe research that explores the lives of children, from poor families, at a Durban school thus revealing the micro-social spaces in the daily learning experiences of these learners. Emmison and Smith, in providing some guidance on how to make social space more observable and researchable, make the point that the "visual is also spatial" (2000: 5). New digital technology provides innovative possibilities for research. According to Johnson et al. (2013) the number of new wearable devices is increasing daily and it outpaces the implementation of such technology at schools and in universities. They suggest that the education sector is

Carmel Chetty
Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Faculty of Education (Mowbray campus)
carmel.chetty@gmail.com

just beginning to experiment with such devices and the potential applications are significant and vast.

Therefore in my research, in addition to interviews and observations, I use photographic evidence, obtained through a wearable camera called a SenseCam, to enhance my understanding of learners' positionings and attitudes to learning in the classroom space. The numerous, sequential photographs provide insight into the complexities of the learning experience. Data is networked, as suggested by Latour (1996) from observation notes, interviews, historical records, and the photographs to explore the research question: "What are some of the factors linking learners' everyday lives to their learning experiences?"

Theoretical framing

Since this article explores the everyday learning experiences of disadvantaged learners in a particular school, an understanding of the everyday is important. Lefebvre expounds:

> *In one sense there is nothing more simple and more obvious than everyday life. How do people live? The question may be difficult to answer, but that does not make it any less clear. In another sense nothing could be more superficial: it is banality, triviality, repetitiveness. And in yet another sense nothing could be more profound (2002: 47, emphasis in original).*

I explore the everyday as that which relates to the commonplace, ordinary, and mundane in the rhythms of life from day to day, part of the known and accepted rituals associated with common-sense knowledge (Sandywell, 2004). I also, however, remain mindful of the complexities related to the simple question of whose everyday life we are dealing with.

Important to the study of everyday life is the uncovering of that which is hidden by dominant versions of social life (Highmore, 2002). It is my contention that normalisation inflicts alienation on those outside of perceived norms. Norms have historical contexts that are obscured, and thus the everyday understandings of why we perform certain rituals in the way we do are hidden behind sayings like, for example, "It has always been this way". In the context of school life everyday acts have been normalised through two centuries of ritualised actions. Foucault's insight into how perceptions and understandings come to be is important for linking alienation and what is perceived as abnormal. As Foucault contends, the power of normalisation has evolved historically to "extend its sovereignty in our society" (2003: 26).

Institutions like schools regulate disciplinary control by demanding individuals' participation in their own subjugation (Gore, 1997). The control is exercised over teachers and learners alike. It is the common forms of disciplinary control and knowledge production that give schooling a consistent character in keeping with

the ideological perspectives of the country, and the world. Through normalisation practices, schools become sites of the actualisation of power relations.

Central to this study is the understanding of space and time. A theoretical grounding in space and time as developed by Lefebvre (1991) helps me to explore learners' experiences. The study uses, as its basis, Lefebvre's theories to dialectically expose the contradictions and ambiguities of everyday life. For Lefebvre, time has evolved so that it is no longer perceivable, as time has been "apprehended within space" (1991:95). He conceives of social space as interpenetrating and superimposing. Complex intertwining networks expose myriads of social relationships. Murdoch says, "There is no one time or space, rather there are a number of co-existing space-times" (1998: 360).

It is my view that social spaces conceal social relations. Within the school walls are numerous networks that create complex social relationships that extend beyond the confines of the school as situated in time and space. I network the data (photographs, observations and interviews), to explore how learners see themselves and reproduce themselves within the ever changing, yet constant, environment of the school. Through networking, as suggested by Latour (1996, 2007), space is studied through connections and associations. The claim is that through creating a flat area the social becomes fluid and collectable since it enables the researcher to look at the *how* rather than the *what*. By tracing network activity I delve into the lives of learners, looking at them through historical, social, and educational lenses. I attempt to make visible that which is hidden behind decades of history and normalised practices in the educational arena.

Methodology

The methodological framework of the study is set within a critical ethnographic approach and is supported by Lefebvrian theoretical concepts of space and time. Lefebvre (2002) considers everyday life at different levels of social reality and sees space as being produced through everyday practices. The study reveals the everyday school life of children. I position the study in the physical, social, and pedagogical context of the school environment to investigate the daily lived experiences of the children.

In the following sections, I explain, briefly, why I chose an ethnographic approach; I set out the context of the study; I clarify the process; and I describe how the SenseCam photographs were used.

Ethnography

James (2001: 247) maintains that ethnography, as a research methodology, has facilitated the recognition of children as research participants who can be studied in their own right. Important to her understanding is that ethnography entails "the

desire to engage with children's own views and enables their views and ideas to be rendered accessible to adults as well as other children".

I chose an ethnographic model for this study because it enabled me to observe learners' experiences first hand through being present in their actual setting in the classroom. As the ethnographer I had a direct view into the world in which this particular school learning occurred; this allowed me to better understand learners' experiences, the objective of the ethnographic project. The various relationships, influences, and power structures in the classroom setting were observed and recorded as they happened.

Context of the study

The site for this study was a primary school (that I renamed, in the interests of preserving its anonymity, Good Hope School) with over 1 400 learners, situated in the city of Durban. I chose it because of my general understanding of its demographics in relation to its racial/ethnic diversity and socio-economic backgrounds, as well as its colonial heritage and geographic positioning.

Social and geographic spaces have a significant impact on the learning environment. The learners' social contexts and daily experiences intertwine in multiplicated ways with their learning. Most of the learners, South Africans as well as refugees and migrants from various African countries, who make up 40% of the school roll, lived in the surrounding city environment in rapidly deteriorating flat-dwellings that, according to those associated closely with the school, were teeming with drug lords, sex workers[2] and gangs. The rest of the school population were learners from the surrounding townships.

Method and process

In the first phase of the research, I, as the ethnographer, embedded myself in the life of the school. I use the word "embedded" to convey invisibility attained through familiarity rather than to describe myself, erroneously, as an "immersed insider" (Carspecken, 1996: 189). The management team selected the Grade 6 class where I conducted observations for a period of approximately 4 months, from May 2011 to October 2011. The entire class of 35 learners (18 boys and 17 girls) was closely studied so that I could unravel, as it were, their daily experiences of school life. The 8 educators who taught the learners were also observed.

I kept a reflexive journal in which I recorded my own thoughts as well as what was happening outside of the classroom space. Maintaining such a journal is in keeping with the belief that ethnographic observation should be accompanied by self-reflexivity. Reflexivity, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1993) point out, helps to contextualise and understand the effects of the researcher on the research process.

I kept detailed field notes. The primary observation record is thick (in-depth) as well as journalistic. The thick observations included notes on body language, tone, facial and eye movements, and gestures. Carspecken's (1996: 49) suggested method of using a "priority person" for the in-depth observation and changing the "priority person" every five minutes was used. I conducted the detailed observations throughout the day with intervals of general observations. I also recorded other aspects of interest in the classroom space, including informal conversations. I made detailed notes of learners' movements in and out of the classroom, learner monitoring of other learners, teachers' comments and teaching styles as well as responses of learners. I also took notes about the learners' styles of dress and behaviour as well as their activities during and between lessons, as well as factors related to the use of classroom space and furniture, and evidence of general comfort and discomfort in the classroom. I recorded observations on the playground and during assemblies shortly after the relevant activity to avoid attracting attention to myself by being seen to be taking notes. Real-time recording was easier in the classroom, where I was situated at the back so only a few learners and the teachers were aware of my discreet note taking.

After three months of observations I conducted in-depth interviews. Ten learners (five boys and five girls) from the class as well as two staff members were selected for the interviews. Thereafter the whole class completed a questionnaire while watching a PowerPoint presentation of the photographs (explained in 3.3.1 below). Since the photographs are the focus of this article, the process is described in detail.

Photography

I used photographs taken by a wearable camera called a SenseCam, [3] first developed in 2009 and adopted by Vicon Revue. [4] The SenseCam automatically photographs whatever is in front of the wearer, capturing an average of three to four photographs per minute. It is a digital camera with multiple sensors including a 3-axis accelerometer to detect motion, a thermometer to detect ambient temperature, and a passive infra-red sensor to detect the presence of a person or persons. Sensor data is captured approximately every two seconds and stored in the camera.

The SenseCam was used for a period of two weeks towards the end of the four month study. During that time teachers who taught the class wore the SenseCam during their lessons. Between lessons it was returned to me and I continued wearing it so as to take pictures from where I sat at the back of the classroom. I kept the SenseCam switched on throughout the day including when there was no teacher present, when I accompanied learners to different venues, and during break. Over the two-week period, the SenseCam produced approximately 5466 images. However, there are difficulties in the use of an unobtrusively placed continuous camera. Some of the automatically captured images were unusable because they were indistinct, blurred, out of focus, or irrelevant to the study.

According to Harper (2002: 13), "images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words" . Common-sense understandings of photographs are that they serve as a record that embodies reality; a photo acquires value as a document of an event as it happens. From this perspective, the meaning attached to the photograph is viewed as being either in the photograph itself or in the framework from which viewers draw meaning. It is in the viewing of the photograph that meaning is constructed and, in this process, multiple meanings are generated (Schwartz, 1989; Mitchell, 2008). Schwartz (1989: 122) views photographs as "inherently ambiguous" since multiple meanings emerge in the viewing process.

The discreet photographic device produced evidentiary material to reinforce the theoretical framework of space and time explored within the context of the everyday: The digital images obtained were used to elicit and explore learners' views as well as help reveal the complex relationships between learners, staff, and the social spaces that operated within the classroom and school environment. The photographs also helped link the classroom and school space to the social contexts of the learners' lives through questionnaires and in-depth interviews.

Working with the photographs

I adapted Harper's (2002: 15) ideas on photo elicitation. He suggests that photo elicitation be "based on the authority of the subject rather than the researcher". The first part of the questionnaire captured learners' personal details, activities they engaged in, and their views relating to school and home life. Learners gave their views on the photographs in the second part of the questionnaire that they filled out after they had watched a PowerPoint presentation of selected photographs.

The PowerPoint presentation was arranged into three categories: Places around the school; Behaviour; and Moments. Each photograph was numbered. Learners matched the number on the photograph to a suggested statement on the questionnaire. The suggested statements in the questionnaires were developed from learners' views, established through my observations and the in-depth interviews.

Statements about places around the school (1st category) related to emotions learners might have experienced in particular places (e.g. a place where I feel safe, or nervous); activities learners were involved in (e.g. where we meet friends); and perceptions of the learners in particular contexts (e.g. where there are secrets, where I have fun). Learners filled in the number of the specific photograph next to each suggested statement. Behaviour (2nd category) was selected from words the learners and teachers used to describe particular behaviours e.g. good, inattentive, bossy, etc. Learners placed the number of a specific photograph next to each behaviour type. In the Moments section (3rd category) learners were asked to indicate whether a particular photograph gave them a good or a bad feeling. The learners wrote the number of the photograph below one of the two statements about emotions.

Visual ethics

The issue of informed consent is of particular relevance when visual data of a personal or sensitive nature is produced (Boxall & Ralph, 2009). In view of the sensitivity related to the use of photographs, the ethical issues surrounding the taking of public photographs need to be considered. Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001: 563, emphasis in original) caution that "even though it may be *legal* to photograph someone in a public place, ... such action is *not* ethically neutral". In relation to these ethical issues, I have been mindful of the importance of respecting participants' privacy. I recognise that a photographer wields the power to suggest meaning with regard to a particular photograph, possibly imbuing it with her or his views and values (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001), and, therefore, I meticulously recorded the learners' views.

The school permitted the use of the SenseCam in its environment. Staff and learners involved in the study were advised as to how the SenseCam worked and they gave consent for its use in the classroom and school. I have used only those photographs for which I received permission. Learners gave written permission for my use of the SenseCam photographs in which they appeared. I have protected the identity of all the learners. I have increased the contrast and brightness on one photograph in order to blur it so that a learner is not recognisable, thus ensuring this participant's anonymity. In all other photographs no learners are facially identifiable.

Findings and discussion

I set about finding networks revealed in the data linking historical records, my observations, the photographs, learners' written responses to the photographs, and the voices of the interviewees to the photographs. Networks are revealed through associations and mediations that contextualise and link the learners' lives to their learning experience by bringing together the bits and pieces that hold together the complex relationships of learning.

Safety and security

The learner responses illustrated that the places outside the school (picked up by the camera as I walked around the school yard and near the school gate) were generally perceived and described as unsafe places. The learners presented real experiences that demonstrated their fear of crime and violence that cannot be dismissed as mere "hysteria, paranoia or obsession" as advocated by Baghel (2010: 71). The narratives of the learners and adult participants indicate that their fears are founded on personal experiences. While the streets represent places of fear, the school itself was regarded as a safe haven where learners preferred to be.

In the following representative extracts learners explain the dangers on the streets.

> *Interviewer: … what of the other kinds of dangers that you find there?*
>
> *Penny: Like every single week there is like blood on the floor. Not in the flats, but*
>
> *around. You hear all this man was walking at night. And some people came and stab him.*
>
> *Interviewer: And that happens a lot?*
>
> *Penny: Ja like every week some.*

The violence was often associated with drug use about which most of the learner participants spoke matter-of-factly as an inevitable reality of their lives since the drug trade took place around them every day. Their normality incorporated living with and experiencing crime and the effects of drug use.

> *Interviewer: Is the area you are living in safe?*
>
> *Mandy: There is security, but you know area by where they sell drugs, by that*
>
> *side...in the street, down....*
>
> *Interviewer: You can see them?*
>
> *Mandy: Yes, ...people and that's why that side they stay*
>
> *Interviewer: How do you know they are selling drugs?*
>
> *Mandy: It was in the paper and every day police will be there, ja....*

Ike dealt with his personal safety by ensuring that he befriended people whom he thought could protect him. He had determined that knowing the right people was a necessity for his protection. He suggested:

> *Interviewer: So you think the beach is a safe place?*
>
> *Ike: Not anymore, but you have to have...in this town you have to know people to protect you...There's like big names, there's another boy Adam. Everyone is scared of him. He can fight. So when you with him, no one doesn't play with you.*

Most learner participants perceived street children as dangerous. Many of them had witnessed what many would describe as unimaginable on the streets and from the windows of their flats. They understood the limitations of the spaces in which they could move around freely.

> *Interviewer: Do you also go to the skateboard place?*
>
> *Ike: No, I never go there, that's in North Beach.*
>
> *Interviewer: Is it too far away?*
>
> *Ike: Naah, you can walk but it's dangerous to walk, there's always like street kids. New people always come in there. They like gangsters, they always have flick knives in their pockets. So that's why I never go to that place.*

There was ambivalence about the real danger of street children. A learner explained that they were not really a danger because he knew some of them. One of them had

attended Good Hope School and became a street child when his mother died. The learners expressed their views as if detachment and violence had become normalised as an inevitable part of their lives.

This perception is also supported by the inquiry conducted by Hentschel (2011: 148) into "the uses of space and emotions in the governance of urban dangers" in Durban close to where the school is situated. She noted that

> [h]igh crime rates are accepted here as a given that cannot be overcome—just like the weather: useless to even waste a thought on how to change it. … Governing crime through charm initiatives in space is an undertaking on a small scale, and literally on the surface.…(157)

At the school the police played a positive role as the protectors of a safe school environment. They assisted with the daily scholar patrol and served on the school's governing body. It appears that the school enjoys, possibly because of its positioning adjacent to the more upmarket areas on its borders, what Hentschel (2011: 155) has called a "charm bubble" in the form of a school/community-police partnership aimed at creating a safe learning environment. In their interviews learners indicated that they felt safer at school than they did in the crime-ridden areas they traversed to and from their homes.

For learners who routinely experience having their property stolen while they are on the street there are very few safe bubble spaces. Confrontations by criminals generally occurred when children were alone.

> Terry: …I was with my scooter at …. It was nice with my scooter. They put knives on me like…
>
> Interviewer: Mmm and did they take it?
>
> Terry: They took it. They told me they going to poke me if I don't give it to them. So I just gave it to them ….

All those associated with the school to whom I spoke described the area around the school where many of the learners lived, as dangerous, run down, and overcrowded. This made life here for the learners extremely difficult. Both adult participant 1 and 2 spoke about the overcrowded conditions in which many of the children lived.

> Adult participant 1: …And maybe we're living ten of us in one room. It's normal. So I don't even see that… because most of my peers live like that around here.…
>
> Adult participant 2: And they share one communal toilet and bathroom. It's like upstairs and they all go. All the people living in that floor go upstairs to use a very messy toilet and bathroom… Yes, I know that one boy I taught last year … going right down to another building to fetch buckets of water to bath.…

The narratives shared by the children reflect the dangerous environment in which they lived and which they traversed on their way to and from school. Crime and violence, as an everyday feature of their lives, were accepted in an unchallenging way. My interest lies is how the learners who are practically trapped in unsafe urban spaces negotiate their lives, and cope at school.

Spatial dynamics in the school and classroom

The disciplinary controls and teaching styles that mimicked old colonial practices are evident in the historical school logs (from 1904) that I perused. During my observation period, I noticed that learners adapted their behaviour to what was considered acceptable in the school space. They typically adopted the persona normalised and promoted by the school discourse and teaching practices. Close observation of the learners revealed that they understood themselves differently in their home and school spaces. Wortham (2004) suggests that schools transform learners through an ontological approach that not only changes what the learner knows but who the learner is. Fataar and du Plooy (2012) refer to "spatial dislocation" (18) to describe learners' adaptations to fit in. On the surface, learner participants presented a uniform identity as Grade 6 learners in a particular environment. However, social realities added different dimensions to the way learners received their learning.

Outdoor spaces

Learners' responses to the questionnaire indicated their enjoyment of large open spaces. They cited the playground as the place where they had the most fun. The learners' responses were in accordance with the findings of Blatchford, Baines and Pellegrini (2003: 481) who state that break time "is one of the main 'open' settings with more degrees of freedom and more opportunities to interact with peers". This was particularly so for the learners who lived in flats. During break time learners could participate freely in physical games. In the playground boys loved to run around while girls mostly sat around in conversation groups. The study conducted by Blatchford et al. (2003: 491) confirmed that "boys were significantly more likely to be involved in ball games and girls in more conversation [and] sedentary play…". In this space, informal learning was mediated through both the physical surroundings and the social relationships.

Figure 1: Boys run around - girls sit in groups

The classroom space

Leander (2004: 189) expounds on Lefebvre's (1991) notion of human activity being situated in space and time and asserts that different activities serve to produce different types of space and time and "individuals are constantly in the process of vying for power and negotiating alignments and identities". The familiarity of the classroom space in the collective imagination makes it appear static. Yet classroom space is dynamic and constantly being reproduced differently. Learners' identities grow out of their physical positioning in the classroom space as well as out of their relationships with others who occupy that space. Learner interviews indicated that the home environment created conflictual experiences for them in a school space dominated by normalised practices authenticated across decades of existence.

Learners learn to deal with the contradictions by conforming to the rules in the classroom and school environment as far as possible. Family circumstances sometimes impinged on the learning space and poor children felt excluded. For instance, some learners could not make financial contributions to project work. Penny revealed how she felt marginalised by teachers and learners.

> *Penny: Like when it is difficult work like our project just now technology. It is very expensive to buy globe and batteries.*
>
> *Interviewer: If you can't ... what do you do? Do you get into trouble?*
>
> *Penny: Ja.*
>
> *Interviewer: With the teacher or with the group?*
>
> *Penny: The teacher and the group. They leave me alone.*
>
> *Interviewer: They don't let you participate?*
>
> *Penny: The group they just leave me alone, and they won't take me they won't allow me....*

The socio-economic plight of poor learners has an impact on their behaviour, socialising, and learning in the school space. I witnessed tensions related to home life, peer status, and symbols of belonging like shoe brands surface in the classroom and result in physical confrontations between learners.

Positioning the learner

The following photo essay presents learner behaviour from before the teacher arrives to when she leaves the classroom. The photographs are placed sequentially and show learner attitudes, behaviour, and body positioning. Much of what happens during lessons militates against learning or produces a different kind of learning. Fataar and du Plooy (2012: 13) use the word "suppression" as a referent for a situation in which "one type of spatial practice serves as a kind of constraint or suppressor of other positioning practices in the same domain". Learners positioned themselves differently depending on the situation. They behaved differently in different places or with different people. Peer acceptance behaviour (noticeable in language use, the

assumption of macho attitudes, degrees of loudness etc.) surfaced mostly during the absence of the teacher. The way learners position themselves or the way they are positioned by teachers has an impact on how they learn.
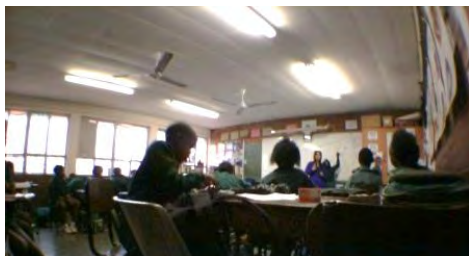
Before teacher arrives in the classroom

Consulting over a project?

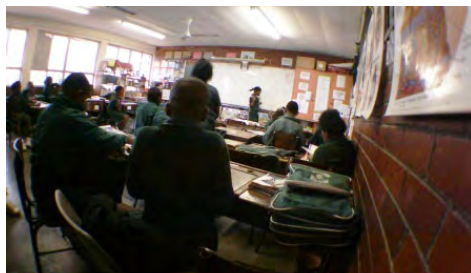*Stretching in confined space*

Teacher conducting a lesson

Teacher faces class – Learners face her.

Teacher's back turned – Learners' attention diverted.

After the lesson

Teacher leaves classroom. Learners continue copying corrections from the board. Monitor keeps order.

More monitors at board once work is completed.

Teacher has left the classroom

More learners out of their places… the longer the teacher's absence, the less control monitors are able to exert.

Learners positioned themselves differently in the presence or absence of the teacher. In the teacher's absence learners relaxed but returned to the formal atmosphere in the teacher's presence. Surreptitious communication and activities continued throughout the day. During the lesson learners tried to keep out of the teacher's immediate line of vision. The photographs show the fluidity of the classroom space and the hierarchy amongst learners. Monitors were undermined and the rules about remaining seated and being quiet were disobeyed.

The subverting of school rules and disobeying those in authority is related to the conflict between behaviour acceptable to teachers and that which demonstrated belonging in peer authorised domains. Carter (2003), in her study of low income African-American youth, found that the youth presented different persona depending on the social setting in which they performed. They used the expected dominant discourse positionings to acquire status in that space and understood how to negotiate authentic speech to gain linguistic and cultural capital in both dominant or peer group settings.

Below (see Figure 2) are examples of learner deflection strategies that I observed as well as saw revealed through interviews and photographic evidence.
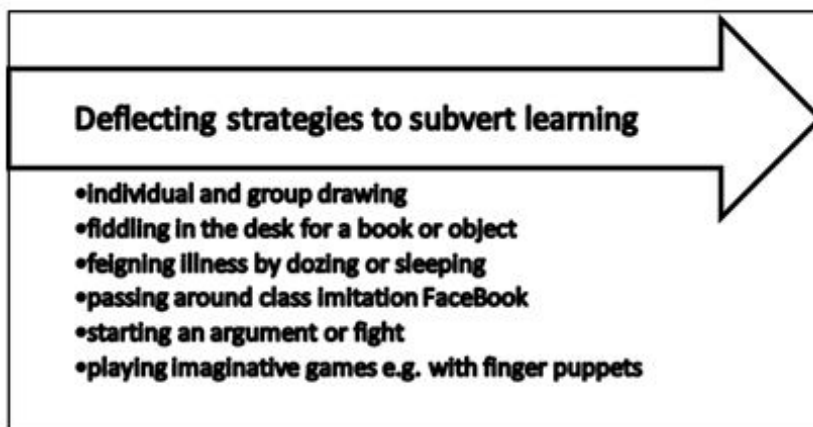

Deflecting strategies to subvert learning

- individual and group drawing
- fiddling in the desk for a book or object
- feigning illness by dozing or sleeping
- passing around class imitation FaceBook
- starting an argument or fight
- playing imaginative games e.g. with finger puppets

Figure 2: Deflecting activities that learners engage in

The teacher assumed that the learners were performing the set work when the class was quiet and busy. Turner et al. (2002: 48) found that avoidance strategies were often adopted to deflect attention from low ability and to undermine performance and that they "may contribute to the devaluation of learning and dropping out of school". In their study, Fataar and du Plooy (2012: 25) found that learning was suppressed by dynamics at the school that "reworked the children's positioning in such a way that they assumed one-dimensional learning subjectivities emptied of productive and enriching possibilities". In his view those positionings led to learners'

failure in the educational arena of the school. Learners' imaginings and creative engagement were suppressed in an environment that supported a traditional approach. Like the study by Urdan and Schoenfelder (2006), I found that where there were ambiguities and conflicts between and among the values and social contexts of their home, community, and school, learners became less motivated and devalued their learning experience.

Learners at *Good Hope School* positioned themselves differently as either involved or dislocated from their learning. Dislocation was seen in the numerous examples that showed a lack of interest in, as well as subversion of, the learning environment. Leander, Phillips and Taylor (2010: 341) suggest that space is constantly in motion and subject to emotive "bodies-in-interaction" that transform our understanding of a "learning environment" from a homogeneous assembly to assemblages of learning that allow for multiple readings and interpretations.

Conclusion

In this article I have described the use of the SenseCam to photograph learners and situations unobtrusively. It is part of the digital technology now available as tools for teaching, learning, and research purposes. While it proved to be most useful in this study, the SenseCam may pick up images beyond what is intended and could potentially infringe on the civil liberties of those being photographed. Its use could create an atmosphere of distrust with the subjects being wary of possible unethical use, such as privacy infringement, profiling, and victimisation. In this study it remained under my control and I ensured that it was used ethically.

The minutiae of classroom life, captured through the SenseCam, in and out of the teachers' presence, provide information which could be used to improve the teaching and learning environment. The use of significant photographic images in the article, together with the data collected from detailed note-taking reflect the teaching and learning processes in the classroom, as well as the experiences and behaviour of the learners. The evidence showed how learners undermined their own learning and that a multiplicity of factors had an impact on learning and the way the learners experienced school life.

A complex relationship between physical and social space mediated the educational experiences of the learners. The learning experiences were circumscribed by values steeped in history that had evolved over generations in the school environment. The learning included complex interactions between and among the learners, the community and the school. Poverty and urban social realities conflicted with learners' experiences at school, and contributed to disengagement with learning. The school's mission to teach learners within a regulative space was compromised by the complex realities of the learners' poverty.

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Endnotes

1. This article draws on the research work and photographic evidence I obtained during an ethnographic study I conducted in 2011 for my PhD thesis (see Chetty, 2013).

2. Far from putting sex workers in the same category as drug lords and gangs, I am trying to capture the problems associated with the illegal sex industry that sets out to recruit underage children. While I was at the school the counsellor told me of a Grade 7 girl who had been lured by girlfriends to accompany them on sex jaunts in which they earned money.

3. OMG (Oxford Metrics Group) has announced the arrival of Autographer, an updated version of the SenseCam. Both were designed by electronics engineer Lyndsay Williams. http://www.zdnet.com/autographer-wearable-camera-will-save-your-life-or-track-your-staff-7000004775/

4. Microsoft has licensed its SenseCam technology to UK-based Vicon Motion systems.
   http://www.gizmag.com/sensecam-being-manufactured-as-vicon-revue/17311/