Chapter 9
Beyond Alienation: Unpacking the Methodological Issues in Visual Research with Children

Joseph Seyram Agbenyega

Introduction

Child development is interactively complex with 'no single methodology to fully explain the nature of human development and learning' (Amso and Casey 2009, p. 85). However, headway is being made in recent years through visual research methodologies and methods to understand the process of young children's development. It can be argued that visual research with children poses particular difficulties in relation to how children fully understand and contribute to the visual research data generation and interpretation process. There is also limited evidence of how visual research methods are critically attentive to methodological issues associated with *habitus, field* and *capital*. Drawing on critical social theory of Bourdieu, this chapter introduces the concept of habitus, field and forms of capital that are crucial for understanding and conducting visual research with young children. This is followed by a research example that utilised children's drawing to illustrate a Bourdieuian approach to visual data analysis.

Critical social theory which is used to inform this chapter is not a child development theory but a method of practising critical reflexivity in visual research, which enables visual researchers to dig beneath surface appearances of images, asking how interactive social systems influence child development and research data (Mills and Gale 2007). Critical reflexivity engages researchers in thinking about the self (Nagata 2006) in relation to their choices of visual tools, for example, whether to use video, digital camera, children's drawings or a combination of these. It also involves a critical engagement with the data they generate and the meanings they assign to it beyond the surface of research as an academic and technical exercise, to research as critical praxis, and applying the research findings to benefit

J.S. Agbenyega, Ph.D. (✉)
Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: joseph.agbenyega@monash.edu

the individual child, groups of children or families who are the focus of research. The arguments put forward in this chapter are intended to influence the methodological and theoretical approaches visual researchers with children employ. It is a move towards methodologies that demonstrate the value of social justice and equity in visual research.

Researchers' choice of visual methods, whether simple or complex, has serious implications for the researchers, children and their families in terms of the construction of the visual and how the visual is interpreted and consumed (Alderson and Morrow 2004; Masson 2004; Wiles et al. 2008). In particular, the chapter argues that critical reflexivity in visual research is undervalued in the current visual research climate and that its revaluing requires theoretical work on the habitus of visual researchers in order to transform their embodied structured master dispositions (habitus) towards a more socially just practice when working with children in visual research. It concludes by considering how visual research with children can become a transformed performance of rights, equity and social justice.

This chapter begins with a discussion of Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus, which assist understanding of how and why some visual research practices still constitute practices of domination and exploitation of children (Mills and Gale 2007). Bourdieu's work, which is applied here, constitutes critical reflexivity into the researcher's self, 'reproductive tendencies of educational research, society and culture, which, by extension, reproduce essentially' (Karol and Gale 2004, p. 1) dominant practices.

Taking a Critical Standpoint on Visual Research

The main contribution of Bourdieu's work to visual research is the understanding of the role that educational research plays in reproducing the theoretical and methodological status quo, limiting certain innovative research practices (Bourdieu 1998). There is overwhelming concern by the visual research community regarding institutional and cultural regulations rendering some visual research with children difficult. For instance, stringent ethics regulations regarding the use of images in research have compelled some visual researchers to obscure faces to preserve anonymity which result in data becoming meaningless, particularly to those who are not part of the research and need to draw their own interpretations from clear images (Prosser and Loxley 2007; Wiles et al. 2008). Similar views and concerns are expressed by visual researchers in North America that institutional guidelines and fear of litigations from parents and child-right advocates are resulting in visual researchers protecting their institutions rather than the rights of participants (Gunsalus et al. 2007; Wiles et al. 2008). Taking a critical stand on child development research requires visual researchers to first and foremost serve the interest of children. It is along this line of thinking that Bourdieu's ideas of habitus, capital and field contribute to how the visual researcher can turn a critical eye on himself/herself, the visual data generation process and the tools being used. It is also

important for those involved in the research with children to critically consider the contribution that the research would make to the participants' overall development, and not only to the institutional and professional fame.

In contemporary early childhood research, visual approaches are increasingly becoming sophisticated but by and large, turning into philosophical and methodological movements, and in many cases, the visual is being used as appendages for textual data (Deppeler et al. 2008). Visual researchers adopt different technological tools and approaches in their research: video, digital still cameras and children's drawings. Irrespective of which visual tools are used, visual research with children is informed by different theories. Whichever theoretical path one takes (cultural-historical, postmodern, poststructural, feminist etc.), Bourdieu 'reminds us that 'theory' should not be valued for its own sake' (Karakayali 2004, p. 352) and that reflexivity, reflectivity and critical reflexivity should be a key component of research because these enable researchers to be aware of the implications and effects of theory in relation to the social world they conjure up in their research (Bourdieu 1998).

Critical reflexivity is the awareness that emerges through the researcher attending to the visual research moment from a non-judgemental perspective. It is shifting preoccupation away from the researchers' and the participants' past and future, in order to locate oneself into the actuality of the lived experience of the participants (Bishop et al. 2004; Nagata 2006). Without critical reflexivity, visual research becomes depersonalising, objectifying and compartmentalising and treats research participants in mechanical terms, neglecting visual research as lived experience. Bourdieu is critical of what he called the 'intellectualist bias' which often arises, for example, when a visual researcher is inadequately critical of visual tools being used, the research site, the visual imagery and the 'presuppositions inscribed in the act of thinking about the world' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 39). Inadequate knowledge and the lack of critical reflexivity results in the failure to grasp 'the logic of practice' stemming from the choice and use of visual research methodologies and methods. Critical to Bourdieu's contribution which is relevant to this chapter is his attempt to deconstruct and reconstruct the intellectual habitus, 'a system of dispositions necessary to the constitution of the craft of the intellectualist in universality' (Bourdieu 1993, p. 271). I would argue that the visual researcher needs certain attributes in order to bring together all the interactive components of development for a holistic understanding rather than as disjointed pieces of research information. The following sections look at Bourdieu's three conceptual metaphors through which to develop the attributes for conducting visual research with children.

Habitus and Visual Research

Bourdieu defines 'habitus' as 'internalised embodied social structures' (Bourdieu 1989, p. 18) and 'cultural unconscious or mental habits or internalised master dispositions' (Bourdieu 1989 cited in Houston 2002, p. 157), which include beliefs,

values, norms and attitudes. Dispositions of researchers inevitably reflect the social and institutional contexts in which they acquire them. Habitus influence the ways researchers interpret and make sense of the world. Visual research with children and families is one way researchers make sense of the world of children and families through visual data. The mental structures and dispositions from which visual researchers make choices of which method or visual technology to use, and how they make sense of the data are generated within the habitus. Habitus as embodied is visible through practice. This means the knowledge and skills the visual researcher possesses become visible through how the researcher conducts the research in the field. Therefore, the only way to determine whether the visual researcher respects children's rights and takes their contribution to knowledge seriously is not in the ways the research is designed on paper but how the data gathering, analysis and interpretation involve the children. On the one hand, perceiving children as simplistic participants and families as non-experts could lead to imposing predetermined structures on them that 'humiliate' their knowledge and experiences. On the other hand, a positive image of children would enable the visual researcher to enact visual research practices that consider children's developmental strengths and families' cultural and symbolic capital, all which add richness to the visual research data and analysis.

In the selection and use of visual research methods, researchers activate their skills taking into consideration their child participants and enter into a social world of which they are both the product and agent (Bourdieu 1989). Product because institutional regulations and the visual approach they utilise dictate how the research should be conducted; agents because they act on the visual process with their knowledge. In many instances the visual researcher's practice may constitute a situation like 'fish in water', without feeling the weight of the water (Bourdieu 1993). This means complacency on the part of visual researchers can turn them away from taking a critical view on the visual data they generate with children.

Researchers are social and academic agents endowed with habitus, inscribed in their bodies by past experiences and by virtue of their training (Houston 2002). These past experiences and training may predispose a visual researcher to think and act in particular ways. The habitus as a system of schemes of perception, appreciation and action should enable visual researchers to perform acts of practical knowledge, based on the identification and recognition of conditional and conventional stimuli to which they are predisposed to react (Mills and Gale 2007), and to generate appropriate and endlessly renewed visual strategies. This is in recognition of the fact that child development takes place in a 'structured social world full of material and symbolic artefacts such as tools and language, structured social interactions such as rituals and games, and cultural institutions such as families and religions' (Tomasello 2009, p. 207). Social institutions, family practices and the children that visual researchers study are dynamic, fluid and shifting; hence, visual research cannot restrict itself to pre-programmed and rigid set of activities but rather must be generative and transformative to answer complex child development questions. Some of these complex questions are addressed in other chapters of this volume.

Bourdieu sees habitus as potentially generating a wide collection of possible actions, at the same time enabling the individual to draw on transformative and constraining courses of action. He writes that habitus:

> is a kind of transforming machine that leads us to 'reproduce' the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively unpredictable way, in such a way that one cannot move simply and mechanically from knowledge of the conditions of production to knowledge of the products. (Bourdieu 1993, p. 87)

Therefore, 'on the one hand, habitus is a structuring structure; that is, it is a structure that structures the social world. On the other hand, it is a structured structure; that is, it is a structure which is structured by the social world' (Ritzer 1996, p. 541).

To apply this sense to visual research means the composition of our internalised master dispositions determine the ways we select our visual methodologies. In doing a research in a particular way, we produce knowledge to structure our social world which we are part of. We are in turn affected by the knowledge we put in the public domain. This is circularity.

Capital and Visual Research

Visual research with children is not a capital-free process. Capital manifests in various forms including economic, cultural, social and symbolic. Economic capital – wealth defined in monetary terms – determines the choice of the kind of visual technology to use in a particular visual research. Cultural capital – a person's or institution's possession of recognised knowledge – influences the visual research design and fieldwork. Important also in conducting visual research are social capital, which is capital constituted by social ties, and symbolic capital, which is one's status, honour or prestige (Bourdieu 1998). These capitals govern the nature of relationships that exist in the research site when we work in participatory visual research and determine whether the research we conduct constitutes oppressive practice or acts of social justice.

Economic, symbolic, cultural and social capitals contribute to child development in many important ways including influence on everyday relations in visual research practice. Capital determines researchers' and child participants' agency, that is, their ability to strategically engage in the research and contribute to the development and conduct of the research (Webb et al. 2002). Many visual researchers involve families; however, families and children may have knowledge capital that is less valued by a particular researcher resulting in limited capacity of the participants to strategically be involved in the research process.

Unless the development of the research design and visual research tools consider the nature and extent of capitals that both the researcher and the participants bring to the research field, visual research can become a destabilising experience for families and children. This implies that the nature of the researcher's and the participants' capital turns visual research into a field of struggle. Bourdieu argues that

the outcome of the struggle one engages in within an educational research field is determined by the amount and nature of capital possessed by competing actors in that given field (Webb et al. 2002). The visual researcher's position in the research field and that of the child and family with whom the visual research is concerned are informed according to Bourdieu by hierarchy of the amount of knowledge and symbolic capital the individuals possess (Wacquant 1998). Thus, there is always an issue of social justice, human rights and equity when working in participatory visual research with children and families endowed with unequal amounts of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1998).

A visual researcher may perpetuate inequality and injustice against some children and families without knowing or desiring to do so (Bourdieu 1998; Mills and Gale 2007). Child development research often positions some families as deficits, particularly children and families from disadvantaged backgrounds who struggle to receive recognition and supplement their meagre cultural, symbolic and economic capitals (Bourdieu 1997; Mills and Gale 2007). Visual researchers can use their well-designed research to accentuate various forms of capitals of such families and children by assigning them important roles in their research and not just treating them as data objects. This means recognising and authorising the contributions of their knowledge through data generation and interpretation of the visual data. This is like transforming one form of capital to another form. For example, cultural knowledge capital is being transformed to academic knowledge capital which can then be transformed into supporting families and children to improve their developmental status (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). From this perspective, it is evident that the interrelationship between habitus and capital helps explain how cultural knowledge affects the kinds of visual research we conduct with children and families and how researchers reproduce their worlds (Webb et al. 2002).

Field and Visual Research

Bourdieu uses field as a spatial metaphor, a network of relations among the objective positions. Bourdieu's conception of field is different from positivist conceptions of field as social location, for example, social milieu, context and social background. Positivist conceptualisations fail to highlight sufficiently the conflictual character of social lived experience (Mills and Gale 2007) which characterises visual research epistemology. The concept of field denotes a social arena in which people interact, manoeuvre and struggle in pursuit of desirable development (Bourdieu 1997). Therefore, all human actions including visual research take place within social fields, which are arenas for the struggle of acquisition of knowledge, credentials and development. In visual research, both the researcher and participants occupy distinct positions within the field in which struggles or manoeuvres take place over specific knowledges or stakes and access to them. The intellectual distinction, class, prestige and social class in varying degrees define the stake of the visual researcher and participants. Therefore, as contemporary research with young

children is increasingly adopting visual approaches, we need to use our research skills to minimise the struggles between theoretical research knowledge and the knowledge that families or children who are involved in our research bring to it.

Contemporary child development research that adopts visual methodology requires taking a critical stance to embrace and enact genuine equity, value children and create opportunity for a more in-depth understanding of children's learning and development (Deppeler et al. 2008). Critical visual research 'takes as one of its central projects an attempt to be discerning and attentive to those places and practices where social agency has been denied and produced' (Giroux 2011, p. 3). Therefore, visual research should not be viewed merely as data site to practise our research skill, technique or method. Without recognising the visual research as arenas of struggle, we may simply be reducing children and families with our visual methods to 'cheerful robots' (Giroux 2011, p. 3). For example, a child smiling in front of a camera or acting for a video recording can be taken for granted to mean a happy child. This may not be necessarily so. We do no good to children and families in visual research when our methods embrace instrumental rationality on the surface in which matters of justice, human rights, power and emancipation are silent. Practising critical reflexivity in visual research engages researchers in moving beyond the obvious to interrogate their choices of visual tools, the data they generate and the meanings they assign to it. This means interaction between the researcher and families, including children, should not be taken for granted when working with young children in participatory visual research. Therefore, reflexivity is important to keep the visual researcher on course throughout the research process.

Reflexivity according to Bourdieu is 'an interrogation of the three types of limitations (social position of field and of the scholastic point of view) that are constitutive of knowledge itself' (Schirato and Webb 2003, p. 539). This means the visual researchers are becoming conscious of their class, ethnicity, religion, etc., their position within the field in relation to the participants, for example, an expert or novice visual researcher, and the tendency to abstract research from context.

I argue that the extent to which researchers can produce useful knowledge on child development using the visual is through the logic of practice and conscious comprehension or reflexivity (Bourdieu 1990). In this chapter I drew on critical reflexivity and reflexivity to produce research knowledge with children using children's drawing as the visual.

Applying Bourdieu's Ideas to Generating Visual Data with Children

Visual research is innovative when it does not succumb to methodological fashion. Participatory visual research with children is based on a system of habitus that celebrates children's capital (knowledge) and invites them to be codesigners of the research process and to contribute to interpretations of the knowledge that is

produced (Swart and Pettipher 2005). Involving children as codesigners of research is building a network of relations which Bourdieu refers to as field. It is essentially about respecting children's unique knowledge, cultural and symbolic capital, which accentuates child rights and promotes social justice. This process is multifaceted and complex and challenges researchers to both think and practise critical reflexivity in their research (Swart and Agbenyega 2010). I will illustrate this point with an example extended from my research with children in Ghana.

In a recent study comparing young children's perception of the kinds of disciplinary situation they experience at home and in preschool, I decided to use children's drawing as a method of inquiry and as a stimulus to encourage conversations during group discussion time. It is argued that providing opportunity to draw holds some potential for obtaining accurate and complete reports from young children (Bruck et al. 2000) because as children draw they spontaneously talk about what they are drawing. The process of drawing itself may provide relevant signposts that catalyses memory retrieval. Similarly, Gross and Hayne (1998) found that drawing is a useful research tool for young children to express their emotional experiences (Bruck et al. 2000). When children are asked to draw about events, they bring their imagination to play and the drawing itself serve as prompts that augment retrieval of past events (Butler et al. 1995). Importantly, drawing may help to minimise the suggestive influence of the adult researcher because the prompts are largely child generated rather than externally induced.

The study involved 25 children with a mean age of 5.6 years who attended the same public kindergarten and were taught by two teachers. The decision to use drawing is to make the research process flexible and open-ended so that all children, depending on their habitus (internalised dispositions), capital (intellectual capacity) and field (network of relations with their teachers), convey their lived experiences through drawing without fear of making mistakes. The first drawings were aimed at evoking children's memoirs on their lived classroom experiences. The drawings were carried out without the presence of the teachers in the classroom. The decision to allow children to draw without the presence of the teachers is to enact the logic of practice of freedom, that is, to create a flexible space where the children are free from fear and intimidation from their teachers, which is common culture of the school. In this way reflexivity on the culture has influenced the way the fieldwork was conducted.

The second drawing was based on children's lived experience at home which also took place the following day in the kindergarten without the teachers or parents. The same ideas related to the first drawing were reasons for doing the drawings without the presence of parents or teachers. My knowledge of the cultural situation in which the children experience their lives has been an added advantage to do the study in this way. This implies that in visual research with children background knowledge of the research sites, sociocultural norms (capital), social agents' dispositions (habitus) and the relational positioning of various agents (field) must be necessary considerations in the ways the research is designed and carried out. The children were given 30 min to produce their lived experiences on paper. The various drawings the children produced were not viewed in terms of their accuracy but

rather in terms of the meanings they assigned to them. After the children completed their drawings on preschool and home discipline, we sat on the floor in a circle to analyse and co-produce meanings of the drawings.

Using Bourdieu's Ideas in the Visual Data Analysis

Visual data is complex data; therefore, Bourdieu suggests eclectic approach to making sense of our data. Bourdieu argues:

> All activity and knowledge … is always informed by a relationship between where the agent has been and how their history has been incorporated, on the one hand, and their context or circumstances (both in a general sense and 'of the moment'), on the other. In other words, agency is always the result of a coming together of the habitus and the specific cultural fields and contexts in which agents 'find themselves', in both senses of the expression. (Schirato and Webb 2003, p. 541)

I followed four steps in analysing the visual data. The first step involved the analyses of the position of the field in relation to the field power. This involved critically examining the drawings and the comments the children made about them to determine how the children are positioned in the field and how power is implicated in the ways they are positioned. The second step involved mapping out the objective structure of relations between the positions occupied by agents who compete for the legitimate forms of specific authority. In this process, I examined the children's routine comments and their drawings to establish how teachers, children and parents struggle for recognition and acceptability in their classroom and at home. This process was followed by the analyses of the habitus (beliefs, dispositions, values) of the agents involved in the research (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). I concluded the analyses by examining the forms of capital that are privileged within the field (relations).

Children's Representations of Lived Experience Through Drawing

The opportunity given to the children allowed them to freely and emotionally convey their lived experience through various drawings, the meanings which are not easily accessible to the external viewer without the children contributing to their interpretation.

The drawing above (Fig. 9.1) was produced by a girl aged 5.6 years. As the two drawings were quite similar in size, the distinction between who is the child and who is the adult was not readily apparent to the external viewer. However, the children interpretation clarified the issues associated with the drawing. The child who produced the drawing pointed to the image on the left as herself receiving corporal

Fig. 9.1 A mum hitting
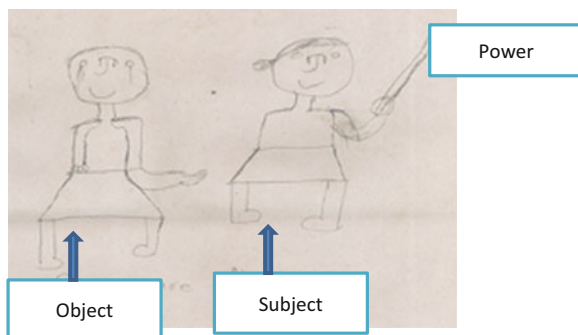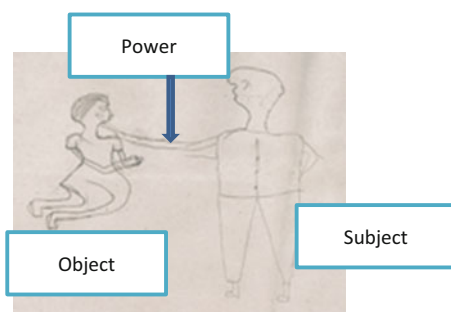the daughter with a stick
(5.6 years old)

Fig. 9.2 A grandfather
slapping face of the
granddaughter
(5.7 years old)

punishment from her mother because she returned late from an errand. The drawing
demonstrated an object-subject relationship. A close look at the objects' face shows
tears marked with pencil.

> My mother sent me to buy salt… I saw my friend… we played when I came home mother
> beat me with a big stick.

The visual and the child's comments are very powerful in evoking an event that
symbolises the positioning of children and their parents within the field where the
field power belongs to the parents. It also explains the habitus (beliefs) of the parent
where corporal punishment is considered a way of correcting a child's misbehav-
iour. However, in child development perspective, this approach is destructive to
children's emotional, behavioural and physical growth. Bourdieu argues that the
formation of the habitus takes place in cultural and historical contexts. Therefore, it
can be argued that the children who experience this kind of lived experience could
internalise the same to develop master dispositions (habitus) that may affect their
individual positionings in the future.

In terms of Fig. 9.2, a girl narrated her story about how she is frequently assaulted
physically by her stepfather. During the discussions of the drawing, the child, with

Fig. 9.3 A drawing depicting a teacher who verbally abuses the children (4 years old)

tears in her eyes, told her story of how her father abandoned her mother before she was born. The drawing illustrates lived experiences of object-subject relationship. Her reasons for the assaults include:

> If don't wash the plate he beat me…if I don't sell the water he beat me…he beat me with his hand he push me…

The story she inherited from her mother regarding her father's disappearance coupled with frequent assaults demonstrates family dynamics pregnant with emotions which have serious implications for her physical, cognitive and emotional development. This shows the complexity of Bourdieu's idea of field and how various agents within the field use a combination of their capital and habitus to enact practices. The most powerful agent here is the stepfather. The relationship as portrayed in the drawing is domineering and authoritative. For this family, it was evident from the analysis that there is extensive struggle within the field as the various agents, child, mother and stepfather, struggle for the field power and recognition (symbolic capital). It is possible that because the man is not the child's real father, issues of trust and respect may be at stake.

The third selected drawing (Fig. 9.3) was quite unique in that it was a human face but the mouth attached to it was very wide across the whole face. To the layperson, the drawing does not convey much information. As a researcher, I am likened to a layperson in this situation. I have difficulty making any sense of the drawing, and the only way to analyse and interpret it is to engage with the child who produced it to help me make sense of it. In this sense, I was drawing on the child's capital (knowledge), her feelings and beliefs (habitus) about the drawing and his relationship to it (field) in constructing meaning. When asked for interpretation, the child who drew it indicated:

> Miss Bonsua is always shouting on us (pseudonym)…if you talk she will shout keep quiet… put your mouth on the table…hey! who is still talking?

It can be argued that from the point of view of the child that their teacher was overbearing and punitive. It demonstrated the teacher's habitus as authoritative with the belief that children must be silenced to enforce discipline in class. The subordinate

relationship existing between the teacher and the children brings tension and more struggles to the field. Because the field power is skewed in favour of the teacher, the children are objectified silenced and othered. I ask, how can children develop their communicative capabilities when they are often silenced in their learning? How can children develop their cognitive capacities when they are not free to express themselves? This is where Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory about child development comes to mind. Vygotsky is critical of maturational framing of children's development. He theorises that social interaction leads to continuous changes in children's thought and behaviour (Woolfolk 1998) and that the basis of development is the interaction with people and the tools that the culture provides to help form their own view of the world (Woolfolk 1998). This study has demonstrated that through children's drawing the very essential factors that impact their development can be brought to the fore.

The drawings showed that visual research in a critical paradigm gives voice to children to evoke their consciousness and tells their stories without fear. It showed a method that accentuated social justice for all children; hence, children's voices regarding their drawings were tape-recorded and played back to parents and the teachers during pickup time. The teachers and parents were also allowed to view the children's drawing for the first time. In this sense, the visual research is not only to benefit the researcher but to serve to transform the habitus of the teachers and parents for a more positive experience in early childhood education. Therefore, the next stage of the project was to organise a follow-up meeting with the teachers and parents to address discipline issues that are seriously affecting the children's rights, well-being and development. This requires an expert knowledge from the researcher to be fed into the understanding of the effects of corporal punishment and assault on children's development, hence a participatory visual research of social justice. It must be emphasised that the relationships we researchers form with children when we conduct research through visual methods are determined by our internalised dispositions, and children and families that we research with will react to us on the basis of what defines us as individual visual researchers.

The analysis proceeded with children's relationship with their drawing, where they experienced the lived experiences that they have demonstrated through their drawing and the historical and cultural circumstances that are implicated in their experiences. One important aspect of this visual research is the children's voices that accompanied their drawings. Because voice is involved in the visual research, the children's conversation was taken seriously in the analysis process in capturing aspects of the audible comments that connect to the visual elements of the participants' understanding enacted through their engagement with the drawings during data generation process. In doing this I have taken into consideration what Crossley (2000) advises:

> The comments of individuals should not be taken at face value; rather, they need to be located in wider structures of discourse and power so that their implications and ramifications can be fully understood. (p. 36)

The same view is expressed by critical researchers who use Bourdieu's ideas and that in conversational analysis researchers need to 'problematize what people say as something other than either simply a reflection of "what is going on in their heads" or a valid description of the social world' (Jenkins 2002 in Mills and Gale 2007, p. 9).

The analytical methods applied to the visual data in this research are not means to an end in themselves as Bourdieu cautions that it is not simply a question of what technique to use in research data generation and analysis and how to use it, but rather why it is used and what it will lead to (Grenfell and James 1998; Mills and Gale 2007). This suggests that the historical, ideological and political moment in which one lives should be considered seriously in addition to one's habitus, field and capital when conducting and analysing visual research data.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that using critical theory ideas espoused by Bourdieu is a fresh effort to articulate a new critical reflexivity in new methodological movement of visual research culture in early childhood education. In this study, for example, reflexivity afforded me insight into some cultural and institutional practices that would be difficult to capture through photographs. I questioned my own habitus and knowledge about visual research whether the teachers and families in this situation would allow the children to use photographs to capture critical moments of aversive practices. How could children capture their own moments simultaneously experiencing that moment? Video is an option, but it wouldn't work for me in this situation because the teachers and parents may alter their real punitive practices, thereby defeating the purpose of the study; therefore, I opted to use drawing. The drawing approach enabled the children to connect their imagination to classroom and home discipline practices and as well felt confident to express their opinions without feeling overwhelmed and intimidated. For most of the children, their agency had been previously suppressed by their teachers and parents, and this is the first time they had had the opportunity to verbally and artistically convey their lived experiences in a holistic and confident way. The analysis of the drawings focused children's interpretations pertaining to their everyday lived experiences. It shows that the choice of visual methodology derives from habitus and capital within a given relation (field). Bourdieu argues that habitus is a 'conditioned and conditional freedom' which generates 'things to do or not to do, things to say or not to say, in relation to' research (Bourdieu 1990, p. 53). Thus, the things not to do in a sensitive research such as this one are to avoid videos or photographs. The possible things to do in this research are creating a flexible space for those who experience the situation to tell their stories boldly.

It is argued that despite the strong influence of our social and institutional structures on us, 'we are not automatons or mindless vehicles of our governing habitus' (Houston 2002, p. 157). As a visual researcher interested in social justice and equity,

the choice of visual methodology must be informed by habitus loaded with passion for childhood justice, human rights and equity. I would argue that habitus acts as principles and schemes to generate and organise visual researchers' research practices in ways that enact social justice or in ways that obscure it. As representations of the world of objects, habitus can be adapted to visual research without a conscious aiming at ends or an expression of mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain the research aims. It requires critical reflexivity to constantly shift in epistemology, methodology and methods of doing research according to the demands of capital, field and habitus of both the researcher and those with whom the research is carried out (Thomas and Glenny 2005; Skrtic 1995). It means our methodological and epistemological visual approaches must show interest in the struggles of the field, cultural and institutional complexities that influence children's development and experiences in unique ways (Rogoff 2003; White et al. 2005).

Critical visual research approaches encompass co-construction and collaboration between researchers and participants (King and Horrocks 2010). These kinds of research lead to troubling one's own lived experience (Nagata 2006). In the research reported in this chapter, the children used drawings to engage the researcher and themselves in questioning issues around their everyday home and school experience. In this sense the research focus is on listening to and empowering children's marginalised voices through visual elicitation in group times (King and Horrocks 2010). This process created opportunities for participants to learn to reflect critically and learn about themselves and their everyday experiences.

Therefore, to adopt critical theory in visual research with children, the researcher must be essentially reflective and reflexive to avoid being 'methodologically formalistic' (Luke 1991, p. 21). Visual research with children and families is built on relations; therefore, in seeking a reflexive or reflective knowledge of social relations, visual researchers working with children no matter their theory should complement positivist approach of understanding children's and their families' world, tied uncritically to natural science methods of investigation with other methods of investigation. This means critical visual research must not

> follow set-piece research strategies, using formalistic methodologies intent upon gridding some pre-processed empirical data through an allegedly objective but still theory –laden hypothetical model. The results of such productions almost fail to resonate successfully with reality or more importantly, hyperreality. (Luke 1991, p. 21)

Instead our visual research approaches must be a revolutionary way of seeing and a form of knowing that employs the understanding of habitus, capital, field and reflexive reasoning to give children and families some research tools to realise new potentials for their emancipation and development (Giroux 2011; Luke 1991). Taking a critical turn on what this chapter has offered, I would like to argue that Bourdieu's lenses on critical theory and cultural-historical theoretical approaches of Vygotsky have both broadened and deepened our understanding of the nature of child development and the sources of hindrances. Although this book centres on cultural-historical approaches, the interaction between the cultural orientations of social actors and the structural environment that conditions development is a useful conceptual framework that can provide the basis for a more systematic approach to understanding the cultural roots of child development.

Finally, in doing visual research, we must adopt the goal of guiding families and children to better their lives by refining their thinking abilities and developmental sensibilities. This requires continuous new consciousness of what must be done in visual research and how to do it to accentuate child development.

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