NEW RESEARCH – NEW VOICES

Object Medleys

Interpretive Possibilities for Educational Research

Daisy Pillay, Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan and Inbanathan Naicker (Eds.)

SensePublishers

Object Medleys

NEW RESEARCH – NEW VOICES

Volume 8

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Object Medleys

Interpretive Possibilities for Educational Research

Edited by

Daisy Pillay, Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan and Inbanathan Naicker
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> *Izimbadada* are synonymous with the dances of the Zulu migrant workers who brought the sturdy sandals, made from recycled motor car tyres, to the city during Apartheid. Maskanda and Mbaqanga musicians popularised *izimbadada*, the name being onomatopoeic for the sound the rubber soles make when walking and performing vigorous, athletic, traditional Zulu dances.

For us, this image evokes the plurality and possibilities of working with objects in educational research.

NOTE

[1] Any opinion, finding and conclusion, or recommendation expressed in this material is that of the authors and the National Research Foundation does not accept any liability in this regard.

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AND INBANATHAN NAICKER

1. COMPOSING OBJECT MEDLEYS

OBJECT MEDLEYS: THE PRELUDE

Object Medleys: Interpretive Possibilities for Educational Research follows on from a 3-day international research symposium held in Durban, South Africa in February 2016, organised by Daisy Pillay, Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, and Inbanathan Naicker. The symposium, *"Not Just an Object": Making Meaning of and from Everyday Objects in Educational Research*, was inspired by Claudia Mitchell's tantalising question: "But how do we get at the meanings of these everyday (and not so everyday) objects, and how might their meanings enrich our research?" (2011, p. 36). The focus of the symposium was on working with objects (both tangible and symbolic) to produce personally, professionally, and socially useful understandings to enrich educational research. The symposium included a poster exhibition where participants presented visual images associated with objects that were connected to their own research. The symposium and exhibition brought together 34 local and international researchers (including many early career academics and postgraduate students) from multiple knowledge domains.

Keynote speakers at the event were two distinguished researchers with considerable expertise in working with objects in educational inquiry: Claudia Mitchell (McGill University, Canada) and Kate Pahl (University of Sheffield, United Kingdom). Each guest speaker gave a public seminar as a vital part of the symposium. Claudia Mitchell's seminar spoke to the topic of "Object as Subject: Productive Entanglements in the Study of the Everyday in Educational Research." Building on work across a variety of disciplines that looks at objects, things, and even "stuff," and drawing on case studies where objects have been the subject of social inquiry, her talk sought to contribute to deepening an understanding of their significance to several approaches to participatory research, including autoethnographic studies in higher education. Kate Pahl's seminar looked at "Dialogic Objects: Material Knowledge as a Challenge to Educational Practice," where she considered the potential objects have for unsettling academic boundaries and ways of knowing by exploring the qualities of objects as they travel across diasporic contexts—to come alive, speaking in multiple languages and materialising new practices.

Each guest speaker also conducted and facilitated an interactive research workshop to offer symposium participants hands-on experience of working with objects for meaning making in educational research. Claudia Mitchell's workshop centred on

D. Pillay et al. (Eds.), Object Medleys, 1–8.

"Things That Talk: Meaning Making through Autoethnographic Engagement with Objects and Things." Kate Pahl's workshop focused on "Object Pedagogies as Practice: Hearing Voices, Listening to Stories."

Overall, the *"Not Just an Object"* symposium strengthened and extended local and international collaboration and networking in the emerging area of object inquiry in educational research. As Claudia Mitchell highlights in her chapter in this book, the study of objects is well established in fields such as archaeology, art history, communications, fine arts, museum studies, and sociology—but is still developing in education.

Multidisciplinary, interactive, and playful engagement with objects during the 3-day symposium offered participants diverse languages of, with, and about objects and visual representations of those objects. Together, the symposium and exhibition became "an ensemble which [portrayed] messages, of possibility and plurality" (Nordstrom, 2013, p. 252) and pushed the boundaries of what counts as evidence for generating new and different knowledges and ways of knowing in educational research.

Following on from the symposium, Daisy, Kathleen, and Inbanathan invited participants to contribute written object pieces to a collective book proposal. This invitation was also extended to other researchers who had not attended the symposium but had become interested in object inquiry through their involvement as colleagues and postgraduate students of the guest speakers, Claudia Mitchell and Kate Pahl. The invitation contained the following guidelines (adapted from Samaras, 2011, pp. 105–106):

> Choose one object that captures an aspect of *your educational research*.
> Consider the *suggested* prompts for writing about your object:
>
> - Explain why you chose this object.
> - Share what the object represents or symbolises about your educational research.
> - What is the time period of this object?
> - How does culture play a role in relation to this object?
> - Are there others involved with this object? What role do they play? What is their influence on your thinking? Do they see things the way you do?
> - What metaphor would you choose to represent, symbolise, and reinforce the
> - significance of this object to you?
> - Express an emotion that this object brings forth for you. Describe where that emotion generates from, and might extend to, in your educational research. Be descriptive.

Kate Pahl and Claudia Mitchell were each asked to contribute a book chapter based on the public seminars they gave at the symposium. Devarakshanam Govinden, a renowned South African researcher with expertise in literature and literary theory, postcolonial studies, and feminism, was also invited to submit a chapter based on her work with objects.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

A medley can be understood as "a musical combination consisting of diverse parts" (Medley, n.d.). By combining wide-ranging object pieces and perspectives from 37 authors, *Object Medleys* continues and extends the creative process of dialogue and exchange that was set in motion at the *"Not Just an Object"* symposium. The book is organised into two parts. "Part One: Object Memoirs," offers retrospective insights from established scholars, Claudia Mitchell, Kate Pahl, and Devarakshanam Govinden, bringing together their distinct yet complementary theoretical and empirical vantage points and practices of working with objects.

The "Object Memoirs" section begins with a chapter by Claudia Mitchell, whose pioneering body of work on objects in social research (Mitchell, 2011; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002; Mitchell & Weber, 1999) was the catalyst for the *"Not Just an Object"* symposium. In her chapter, "Object as Subject: Productive Entanglements with Everyday Objects in Educational Research," Mitchell explores how engaging with commonplace objects can enhance educational research. In particular, Mitchell makes a strong argument for the social responsibility of educational researchers to take seriously the use of objects and object inquiry in seeking to make a qualitative difference to schools, children, and teachers. Kate Pahl's chapter, "Dialogic Objects: Material Knowledge as a Challenge to Educational Practice," focuses on the the potential of objects to make education a socially just space where people enter on their own terms, with their stories and thoughts kept alive within the material potentialities of the object. In the chapter, she engages with an approach to object pedagogies that offers a challenge to hierarchical educational practices that can deny young people voice and agency. Through an emergent approach to objects and the literacies within, she advocates for a resituating of what matters so that people's own entanglements come to the fore in the making of knowledge together. To close the "Object Memoirs" section, Devarakshanam Govinden's chapter, "Not Just an Object: Exploring Epistemological Vantages in Postcolonial Thinking," focuses on the different ways everyday objects become entangled in the performance of diasporic identity. The chapter engages with object inquiry by drawing on a postcolonial, diasporic lens. Govinden shows how domestic objects can have important implications for critical questioning of what constitutes history and culture, self and selfhood.

"Part Two: Object Beginnings," communicates new voices, new insights, and new possibilities for working with objects in educational research. Each chapter includes several pieces written by new scholars in the field of object inquiry in South Africa, Canada, and the United Kingdom. These researchers, many of whom are early career academics or postgraduate students, have engaged in object inquiry from a variety of perspectives and using diverse approaches. Their individual object pieces were woven together through dialogue with the book editors, Daisy Pillay, Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, and Inbanathan Naicker, who coauthored with the new

scholars in the spirit of peer mentoring and reciprocal learning. Each chapter offers a distinctive, multifaceted, and polyvocal (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015) exploration of interrelationships between objects, lived educational experiences, and wider social and cultural concerns.

The first chapter in this section, "The Vanda, the Rose, and the Baobab: Inspirational Display Objects as Fertile Sites for Opening up Narratives of Teacher Researcher Professional Identities," is authored by 11 Southern African teacher researchers in higher education: Theresa Chisanga, Gladys Ashu, Pamela Mavume, Mandisa N. Dhlula-Moruri, Mukund Khatry-Chhetry, Sookdhev Rajkaran, Lazarus Mulenga, Nkosinathi Sotshangane, Nareen Gonsalves, Peter du Toit, and Daisy Pillay. The chapter focuses on objects as spaces for developing new perspectives and priorities about what teacher researchers in higher education can be, and can do differently. The chapter reveals how objects can provide important clues about how teacher researchers in higher education negotiate their daily lives and choices as moments of possibility and hope for self-transformation.

The next chapter, "A Stove, a Flask, and a Photograph: Learning Together through Object Inquiry in Self-Study Research," builds on and adds to a rich history of object inquiry in self-study research by teacher educators. The chapter brings together the voices of three Southern African teacher educators, Mandisa N. Dhlula-Moruri, Makie Kortjass, Thokozani Ndaleni, and their doctoral research supervisor, Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan. Through object monologues and dialogues, this chapter presents individual and shared learning about how everyday objects can become more meaningful for educational researchers and educators. The chapter further illustrates how collective object inquiry can connect educators and educational researchers who often work alone.

To follow, is the chapter by Southern African educational leadership researchers, Sagie Naicker, Sibonelo Blose, Freedom Chiororo, Rashida Khan, and Inbanathan Naicker: "From a Crutch to a Bus: Learning about Educational Leadership Research and Practice through Referencing and Mapping of Objects." In this chapter, the authors engage with Riggins' (1994) concepts of referencing and mapping of objects in educational leadership research and practice. The chapter shows how knowing in educational leadership research and practice can be enhanced through object inquiry.

"A Tin Bath, a Cooking Pot, and a Pencil Holder: Object–Self Dialogue in Educational Research" by Lisa J. Starr, Zanib Rasool, Haleh Raissadat, and Daisy Pillay, combines perspectives and reflections from four researchers working in universities in Canada, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. The chapter demonstrates how dialogue with different domestic objects can open up spaces for advancing fresh insights into social constructions of the researcher self, and for openness to alternate ways of thinking and knowing as instruments of social change.

The subsequent chapter, "Spontaneous Shrines and the Studio Desk: Learning from Working with Objects through an Arts-Informed, Practice-Led Lens," is the result of a transcontinental exchange of ideas between Shauna Rak in Canada, Adelheid Camilla von Maltitz in South Africa, and Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan. Both Shauna and Adelheid are artists, researchers, and art teachers (artist–researcher–teachers). The chapter gives a storied, visually illustrated account of Shauna and Adelheid's theoretical and practical experimentation in relation to objects, while also showing the meaningful purpose that working with objects can bring to art, teaching, and research practice. This chapter offers insights for both artist and nonartist researchers and teachers into working with objects with arts-informed, innovative, and pedagogical consideration.

"A Microscope, a Stone, a Cap, and a Lampshade: Objects as Conduits for Recognising Teaching Practices as Teacher Leadership in Higher Education," is authored by five Southern African higher education teachers, Tamirirofa Chirikure, Angela James, Nomkhosi Nzimande, Asheena Singh-Pillay, and Inbanathan Naicker. The chapter focuses on how objects can serve as tools for thinking and reflection about teaching practices as teacher leadership. Drawing on the concept of object practice, the chapter shows how, through object inquiry, teaching practices can be understood as teacher leadership in higher education.

Fauzanah Fauzan El Mohammady, Wendy Rawlinson, and Daisy Pillay, in their chapter, "Mount Merapi and the Trencadís Bench: Negotiating Personal–Professional Identities through Working with Photographs as Treasured Objects," engage in an exchange of ideas about photographs as treasured objects. The chapter reveals potential openings for new ways of imaging and negotiating nonlinear and multiple personal–professional identities. Introspective thinking prompted by working with photographs as treasured objects unfurls possibilities for making visible the muted voices and the multiple stories of self that can enable a deeper understanding of the struggle between "who am I" and "how I want to be known by others" as a creative, dynamic, and relational tension.

"Shoes, Suitcases, Stones: Creative Engagement with Ourselves as Artist–Researcher–Teachers through Object Inquiry" brings together self-reflexive research by four South African artists who are also university educators: Tamar Meskin, Tanya van der Walt, Lee Scott, and Chris de Beer. The chapter is presented as a performative, collaborative object inquiry, in which the authors perform distinct roles. The four artists act as the lead players, while Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan offers poetic commentary at key moments. Using dramaturgy as an analytic tool, the chapter shows how objects can become points of departure and vessels for creative engagement with self in educational research within the domain of arts and design.

The final chapter, "A Religious Object Medley: Objects as Signifiers of the Values, Beliefs and Practices of Servant Leaders" by Theresa Chisanga and Inbanathan Naicker, draws on servant leadership as a theoretical lens to explore

objects as signifiers of the values, beliefs, and practices of servant leaders. Theresa's medley of five object pieces, juxtaposed against the attributes of servant leaders, reveals the evocative nature of objects in teasing out values, beliefs, and practices of servant leaders.

THE BOOK PEER REVIEW PROCESS

Essential to the development of this book was ensuring that quality standards for scholarly publication were observed. Every chapter of the book presents original research, and was peer reviewed prior to publication. The chapters were individually reviewed by independent peer reviewers who contributed prepublication advice and expertise. Drawing on the peer response guidelines that were used in Pithouse, Mitchell, and Moletsane (2009), the prompts for the peer review feedback were as follows:

- What do you find most interesting or significant about this draft? Why?
- Do you have any questions about this draft? For example, are there any points that are unclear to you or that you think could be explained more fully? Why?
- Do you have any particular suggestions for how the authors could enhance their discussion of some of the following issues, as relevant to the particular focus and purpose of the chapter:
  - the positioning of the chapter in terms of professional, disciplinary, sociocultural, national, and so forth, contexts;
  - the positioning of the chapter in relation to theoretical vantage points;
  - ethical concerns in engaging in object inquiry;
  - methodological challenges and complexities in engaging in object inquiry;
  - diverse approaches to object inquiry, for example, memory work, arts-based methods, poetic inquiry, narrative, dialogue as method, and so forth;
  - what counts as data and analysis in object inquiry;
  - the potential of objects in generating interpretative portrayals of lived educational experience;
  - what difference the object inquiry might make—the so-what? question.

The peer review comments were sent to the book editors, each of whom also reviewed the chapters and added editorial remarks for the purposes of additional guidance or clarification. The chapters were then sent back to the authors for them to revise and rework as per the peer review recommendations. To provide support and assistance, the editors were involved in ongoing communication with the authors as they revised their contributions.

OBJECT MEDLEYS: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THIS MAKE?

How do we get at the meanings of everyday (and not so everyday) objects and how might their meanings add new significance to our research if, as Shanks (1998)

explained, "the [object] is itself a multiplicity, its identity is multiple" (p. 24)? This unique edited book brings together 37 researchers from diverse contexts and multiple knowledge fields to a shared space in which subjects and objects, living and non-living, entangle as medleys to open up understandings of connections made with, between, and through objects.

The book is distinctive within scholarship on object inquiry in that a large part of the research presented has been done in relation to Southern African educational contexts. This research is complemented by contributions from scholars based in Canada and the United Kingdom who have brought their object memoirs and pieces into dialogue with Southern African voices for the purposes of mutual exchange, learning, and growth.

Object Medleys illuminates the promise of objects in generating sociocultural and autobiographical interpretative portrayals of lived educational experience. Moreover, the original research depicted in each chapter expands scholarly conversations about what counts as data and analysis in educational research to highlight the interpretive possibilities of objects, situated within pressing societal questions (Mitchell, 2011). Educational researchers who mediate meanings of and from objects "are not apart from the trajectories of objects, subjects, culture, society, and discourse" (Nordstrom, 2013, p. 253). The exemplars in this book illustrate how working consciously with objects locates researchers within and in response to those trajectories as they try to make sense of them. The object memoirs and pieces interwoven in *Object Medleys* offer diverse, innovative modes and lenses for representing, interpreting, and theorising object studies. Taken as a whole, *Object Medleys* shows how researching education through studying the meanings we attribute to, or make from, objects defies binaries and linearities—to reveal how lived educational experience is open to new and different reworkings and re-visionings, with critical implications for social agency and social change.

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PART ONE

OBJECT MEMOIRS

CLAUDIA MITCHELL

2. OBJECT AS SUBJECT

Productive Entanglements with Everyday Objects in Educational Research

> We live in the middle of things.
>
> (Turkle, 2007, p. 6)

> Entanglement: a condition of being twisted together or entwined, involved with.
>
> (Nuttall, 2009, p. 1)

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I explore how entanglements with objects of the everyday can serve a productive function in educational research. The writings of Sherry Turkle and Sarah Nuttall serve as useful anchors for this exploration. Objects have interested me across a number of research studies, ranging from work with teachers and the artefacts of school as memory prompts (Mitchell & Weber, 1999), to work on children's popular culture and the place of very young children's expert status in studying material culture as can be seen in girls' knowledge of Barbie or GI Joe (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002). Indeed, it was this work with children that spurred me to go further with the idea of objects and things and to consider the idea of *not just an object* (Mitchell, 2011), particularly when I also considered the profound linkages between memory and objects. But I also began to see this formulation of not just an object as key to accessing in a very economical way what is so often the urgency of social research. I recall the words of a 15-year-old girl in a township school in rural South Africa who made the assertion during a workshop on HIV and AIDS and gender-based violence: "Ma'am, you can get AIDS from lipstick" (Mitchell & Smith, 2001). Her assertion was a stark reminder of the entanglements of the everyday that carry an urgency to them. Clearly, the girl who made this statement was not talking about the transmission of HIV through lipstick at a literal level but she was signalling the idea of entanglements. How do we study transactional sex without an understanding of the meanings of objects (in this case, the four Cs: cash, cars, cell phones, and clothing) as currency?

Daniel Miller (2010, p. 116) made a similar observation about "matter of life and death" in his book, *Stuff*. Citing the work of Layne, who studied the significance of things and objects in relation to late abortions and stillbirths, Miller wrote:

D. Pillay et al. (Eds.), Object Medleys, 11–28.

> Layne showed how parents in the US dealing with late foetal loss and stillbirth insist that at Christmas time a gift is given to the person who should have been, or from the person who would have been. She tells of the trouble parents take to dispose of the layette, the things bought for the envisaged child, as part of the mourning for the death of the child. The central fear of these parents is that other people will think that what they have lost was not a human being, a child, but a mere thing. The paradox is that it is primarily through material things that they find the most effective means for insisting upon the humanity of their child, that they were not just not just a thing. (p. 136)

To draw attention to these intricate and profound entanglements may seem obvious, but the idea of trying to study the significance of these entanglements in the lives of the groups with whom we work offers a promising approach to deepening an understanding of everyday realities.

OBJECTS ALL AROUND

The topic of object as subject is one that can be difficult to write about. At the very moment that I sit down to write about objects, I become ever more aware of the objects around me—on the kitchen table and even the table itself: the half full glass, the slight clutter of objects in my reach (a few CDs, a stray clothes peg, several books about objects and then of course the very thing that makes it possible for me to write, my Lenovo laptop). Thoughts of objects and things can be dizzying. It is impossible to avoid the material world. Even if we participate in some sort of cloud (operating system) much of the time (online, LinkedIn, or connected), our lives are still full things and objects that make the virtual possible—cell phones, chargers, adaptors, laptops, iPads, docking stations, desktops, flash drives—all objects and things in and of themselves. There is now an emerging body of object work that is about technology as objects. Some of it is linked very powerfully to memory work, as Lukas Labacher (2016) wrote in an account of his first cell phone. Along the same lines, David Buckingham and Rebekah Willett (2009) examined the various devices that young people have used over the years to produce videos: Super 8 cameras, camcorders, and different versions of cell phones. Sadie Bening, an artist and filmmaker in the United States, wrote of the Fisher Price PXL camera she was given as teenager, and of her outrage at being given a toy, and of her resistance, which turned that camera into a medium unto itself (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002).

I am also reminded of the pervasiveness of these objects of the virtual world even in contexts where electricity and the Internet are limited. When I conducted a photovoice workshop with a group of women in Korogocho, an informal settlement in Nairobi, on the topic of women's economic empowerment and access to childcare (Mitchell, DeMartini, & Muthuri, 2016), several of the participants produced photographs of dumps and waste sites that contained, along with all the needles and

sharp objects that are so dangerous to their children who might wander in if there is not adequate supervision, images of cast-off hard drives and computer screens (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. Digital dump

The presence of these material objects representing the virtual world is a reminder of the notion of travelling objects and global mobility, but also misplaced objects and the impact of Global North trash on the environment. More than anything, however, these objects are a reminder of Sherry Turkle's notion of things presented at the beginning of this chapter, and that they can have different meanings depending on the situation of the beholder and the context of the object. Ironically, perhaps, trash is a focus of study in the artistic world. As Julian Stallabrass (2009) observed of images of trash:

> Context is everything in the construction of critical meanings. Irving Penn made refined black and white platinum prints of pieces of trash which he had picked up and then shot in the studio against pristine white backgrounds. Torn from the company of the environment and their fellow objects, they lost the largest part of their significance. These isolated fragments were treated like new commodities by this successful commercial photographer, becoming renewed as abstractions, and most of all revealed themselves as discrete objects and as prints for purchase. (p. 422)

The images of trash produced by the Korogocho women offer a different angle on trash. However, in both the work Stallabrass wrote about and in their work it is clear that our relationships to things and objects are typically not simple and straightforward For the group of women who produced the image of the computer hard drives that had ended up so close to where their children play, the objects are dangerous ones, but also entangled with access to child care, having few economic resources, and perhaps being victimised by global commodification. For another person an image of computer hard drive may evoke a nostalgic memory of entanglement, as we see in Lindsay's (2003) analysis of the TRS-80 computer from Radio Shack from the 1980s.

OBJECT STUDIES

To date the study of objects has been primarily outside educational research with the vast body of work that looks at objects, things, artefacts, material culture, and "stuff" as Daniel Miller (2010) wrote, cutting across such disciplines as art history, museum studies, fine arts, sociology, archaeology, and communications. As scholars from such diverse backgrounds as media and technology (Turkle, 2007), science (Daston, 2004), archaeology (Hodder, 2012), museum studies (Wood & Latham, 2014), and anthropology (Brown, 1998, 2004; Miller, 1998), and the interdisciplinary area of object studies (Candlin & Guins, 2009) have highlighted, the analysis of material objects offers the possibility of theorising abstract concepts in a grounded manner and, in so doing, expands the possibilities of what counts as evidence in research. In addition, objects are meant to be seen—and photographed—as Marina Warner (2004) argued in her introduction to *Things: A Spectrum of Photography, 1850–2001*. "Photographers", she wrote,

> have a special relation to the mystery of thingness, for a photograph so often reaches out to possess and stay the moment when the thing was there, in the here-and-now that was happening when I was there or you were with a camera or another means of making an image. (p. 10)

The study of objects, as I explored in *Doing Visual Researc*h (Mitchell, 2011), lands nicely into the area of participatory visual research in that the objects and things as material culture in the lives of participants conveniently carry meaning. The work of Stephen Riggins (1994) on the sociosemiotics of things seems particularly helpful in combining the idea of the visual (seeing the object through photography), something that is complementary to work in the area of photovoice and participatory video, with analyses that highlight the connotative along with the denotative. While the work of object study remains open-ended within Riggins' tools and approaches, there is nonetheless a framework that suggests a type of entanglement. One set of questions focuses on the denotative: What is the object? Where is it typically found? Who uses it? A second set of questions about the connotative allows for more personal interpretation. Interestingly, the idea of brief personal essays about a particular object or thing has evolved into a genre of its own as can be seen in a range of writings such

as Jane Urquart's (2016) *A Number of Things.* These short essays offer what Candlin and Guins (2009) referred to as *object lessons* and highlight, as Turkle noted, the notion of thinking through things. So popular has this genre become that in 2013, Ian Bogost and Christopher Schaberg established a mini-book series called *Object Lessons* (about the hidden life of ordinary things, http://objectsobjectsobjects.com/), and Brown (2015) wrote about *The Secret Life of Things*.

OBJECT AS METHOD

But how can the idea of entanglements with objects be captured in educational research? What tools and approaches are appropriate? In this section, I highlight several approaches to object as method, building on the idea of object lessons and highlighting the ways in which the personal and social meanings of everyday objects can be central to addressing urgent issues.

Object Lesson 1: What Does This Object Have to Do with Issues of Social Justice?

Consider the objects in Figure 2.2: a boarding pass, a knife, a credit card, a condom, a paper clip, a charger, a camera, a potato, a clothespin, a set of keys, a 10-rand note and a USB key. What do these objects have in common? And how might the answer to this question form the basis for the idea of object lessons, particularly if the question was varied to become, "What do these objects all have to do with … [insert a particular issue of social justice: education, HIV and AIDS, gender, waste management, human rights, or democracy]?" In the example here, I use the prompt, "What do these objects

Figure 2.2. A range of objects

[Figure 2.2] have to do with HIV and AIDS and gender?" To carry out this activity as a participatory workshop, there is only one basic rule: there are no wrong answers.

Step 1. Ahead of time, as a workshop leader, assemble a bag full of small things or objects. These objects can be anything from a small potato, to a spoon, a 10-rand note, a flash drive, or an unused condom. Make sure that you have as many objects as there are people in your group. It is also fine to have some duplicates. Consider the objects in Figure 2.2. These are just examples and can be substituted by other objects that are on hand.

Step 2. While there are no doubt many different ways of carrying out an activity like this, my approach in working with a group (typically 15–25 people) is to ask participants to stand in a large circle. I think of it as the "object circle" (see Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3. The object circle

Step 3. When everyone is in a circle, explain that you are going to ask each person to put a hand into the bag and choose one thing. Tell them that after everyone has chosen something you will tell them what will happen next.

Step 4. After everyone has an object in his or her hand, explain that you are going to call on each person one by one to hold up his or her object so that everyone in the circle can see it. They can say what the object is, for the benefit of the whole group: "These are car keys" or "This is a potato." Then they should proceed to focus on the question, "What does a set of keys have to do with HIV and AIDS and gender?" or "What does a potato have to do with HIV and AIDS and gender?"

Step 5. Give each person an opportunity to explain, one after the other, to the whole group what his or her object has to do with HIV and AIDS and gender.

Answers will of course vary but I offer some of the responses to three objects used with college instructors working in agriculture in Ethiopia:

Potato

This is a potato. It has a lot to do with HIV and AIDS. We know that good nutrition is very important for people. We need to make sure that when we are thinking about food security we are thinking about special populations such as people who are HIV positive.

Potatoes are harvested by women. We also know that women are more likely to be infected by AIDS than men, so we need to make sure that we see the health needs of women farmers as attached to food security.

Adaptor for a cell phone

Here is an adaptor for a cell phone. Cell phones are very important in relation to treating HIV and AIDS. Now you can receive text messages from a clinic reminding you to take your ARVs.

Here is an adaptor for a cell phone. When women farmers have access to cell phones they can deal directly with the markets in nearby towns and cities for finding out what things are selling for. They don't need a middle person [intermediary] negotiating prices. This gives women much more autonomy and more agency. If they are more powerful they may be less likely to be victims of sexual violence and having to engage in unprotected sex.

Keys

Here is a set of keys. We might think of education as the key to addressing HIV and AIDS. If people have more awareness about what causes HIV then we can solve the problem.

Here is a set of keys. We know that the person who has the set of keys is usually more powerful than the person who does not have the keys. If we had more female farmers with the keys in their hands, we would have a greater chance of gender equality. Women would have more control over their own lives. This will help to address gender inequality as a driver of HIV and AIDS.

Step 6. If time permits you might ask people if they want to offer something different about someone else's object. This can be very generative and productive because it emphasises the idea that there is not just one right answer. It also shows the power of group thinking and collaboration.

Step 7. Before you finish the activity, pose one question to the whole group: What do you learn from doing this activity? What meanings could it have? Where should we go with what we have learned? How does this help us think about HIV and AIDS and gender?

Discussion. The advantage of this approach is its simplicity and portability. It is easy to find 25 objects. A collection could include anything from things found in nature (a leaf, a stone), to a beer bottle cap, or a paper clip. This approach to working with objects has many permutations and variations. In working with 25 objects all on one theme, "What does this have to do with HIV and AIDS and gender?" the entanglements become obvious. Jean Stuart (2007) worked with the idea of using only one object, the AIDS ribbon, as the prompt for asking participants (in that case, university students) to talk about their personal and social associations. Thus, rather than working with a wide range of objects, she used the symbolism of the AIDS ribbon itself as the prompt. Serving as a reminder of the vast range of meaning that any one object can have in relation to social justice issues, the Rights Today gallery of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg features an exhibition of a small number of objects (including a cell phone, a container of cooking oil, and bag of coffee beans) and asks viewers to consider the meaning of the objects in relation to human rights. Each object includes two captions: one that highlights a positive feature of the object in relation to human rights, and another that draws attention to an association with something that threatens human rights. Visitors to the exhibition are encouraged to go beyond these ideas to consider their own associations, but they are also encouraged to see that human rights are interconnected. Ways of analysing the entanglements are also diverse though perhaps the most generative or productive in relation to this approach would be to document the dialogue, particularly focusing on the dialogue in Step 7, and make use of this in a participatory way with the group. Working across different stakeholder groups would also offer useful insights. At the same time, this approach serves as a useful diagnostic tool for where particular groups are in their awareness of an issue. For instance, in the example of the group of college lecturers and administrators offering their perspectives on HIV and AIDS and gender, it was clear that their knowledge of the entanglements was quite sophisticated, and as such provided valuable insights into what could be accomplished by way of applying this knowledge to teaching situations.

Object Lesson 2: Mapping the Present and the Past through Drawing

Drawing, as with the activity of Object Lesson 1, stands as a low tech, low cost, and yet powerful way to engage participants, both children and adults in participatory research related to objects. While drawing does not have to solely be about objects

and things, experience across a variety of settings demonstrates that objects and things are often present as participants set out to represent a particular social issue. This is very compellingly explored in the Constitution Hill-commissioned publication, *Mapping Memory: Former Prisoners Tell Their Stories* (Segal, van den Berg, & Madikida, 2006). Former prisoners of the Number Four prison complex in Johannesburg participated in workshops in which they went back to map and remap what the authors referred to as the "psychic space" of the jails during apartheid. What is fascinating, as can be seen in Figures 2.4 and 2.5, are the representations of material artefacts present in the drawings. In Figure 2.4, we see the representation of food in the cup and plate as everyday objects. In Figure 2.5, we see both the coffin containing the prisoner's father, and also the image of the father.

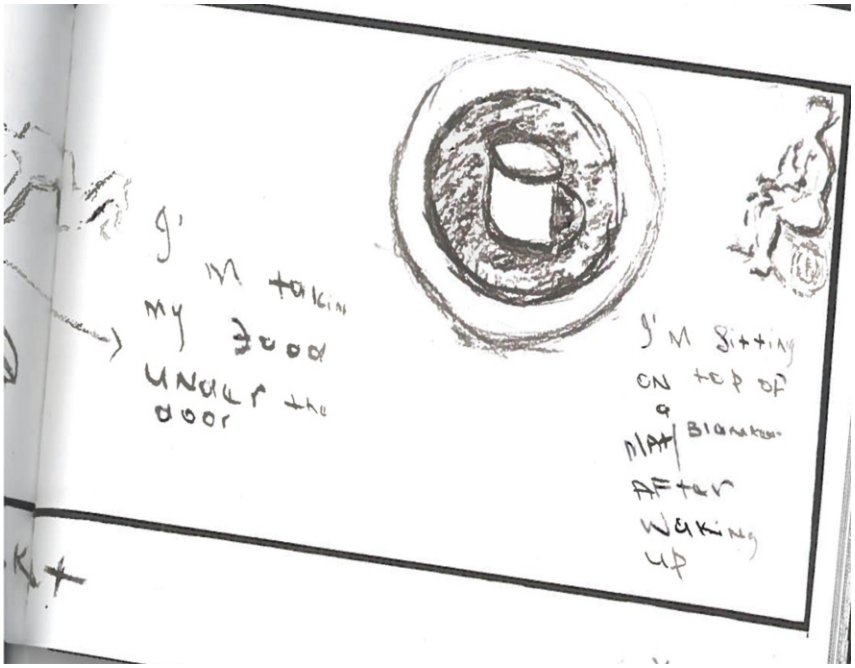

Figure 2.4. Food

I have worked with drawing as a visual methodology across a variety of settings, ranging from studying children's and teachers' drawings of teachers (Weber & Mitchell, 1995), to studying the images of schooling produced by South African school children shortly after the first democratic elections (Mitchell, 2004). In a more recent study, children between the ages of 8 and 13 years living in informal settlements in Kenya drew images of feeling safe and not so safe. While I have written about these drawings in several publications (for example, Mitchell, Chege,

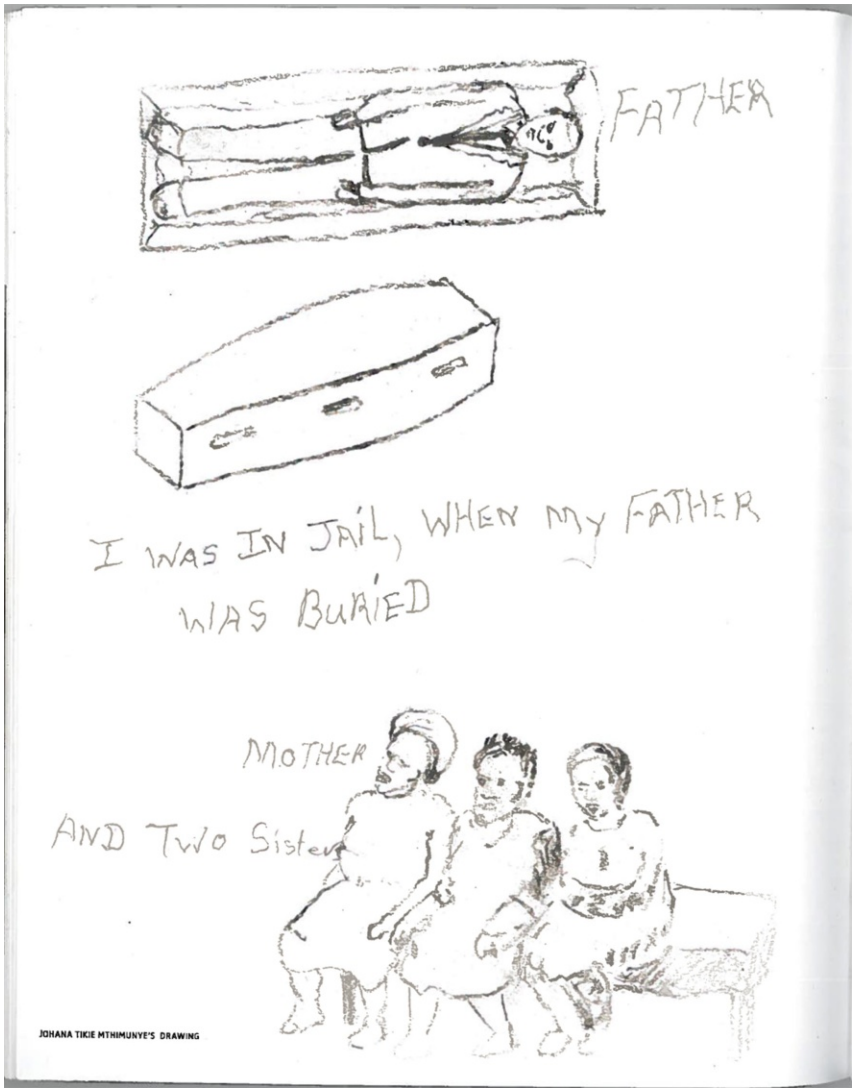

Figure 2.5. Body and coffin

Maina, & Rothman, 2016), focusing very much on the process and the use of the drawings with community leaders and policy makers, I have also come to reexamine these images for what they say about the positioning of everyday objects and things in the lives of children as they represent violence and safety. For example, a recurring image is the strap or stick that adults (often stepmothers or stepfathers) have used to punish children (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6. The stick

Children also drew images of objects to represent labour, as can be seen in Figure 2.7. The child who drew this image has represented clearly the weight of the object that he must carry. As viewers, we cannot fail to appreciate its weight.

Figure 2.7. Heavy objects and child labour

Following representations of child labour and issues of safety and security, objects linked to fetching water were present in many of the drawings (Figure 2.8).

Figure 2.8. The tap

Discussion. As with Object Lesson 1, an advantage of this approach is its simplicity. As I have highlighted in an essay on personal connections to using drawing in research (Mitchell, 2011), some of the most provocative images I have found in participatory research have been in the form of children's drawings. As I wrote then, the drawing produced by an adolescent girl of a baby dropped into a pit latrine toilet remains as one of the most haunting images I have seen in participatory visual research. A close reading of images of objects found in the drawings above highlight the perceptions that children have of their material conditions. More than anything, these representations allow us to contextualise these material conditions so that we become more attuned to their significance.

Object Lesson 3: Picturing Social Justice—Visualising Objects

The third approach, visualising objects, draws on the idea that so much of participatory visual research through drawings and photography relies on objects and things as central subjects in representing the particular social issue under investigation. Much of this happens in photography and in drawing simply because of the nature of representation and, as with the activity above, it is often the objects that carry the message. At the same time, in photovoice, the idea of photographing

a thing or object—possibilities within a "no faces" approach as opposed to close-ups of people—is also a way of addressing ethical issues. As I explored elsewhere (Mitchell, 2011), participants in rural South Africa photographing challenges and solutions to addressing HIV and AIDS have chosen dozens of objects and things to represent their concerns. These include images of T-shirts with AIDS activism messages, hair dryers in a beauty salon, a bus, and a potted plant. The captions offered by the participants were typically similar to the types of statements offered in Activity 1, as we see in the caption offered by a teacher to accompany his picture of a bus. "I took a picture of the bus because it represents for me what AIDS is doing to our community. The bus is taking a group to a funeral. Another AIDS-related funeral" (as recorded in Mitchell, 2011, p. 105).

In an example which I have written about elsewhere (Mitchell, 2015), students in four agricultural TVET colleges in Ethiopia produced photo images of what it means to be a student in a TVET. As part of the work in these colleges, my colleagues and I had been working with senior staff to contribute to improving delivery of courses, women's leadership, attention to gender and HIV in the curriculum, and entrepreneurship. Prior to the photovoice work with students we had done many consultations with deans and staff members but we realised that we also needed to consult with the students, and so we drew on our longstanding interest in photovoice to get at how the students saw the issues. We wanted to honour as much as possible the idea of no faces—so of course this resulted in many pictures of scenes and deforestation (things they are learning), but then many objects: jerry cans and the challenges of water in the dormitories, pictures of tools (either the lack of access to, or appreciation for access to, tools), and so on. The students made it quite clear in our debriefing sessions that they hoped the images would be viewed by as many policy makers as possible. When our research team was in a position to choose approximately 30 images and captions for an exhibition (*Our Photos, Our Learning, and Our Well-Being*) that took place in Canada and Ethiopia and involved the deans and associate deans from Ethiopia, we consulted these administrators to make sure that they were fine with it because many of the images depicted the colleges in a negative light. What I want to draw attention to here is the ways in which the photograph of one object, a half-eaten plate of food on a chair in a cafeteria, evoked a great deal of discussion amongst the deans. When they first started looking at the images, they expressed a sense of being pleasantly surprised about the photography skills of the students and also about how much their students seemed to know about topics such as climate change and environmental issues. At the same time, one dean was concerned about the image of a chair with a half empty plate on it and the rest of the dining hall in the background. The students who took the pictures offered a caption about the lack of food available. I wrote then:

> Three of the senior management (deans and vice deans) are clustered around the image. One is adamant that it should be taken down. For one thing, he says, the student who took the picture should not be showing a picture of a plate

> on a chair. Why doesn't she clean it up instead? A colleague assures him that actually this is how things are and we should all be open to looking at the truth. It is a back and forth dispute and as an outsider I stay out of it but in my heart I am hoping that they will agree to leave the image. It is only the next day at the time of the launch I learn the outcome. The person who is most adamant about removing the picture asks if he can say something to the assembled group of dignitaries and makes a comment that although many of the images of the colleges are very negative in that they show problems with sanitation, and it is too bad the students had to take them, but that perhaps at the end of the six years of the project they will be taking different pictures. (Mitchell, 2015, p. 72)

Discussion. Photovoice projects typically are full of images of objects and things, and so offer rich possibilities for studying urgent issues. The advantage of photographing the images is that of course they can be exhibited and so may have a long-term impact on various audiences. The exhibition referred to above has travelled to all of the colleges involved in the project. While as a research team we have not been able to capture all the discussions that have taken place at each college, the critical point has been the recognition of the ways that objects talk. In this case, an image of an unwashed and half empty plate of food made a strong statement and set off a great deal of debate and in so doing drew attention to the entanglements that included, for example, issues of gender ("why doesn't she clean it up") and poverty, but also students' rights to speak about the issues.

REFLECTING ON OBJECT LESSONS: WHAT CAN AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHER DO WITH OBJECTS?

In this section I draw on a formulation that I have used across a number of publications, and borrowed from the photo theorist Jo Spence's, *What Can a Woman Do with a Camera?* (Spence & Solomon, 1995): What can a researcher do with a video camera? What can a teacher do with a camera? Here I ask the question: What can an educational researcher do with objects and object study? It is worth noting that much of the work in educational research, especially in South Africa, remains, of necessity, focused on access to material resources such as textbooks, schools, desks, electricity, water, and toilets. Indeed, material resources—objects and things—are some of the most urgent issues. The 15-year-old girl who offered, "Ma'am, you can get AIDS from lipstick" draws attention to the entanglements: some of the most critical issues in education are not just about the absence of things, but more about the interconnectedness of things and objects. We need then to pay attention to these object lessons and to methods and tools that make these lessons visible. Some of the lessons about object lessons to be learned from the examples described in the previous section include the following:

Looking Back on Images of Objects and Things

Something I have tried to highlight in this chapter is the fact that we sometimes overlook the obvious in participatory visual research, and that by doing a "looking back" over our work with participants to see how objects and things are represented offers a fascinating "secondary data" approach. Object Lessons 2 and 3 did not start out as object focused but they became object focused as I started to ask questions about the materiality of representations.

Objects and Agency

While numerous authors working on the theory of objects have written about objects and agency, a particularly compelling argument for the use of objects in educational research relates to the agency of the participant who chooses to speak about or represent a particular object. On the one hand, as Sandra Weber and I noted in our study of drawings of teachers (Weber & Mitchell, 1995), children and adults may draw particular objects (blackboard, stick or cane, mathematics symbols or heart symbols) because they are easy to draw and they have symbolic value. On the other hand, the frequency of images of certain objects may attest to their power.

Valuing Local Knowledge

A cornerstone of participatory research is the idea of valuing the local. The materiality of objects and things as represented by participants in the types of object lesson activities noted above grounds our research in the everyday world. The rich body of work in such areas as museum studies and material culture highlights the personal links to objects and things. This is precisely what we often say we want to do in educational research.

To locate object study and object lessons within a participatory visual framework expands the possibilities for approaching and working with the everyday insider knowledge of participants. As with other research involving human subjects, object study of course needs to respect practices and protocols for doing least harm and most good in relation to using the words, drawings, and photos produced by participants. Issues of ownership and creative productions in arts-based research, as Akesson et al. (2014) highlighted, are particularly relevant in relation to ensuring that the objects or images of the objects remain the property of participants.

CONCLUSION: OBJECTS IN POLICY?

For an academic community that is used to thinking of objects and things as best seen or represented in museums and art galleries and outside the realm of educational policy, we might begin to think about the significance of objects and things in policy discourses. Consider, for example, the issue of provisioning as described in

the South African Department of Education (DoE)'s *National Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure* document and its references to toilets, textbooks, desks, and other infrastructure support necessary for quality teaching and learning:

> Historically, one of the most visible forms of inequalities in the provision of resource inputs has been the physical teaching and learning environment; the key elements of which include infrastructure, basic services, equipment, furniture, books and instructional materials. As with other areas of provision, substantial effort has been made to redress these inequalities. This effort notwithstanding, key elements of the physical teaching and learning environment remain insufficient and inequitable across schools. For instance, by 2006, 17 percent of schools were without electricity, 12 percent were without a reliable water source on site, 68 percent were without computers, 80 percent without libraries or library stocks, 61 percent without laboratories and 24 percent had overcrowded classrooms (45 learners or more). To date, there is still a significant backlog of schools that are run in unacceptable and even unsafe physical facilities. (DoE, 2009, p. 5)

Concomitantly, we might also consider SECTION27: Catalysts for Social Justice, the lobby group named after Section 27 of the South African constitution (http://section27.org.za/#), which works to hold accountable national and provincial bodies in the provisioning of objects and things. Learners and teachers indeed live and learn in Turkle's (2007) middle of things. But the object lessons above compel asking: Which things, and what do they mean? At the heart of this object lesson work is an argument for educational researchers to take seriously the use of objects and objects study in our research. Related to this is the idea that some of the most urgent work that we do in schools and with children and teachers is linked to materiality and material resources.

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3. DIALOGIC OBJECTS

Material Knowledge as a Challenge to Educational Practice

INTRODUCTION

Objects speak with many voices. They can call up stories that can resonate across generations and end up in the corners of kitchens, to be resurrected as a dish of cooking or a place mat. Objects frame memories and also keep them alive (Hurdley, 2013). Here, I explore the potential of objects to make education an equitable space where people enter on their own terms, with their stories and thoughts kept alive within the material potentialities of the object. People move in and out of education throughout their lives; and their lives are braided through with objects. Young people bring their stories with them as they traverse the spaces of school and college and university; older people recall their experiences through materially situated memories that call up learned wisdom. People bring knowledge and skills with them into the classroom (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). However, sometimes these knowledges that lie in many forms—linguistic, visual, artistic, and material—go unrecognised by educators who focus on particular kinds of knowledge practices and not others (Hart et al., 2013). I argue for an approach to object pedagogies that offers a challenge to hierarchical educational practices that can deny young people voice and agency. I suggest that objects speak and they can be heard in ways that diffuse power and create new structures for listening. They open out voices within communities to enhance the ways in which different forms of knowledge can be heard.

WHO AM I?

When I write this chapter, I carry my own story. I first became involved in education as an outreach worker in adult literacy. I worked with community groups to create opportunities for adult literacy learners to voice their ideas and narratives, to speak and to write poetry, prose, letters, and stories. This was in London in the 1990s, at a time when adult literacy provision was relatively open and egalitarian in nature (Hamilton & Hillier, 2006). The work I did was strongly influenced by the work of Paulo Freire (1976) and, from this, I drew on a vision of literacy as emancipatory and participatory. This work, community development work at the intersection of educational provision, everyday life, community knowledge, and literacy and language practices, informed my future career as someone who works with

D. Pillay et al. (Eds.), Object Medleys, 29–44.

communities in everyday settings to create projects that look at culture, identities, and civic engagement.[1] I continue to be interested in ways in which people create knowledge for themselves, in groups, to make change happen in communities. Literacy is entwined in this process. Following completion of a doctorate looking at the home literacy practices of boys at risk of exclusion, I became interested in the potential of objects to call up stories, and in the ways in which literacies were embedded within everyday material culture (Pahl, 2002, 2004). These insights led to a passion for understanding the ways in which material culture could be a source of narrative and thereby provide a way of doing literacy differently.

Family stories carry power—the person telling the story owns it—in the telling, and the process of telling can call up places and enable the stretch of a story across generations (Hymes, 1996). Stories can be small or extended and retold so they can be told by others (Georgakopoulou, 2007). They can be a source of comfort and solace in the context of migration, displacement, and disconnection (Miller, 2008). Objects can be materially located or can be lost and displaced but called up in memory (Pahl & Pollard, 2010). Stories can locate objects, even if they have been lost, in order to trace migration and displacement or to understand locations and spaces where identities are forged (Hurdley, 2013).

In 2006–2007, Zahir Rafiq, Andrew Pollard, and I worked with a group of families of South Asian heritage to cocurate an exhibition of special objects. This became the Every Object Tells a Story project (www.everyobjecttellsastory.org.uk); objects from the past were narrated by a group of British Asian families and these were materialised within a website and within an exhibition. The vision from this project came from artist, Zahir Rafiq, who described how the objects floating through space on the website could be seen as travelling through time, calling up past memories and family histories. Material culture was part of the historiography of families and was visually depicted both in an exhibition and on the website.

The Every Object Tells a Story project was cocurated with the families. They brought their objects and stories, expertise, thoughts, and ideas. In a recent revisiting project (Pahl & Khan, 2015), the families said how much they appreciated this process. Coproduction with, not on, communities is a way of working that acknowledges people's own understandings of knowledge creation practices. More recently I have come to see how the everyday can be where research takes place to listen to people's ontologies of literacy. Disciplinary boundaries within education tend to separate out language, literacy, visual material, oral stories, material objects, and feelings and senses; however, people live their lives apprehending these as a web of experience that emerges in interaction (Finnegan, 2015). In my work I have begun to see how things such as sensation, speech, language, and material objects could be connected; an invisible thread can lie between an object and a story, that gets spun again once the story is retold and told again (Hymes, 1996). Objects themselves have powerful voices that can speak, and then lever in change in classrooms (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010). In my work with Jennifer Rowsell, we have explored objects as pedagogic practice and as ways of repositioning the identities and thoughts of young people within classrooms.

Through my work with young people in communities, I have explored the materially situated nature of language. Exploring writing in the home and in the street, we looked at how language itself could be materialised in dust, in forms that are material and artefactual and everyday (Pahl, 2014). Releasing literacy from the flat edges of the page, and seeing letters inscribed in toys, woven through thread, and embroidered throughout a household, can create a sense of how literacies are lived, but experienced through material objects (Ingold, 2007). The different ways in which we could research literacy need to account for the materiality of life so that literacy is threaded through that life, not kept apart from it (Mackey, 2016). The link between objects and literacy practices needs to account for those embedded experiences.

MATERIAL KNOWLEDGE AS A LENS FOR UNDERSTANDING

The material world can provide a situated lens with which to view educational practice. Understanding the material nature of education enables a much fuller view of the worlds of literacy. This is enabled not only in the way in which, as a site, education is storied and full of objects (Lawn & Grosvenor, 2005), but also within an understanding of how thinking is materially situated. In this way, we can reposition the way our learners think and write. Creative thinking is materially situated:

> Creative knowledge cannot be abstracted from the loom that produced it. Inseparable from its process, it resembles the art of sending the woof-thread through the warp. A pattern made of holes, its clarity is like air through a basket. Opportunistic, it opens roads. (Carter, 2004, p. 1)

By drawing on theories of knowledge production that enhance and recognise tacit and embodied knowledge, from the arts and from material and practice-based understandings, pedagogy looks different. It is not abstracted; it relies on a maker epistemology that values the process of doing (Ingold, 2013).

The visual provides a place where things can be told and, sometimes, untold stories can be articulated through this methodology. Material culture and visual material carry stories, but sometimes these objects are too "humble" (Miller, 2001) to be noticed. Visual material provided an inventory of traces, to paraphrase Said's (1978) words, that can sometimes be erased with culture. Paying attention to the traces of the visual is, however, necessary to witness what has gone before (Pahl, 2006). Visual methodologies surface different voices and it is important to recognise that process in our ethical work (Hall, Pahl, & Pool, 2015).

Material knowledge can be expressed through a visual representation—in this image of his mother (Figure 3.1), artist Zahir Rafiq calls up a woman who has brought her heritage with her, and her knowledge is threaded through the bales of material that lie in the shop she owns.

Figure 3.1. "Material Knowledge"
(copyright Zahir Rafiq, reproduced with permission)

Repositioning knowledge practices creates spaces for people to tell their own stories, to place key objects in their life at the centre of their spun stories. When I interviewed Ravina Khan about her special objects, an image that came to mind, and one that she described frequently, was a suitcase stamped with labels from all the countries that she had visited (Figure 3.2),

KP: And you also talked about an old suitcase?

RK: Yes, Mum's, I do believe she has still got it I will ask her, I remember very vividly as a child this brown leather suitcase with all these labels on it. I assume they had labels at that time, they weren't the kind you could take off, and Mum saying Dad had used it for several years and this is all the places he had gone to—I think she's got it somewhere. (Ravina Khan, interview, September 19, 2006)

The suitcase became the space of practice within the project—a travelling object that carried migratory stories within it. Zahir Rafiq, artist, turned the suitcase into an artwork that told the stories of migration through the places that people visited.

Figure 3.2. "Suitcase"
(copyright Zahir Rafiq, reproduced with permission)

Working with artistic knowledge opens up different kinds of understandings. Art foregrounds the complexity of human experience and enables different kinds of meanings to be surfaced and understood. Artistic knowledge can be uncertain, emergent, and tentative; it is also located within lived experience and the body (Coessens, Crispin, & Douglas, 2009). It both creates culture but reflects cultures. As a lens for understanding human processes, it opens up spaces for things to happen. Most importantly, it is materially located within visual and felt things that create more stories and conversations and enable people to exchange ideas and dialogue across cultural spaces (Kester, 2005). Artistic knowledge draws on a tradition from practice as research to see thinking as material, situated, and emergent (Barrett & Bolt, 2007).

ENCHANTED OBJECTS: MAKING NEW PEDAGOGIES POSSIBLE

One of the key properties of objects is their potential to tell new stories. When people talk and refer to their object, the object and the story are linked and also become one as part of an overall "structure of feeling" and way of knowing (Hurdley, 2013, p. 79; Williams, 1977, pp. 128–135). The object itself acquires agency in this process. Rather than simply exist as an adjunct to the linguistic practices occurring around it, the object in some way "speaks" in the linked set of communicative practices. This in turn requires a shift to an understanding of the material object's role in the meaning-

making ensemble. No longer passive, it becomes potentially dialogic, speaking with a number of voices. Objects themselves are also vibrant and potentially magical, rich with enchantment:

> On a sunny Tuesday morning on 4 June in the grate over the storm drain to the Chesapeake Bay in front of Sam's Bagels on Cold Spring Lane in Baltimore, there was:
> one large men's black plastic work glove
> one dense mat of oak pollen
> one unblemished dead rat
> one white plastic bottle cap
> one smooth stick of wood
> Glove, pollen, rat, cap, stick. As I encountered these items, they shimmied back and forth between debris and thing. (Bennett, 2010, p. 4)

The "thing-power" (p. 4) of these objects was vibratory and they hovered between life and death in a way that made the assumption that objects were inert matter troubling. Recent work in the new materialism and post human turn has drawn attention to the ways in which humans and objects "interact-act" in the words of Barad (2007, p. 149). These intra-actions trouble the settled determinism of humans and objects and their ways of knowing together. Barad argued that "discursive practices are causal intra-actions," and looks at the way in which "meaning is not a property of individual words or groups of words but an ongoing performance of the world in its differential dance of intelligibility and unintelligibility" (2007, p. 149).

Objects change how language is used and disrupt settled understandings of what things are. This is particularly visible when the object itself has a number of different functions. For example, in my fieldwork for Every Object Tells a Story, a bed cover was called a *ralli* quilt in the context of Pakistan, but a *duvet* in the context of the United Kingdom. Objects can carry different meanings and play, in particular, is where these meanings can surface and be fluid. The playfulness of the relationship between object and linguistic meaning can create uncertainty, disorientation, and mess but also is productive and positive. Kuby, Gutshall Rucker, and Kirchhofer (2015) talked about the entanglements of people with objects being a productive force in a writer's studio context. Being open to what objects could do and how they could change discursive practices is an important part of this process.

One of the key aspects of this kind of research is an exploration of how objects and stories entangle together to produce meaning. Pippa Stein, in her work looking at doll-making practices in a primary school for the Olifantsvlei Fresh Stories Project, based on the borders of Johannesburg, explored the ways in which "multimodal pedagogies work consciously and systematically across semiotic modes in order to unleash creativity, reshape knowledge and develop different forms of learning beyond the linguistic" (Stein, 2003, p. 123).

As Stein watched the process of children producing three-dimensional doll figures, she recognised how ideas were migrating across modes and, in the process of

slippage, new ideas were being generated: "Working with environmentally available materials such as old plastic bags, bubble wrap, safety pins and old stockings takes the concept of 'doll making' into new conceptual territory" (Stein, 2003, p. 135).

The resulting doll objects created and generated new meanings in the process of making: "The meanings attached to the text are unstable and fluid within the semiotic chain" (Stein, 2003, pp. 135–136). This description of innovation and creativity in small-scale making projects foregrounds the ways in which modes open up new ways of thinking, and the visual and material can shift meanings. These kinds of activities produce creative pedagogical practices that are innovative and move, in their making, through new paradigms and conceptual framings (Stein, 2003, p. 136). The creativity inherent in the production of objects also draws on the histories of those objects, storied and re-storied in the process of making. This kind of activity makes new pedagogies possible. Gathering together the potential of watching the meanings emerge from a making project produces a productive pedagogical space of transformation, whether it is in a writing studio as Kuby et al. (2015) described, or a doll-making project that is storied as Stein (2003) articulated. Maker epistemologies create a concrete space of play and experimentation where meaning-making potentials are not shut down, but remain alive and open to change. There is a relationship between the material world of objects, and the potentialities of these objects to carry meaning and agency (Bennett, 2010).

This produces a more equitable pedagogic practice: one that is rooted in the everyday, and in the worlds of young people as they travel across home, school, and youth contexts. This pedagogic space is public, with learning happening in homes, community centres, museums, and art spaces. It often has an activist agenda, and fosters movement and pursues concrete advances in neighbourhoods, health and social services, and education. Examples could include zines and participatory media (Sandlin, Malley, & Burdick, 2011). Public pedagogy involves shifting communication patterns and changes the power dynamics in relation to learning; it shifts educational curricula to locate learning in the informal, everyday, and lived experience with a focus on activism and social change as spaces for learning and making change happen (Sandlin et al., 2011).

CASE STUDIES: MAKING PUBLIC PEDAGOGIES COME ALIVE THROUGH MATERIAL OBJECTS

Here, I explore the potential for these kinds of projects to shift pedagogical practice through the power of objects. I take examples from my own practice to highlight ways in which educators can learn from objects and create spaces for things to happen. I also consider how these case studies reposition the practice of research as a practice that is artistically based and, potentially, a space that can challenge or disrupt accepted hierarchies of knowledge production. Research that is materially informed has a locating congruence with the everyday. Rather than abstracting out quotes or statistics, it attends to the minutiae of everyday life. It pays attention to lived

experience of people in contexts that are alive with objects. It evokes the humble life of things (Miller, 2001) as part of that experience and recognises how people see the world in the everyday as being important and valuable. By repositioning knowledge creation structures, ways of knowing from uniquely placed knowledge is made visible in new ways (Tuck & Wang, 2014). This process trusts everydayness as a form of knowing and understands the production of knowledge as materially located.

In these case studies, matter is disturbed; language becomes mysterious and talismanic, fish jump out of the water, people hurtle through portals, and children contemplate a world without language by issuing permits and swinging swords. Writing is materially understood as creating a safe space. Things happen that are constructed through material objects but these things also *become* material objects at the same time. The magical world of objects has meaning potential; it is on its way to becoming (Masny, 2012). These case studies throw up conundrums for researchers: about what it is to be human, about whose lens counts, about the boundaries of disciplinary knowledge in an encounter with the everyday. The history of the object matters:

> Objects are animated with human histories, vision, ingenuity, and will, yet they also have durable status and are resilient to our will. Our objects are us but more than us, bigger than we are; as they accumulate human investments in them over time, they can and do push back at us as "social facts" independent and to be reckoned with. (Brandt & Clinton, 2002, p. 245)

In these case studies, material objects generate ideas and support thinking that is divergent, alive, and imbued with knowledge from communities about the world. Below, I describe some case studies where language and literacy practices were materialised:

- Language as Talisman was a project that celebrated the way in which language could be talismanic, whether as actual talismans created to celebrate stories, or within tattoos, braids, hair bands, or other markers of identity that young people carry with them.
- Communication Wisdom acknowledged the hidden knowledge of anglers and the silent skills that accompanied the catching of fish.
- Portals to the Past, a community archaeology project, reanimated objects to make the past as vibrant and hopeful as the future.

These projects helped us understand how knowledge could be differently understood through objects. Taken together, all these projects threaded material culture through their making and realisation, and were coproduced with community partners to create new pedagogic opportunities for young people.

Language as Talisman

Material objects can speak and be animated within interaction. They can perform functions that lie beyond language to activate communicative practices within and across objects and talk. The Language as Talisman project was concerned with

the everyday power of language to provide authority, agency, and power to young people. It was funded through the AHRC Connected Communities programme.[2]

As part of the project, part of the team (Kate Pahl, Steve Pool, Hugh Escott, Andrew McMillan, & David Hyatt) worked with two schools to explore the power of language. In this project Steve Pool, artist, and Hugh Escott, researcher, worked with a group of Year 6 (10- to 11-year-olds) children to explore what would happen in a world without language. They asked the children to make films about what a world without language would look like. One group of three boys created a scenario where language was banned and the world was run by Ninjas. This story involved a newsreader telling the story, a police chief, a rookie (novice) and a ninja. The opening of the film showed the newsreader reporting this problem. He described a world where you had to have a talking permit to be allowed to talk, with the police chief being the only person able to issue this object, and the only one holding a talking permit. The action in the film involved a ninja using a sword to stab the police chief. In the film, the swords and the talking permit were the pivotal objects on which the action hinged. Eventually the whole group agreed that language is the only way forward, a world without language simply resorts to violence.

In this film, the objects (the swords, talking permit) were given agency through the action that they generated. They also had a history and a story. The talking permit also contributed to the authority of the police chief. This drew on previous experiences of the police and referred to the boys' relationship with authority and understanding of the police. The police chief wears a talking permit made from a piece of inscribed paper pinned to his shirt (Figure 3.3) and carries a ruler in a manner reminiscent of a soldier shouldering a rifle. The power of the paper permit is reinforced when the ninja is told that the police chief can talk because he has a permit and the ninja turns to the rookie only to be met with a silence that reiterates the permit's power.

Figure 3.3. Talking permit
(reproduced with permission from the film-makers and the school)

When Hugh and I analysed the film, it was clear that the material objects used in this video created resonances and echoes that were associated with past play and also, the objects themselves suggested things to do. The chief of police could be stabbed or cut down because a board ruler can be swung in the same manner as a sword. A playground bench was instrumental in creating a scene of physical comedy. In this episode the material objects shifted how the interaction happens. For example, the policeman can be seen as an official because of the way that he shouldered his ruler like a rifle. Other rulers can also be swung around in a swordlike fashion allowing the ninja to be understood as ninja-like.

When working with the film the pedagogic possibilities of play, the association of objects with roles and histories, and the ways in which things can be animated to create new stories, are all possible. The making of the film involved a joyful reenactment of the chaos of a world without language, with objects having a powerful agentive role in that process.

Communication Wisdom: Fishing and Youth Work

Material objects encode skills and experiences that might not always be visible within language. Making as a practice and skilled pursuits, such as fishing, represent different kinds of wisdom built up over time and felt through the hands and through experience. In this project a group of young people, some experienced anglers and the youth service, together with a philosopher, a poet, and the education department, met weekly to learn about the skills of fishing. The project engaged young people and older people in intergenerational learning and explored the idea of how knowledge and skills are shared in the practice of fishing. Rather than seeing young people as without skills, in this project young people were able to reposition themselves as skilled fisher people with the support of older, more experienced anglers. Young people came to a quiet, reflective space where they could forget about difficulties at home or at school but were able to sit still and watch the water. In the process, young people made films about what fishing meant to them. In our project we drew on participatory methodologies that incorporated visual and sensory ways of knowing to understand what fishing meant to young people. Young people made films about fishing to show to others. We incorporated a particular research methodology by which young people were coresearchers with the project team about the benefits of fishing. Kate Pahl and Hugh Escott from the School of Education, University of Sheffield accompanied the young people fishing, and wrote ethnographic field notes after each trip. These were coded and analysed by theme.

The team also immersed themselves in the practice of fishing and read books and texts about fishing. The young people created films about the experience of fishing and wrote about fishing and its benefits. The films highlighted the way in which material objects—the fishing tackle, hooks and rods—interacted with the fish to materialise the experience of fishing. Ways of thinking became entangled in the

communicative practices of fishing, which required silence and quiet to make sense of the process. As an example, here are two boys talking about fishing:

> *Two boys are disgorging a fish. Transcription conventions: (1) = seconds pause, //= overlapping).*
>
> *Dylan:* What can I say. (2)
>
> *Jordon:* (Laughs). This is Jordon interviewing Dylan [name] at Bakers Pond. He has just caught a nice fish here (2). This is him (1) trying to get a hook out of its mouth (1) which he's pathetic at. (10)
>
> *Dylan:* Pathetic, Jordon it is such a negative word. (4)
>
> *Jordon:* (Mumbles name). Is it out yet? Can you pull hard?
>
> *Dylan:* //No it's not. (1)
>
> *Jordon:* Pull it hard?
>
> *Dylan:* Every time it's going out it goes back in. (2)
>
> *Jordon:* Does it want that maggot? (2)
>
> *Dylan:* Yeah. (5)
>
> *Jordon:* I were asking what he likes about fishing and what calms him down (1), stuff like that. (1)
>
> *Dylan:* Stuff like that (train sound)//(10) //
>
> //fishing pole dropping on ground sound //
>
> *Jordon:*//What calms you down when you're fishing an' …?
>
> *Dylan:* When I catch summat like that! (laughs). //
>
> *Jordon:*//(Laughs). Big head!
>
> *Dylan:* (Laughs). No, when I catch nice decent size fish.
>
> (Jordan's film made at Bakers Pond, transcript June 18, 2013, edited in November, 2013)

In this excerpt the fish is both object and alive—"it" is both the maggot and the fish, and the making of meaning is constructed around silence: talking also puts the fish off. In this example, sense making is part of the material world, and is woven into the discussion, with silence being part of the material world. Film making constructs this materially infused world, alive with hooks, poles, fish, and objects that seep into silence. In this project, language was less necessary. Instead, the focus was on the relationship between the fishhook and the fish and how to disentangle the two. Skills and experience resided within the anglers, the young people, their families,

and in the community. We considered the community *funds of knowledge* (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) as important when setting up the project, and saw the skills, knowledge, and experience encoded into the fishing process as important resources for hope and sites of possibility:

> I decided to sit on the bank and watch Dylan. Dylan sat very still. He dropped his line very low in the water. He watched and did not do anything else, speak or chat or move. Every so often he would catch a fish and he would bring it in, carefully, inspect it, take the hook out and throw it back in. Once or twice he needed the landing net. When he caught a fish he drew it in quietly and gently. He did not boast or show other people. It was part of the process of fishing. (Kate Pahl, field notes, June 4, 2013)

Knowledge exchange becomes a way of being, so that young people can exchange knowledge with their elders in equitable settings. Community knowledge, often hidden from academic domains of practice, can become important in these contexts.

Portals to the Past

Portals to the Past[3] was a project involving a team of archaeologists who worked with a primary school in an ex-mining area, together with an artist, a literary expert on coal mining, and a poet. The team conducted an actual dig in the school grounds and the children used the objects to research their past and imagine ways in which it could have been different. An artist, Steve Pool, made a giant portal that the children could step through as they imagined the past (Figure 3.4). Steve had previously made portals for another project and, when we were discussing the heritage project, he suggested making the portal to signal a stepping-stone, a move into a different world. As a liminal space, it worked and as an intervention it was a catalyst to unlock the children's imaginations.

The children (aged 10–11 years) were encouraged to make films about different imagined pasts and use the material experience of stepping through the portal to create alternative visions. The films they produced used material objects found in the everyday as resources for meaning-making practices that they could then extend and stretch in complex ways. The material objects found from the dig helped in creating space for imagined possible worlds. Working with trained archaeologists on a live dig enhanced the sense of artefactual literacies in action. Children narrated the objects they found and wrote stories and made films about the past. The week was organised around a curriculum of possibility involving experts who came and made runes with the children, archaeologists, poets, musicians, and artists who triggered stories, experiences, memories, and imagination. The portals operated as a space of potential vitality, linking the idea of possible worlds to an active participation in a practice. The process of doing research with the children as filmmakers and coresearchers drew on local funds of knowledge. As a way of knowing, it was embodied, situated, and could be appropriated by the children in ways that were special to them. By making

Figure 3.4. "Portals to the past"
(copyright Steve Pool, reproduced with permission)

the meaning-making practices multimodal using song, film, gesture, and sensory modalities, the children could engage with history through different modes.

This way of knowing was a practice that brought different disciplines together to focus on the object of study, the history of Rawmarsh, but placed the children as researchers at the heart of the process. By recognising the way in which young people were activating the material and revoicing it in new, dialogic meaning-making ensembles, a theory of communication was born that is vibrant and alive with possibility. The concept of a meaning-making ensemble was then widened to include a broader, more materially constituted view of "what is going on here?" The becoming nature of matter, its transformative potential, also unseats the determinism of analysis that just focuses on language as a way of knowing.

RESITUATING KNOWLEDGE PRACTICES—HOPEFUL PEDAGOGIES OF POSSIBILITY

In all of these projects, knowledge practices within communities were reconceived through a focus on material objects. In the first project, the young people drew on objects to reanimate their worlds and to create an action-packed still, drawing on shared histories of police drama and ninjas. In the second example, the knowledge of angling informed the material practices of the young people. In the portal project, the live dig plus a focus on the portal as a real touchstone of moving through worlds,

helped bring the past to life. In these community projects, the world of university knowledge was unseated through an emphasis on skills and knowledge that are intergenerational and handed down across generations. Zanib Rasool, researcher on the Imagine project, described the knowledge repositioning that can be done within communities here:

> I was so impressed with how much knowledge there is in our communities that often goes untapped and we lose a rich part of heritage and culture forever. … Everybody holds the key to knowledge; it can be found in every community and every house in the land, it is just we put different value on that knowledge. For a long time community knowledge is seen as being far down the ladder from academic knowledge held by scholars. (Zanib Rasool, November 23, 2014)

A material culture approach to literacy involves rethinking the process of doing research together. It involves recognising the power of emotions and feeling and making sense together in a way that is dialogic, multimodal, multisensory, and visual. It involves beliefs and passions that unite, but also surface cultures, histories, and identities. It involves understanding difference and divergence as well as the process of becoming and emergence. This lets new voices into the room and questions established knowledge structures. By acknowledging that objects themselves are dialogic, and can speak with many voices, a pluralism of pedagogical structures is also recognised and valued within community structures.

I would advocate for an approach that argues for pedagogies of possibility—that develop in relation to an emergent approach to how objects and the literacies within them are apprehended and heard (Mackey, 2016). This takes into account the lived experience of literacies within homes, their inter textuality, the sound, feel, and visual resonance of the texts that traverse our lives. Separating out modalities does a disservice to the thick materiality of the matter that provides our lives with meaning. It also contributes to a resituating of what matters so that people's own entanglements come to the fore in the making of knowledge together.

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NOTES

[1] This is exemplified by the Imagine Project, a 5-year Economic and Social Research Council-funded Connected Communities project entitled, *The social, historical, cultural and democratic context of*

civic engagement: Imagining different communities and making them happen. For more information see www.imaginecommunity.org.uk

[2] Language as Talisman was an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Connected Communities-funded programme. The team included Kate Pahl, principal investigator (PI), Jane Hodson, Richard Steadman-Jones, and David Hyatt (co-investigators), and Steve Pool, Deborah Bullivant, and Marcus Hurcombe. Hugh Escott was the research assistant. The project team worked with two schools to investigate the power of language in everyday life.

[3] Portals to the past was an AHRC Connected Commmunities-funded project from the *All Our Stories* Hertiage Lottery Fund initiative. The PI was Robert Johnston.

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4. NOT JUST AN OBJECT

Exploring Epistemological Vantages in Postcolonial Thinking

INTRODUCTION

The impact of artefacts is integral to the cultural imaginary in diverse and multiple contexts. In this chapter, drawing from different literary and documented sources, I shall consider the role of artefacts historically in the social economies of diasporic identities, with particular reference to indentured Indians in South Africa. In the translation from home country to adopted homeland, domestic objects, through memory and re-memory, provided visual, spatial, and material continuity in the migrant, exilic condition. With particular reference to objects related to cuisine, and drawing from literary texts (and against a background of burgeoning scholarship in artefactual literacies, visual culture, and object studies—see, for example, Pahl & Rowsell, 2010), the chapter will consider the varying ways in which everyday artefacts did and do participate in the performance of diasporic identity, alongside an incipient aestheticisation, in traversed landscapes.

This chapter, then, engages in object inquiry in a broad spectrum of postcolonial, diasporic theorising and endeavours to extrapolate from such an exploration, a critical understanding of pedagogical imperatives in general, and in the field of visual methodologies in particular. What counts as *data* and *analysis* constantly shifts because objects are simultaneously both signifier and signified. Further, the reclamation of domestic objects, relegated to the margins in hegemonic colonial and apartheid societies (and now relegated to documentation centres and museums—a "shadowy repository of history," to use a phrase of Thomas's, 2014, para. 5), has important ethical ramifications, arguably, for what constitutes *history* and *culture*, *self*, and *selfhood*.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The macro history of Indian indenture, which entailed the mass transportation of labour in the second half of the 19th century after the abolition of the slavery in the British Empire, is well known (see Desai & Vahed, 2007). As part of the British Empire, India became the logical source of cheap labour. Labourers came from India to work in the sugar and tea plantations in Natal, South Africa, and also went to Fiji, Mauritius, and the Caribbean.

D. Pillay et al. (Eds.), Object Medleys, 45–60.

Against this larger history, what has developed in the historiography of indenture are other attendant narratives—the history of passenger Indians (those who did not come as labourers), narratives of groups, families, individuals, religions, literature, and architecture, and so forth—nuancing the dominant discourses on such movements of peoples (see Desai & Vahed, 2007; Mishra, 2007).

In this expansive vein, I should like to explore the significance of the transportation of objects, particularly in the domestic domain, from India to South Africa during the period of Indian indenture from the time they arrived in Natal in 1860 to the early decade of the 20th century. In foregrounding the "little knowledges" (see Burton, 2003, p. 99) that were objects eclipsed by colonial modernity, and emphasising their place in the archives of indenture, we learn to script and read them anew. We appreciate how "aspects of material culture are vehicles for telling personal or communal experience and for the imagination of senses of selfhood" (Ojwang, 2013, p. 73).

In describing the movement of objects during the travel from the homeland to adopted country, I shall argue that an object was not just an object, but gradually came to be imbued with wider meaning and significance. Working tangentially as I am doing here, in another discursive space, I conclude by arguing that by engaging in this kind of "travelling", we expand and deepen our understanding of the vast potential in visual methodologies and visual literacies for our critical reflective practice as pedagogues. More crucially, because of and in spite of our history, this is another space where we interrogate our understandings of how to live in the world—not only of how we may value hidden and obscured histories, but of our connectedness with one another.

THE TRAVELLING OF OBJECTS

Gaiutra Bahadur, in her book, *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* (2014), and writing of indentured travel to British Guyana, observed that the ships brought "human cargo" (p. 77) and "bales of gunnysacks"[1] (p. 78) from India, in the crossing of the *kala pani* [black waters]. Although the labourers brought diverse physical objects with them, as I shall subsequently show, the point that the labourers themselves were seen as objects should not be sidestepped. As Carter and Torabully observed, "though he/she was the bearer of an ancient, literate civilization, so much valued in the Western world, the coolie himself was treated as an 'object'" (2002, p. 160). This was an indictment on the "civilising mission" of the British Empire. And ironically, the objects that the coolies brought gave them a sense of identity and value, as I shall show in this chapter.

During the time of Indian indenture to South Africa, beginning in 1860, the immigrants bought with them a variety of possessions, both tangible and intangible. These were quotidian, everyday utility objects alongside those that had larger symbolic import and significance in the immigrants' lives. Writing of the movement of Indians from India to the Caribbean, Naipaul alluded to this wide assortment

of objects: “musical instruments, string beds … even grinding stones” (as cited in Mishra, 2007, p. 95, see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. Grinding stone

Cooking utensils were an important part of the objects transported, and one surmises that travelling by ship made this possible. Among these “appliances” was the grindstone, called a *sil*, and a *lorha*, which is a handheld grinder. The other cooking utensils brought were the *karahi*, a concave cast-iron cooking pan, a *tawa*, a heavy baking stone or pan, and a rolling pin or *belna* for *rotis* [bread]. We should remember that an open fire, called the *chulah*, would have been used by the working class, and it was therefore necessary to have sturdy cooking objects and utensils. We can also see domestic images of indentured women with water pitchers poised on their heads (see Desai & Vahed, 2007, p. 373).

The travellers also brought seeds, seasoning, and spices for the purposes of cooking. In *Indian Delights*, a well-known recipe book, published in Durban in 1961, and seen as an important sociocultural tome (see Govinden, 2008), it is recorded that the immigrants, “alongside their sleeping quarters in the little apron gardens… sowed the precious seeds of vegetables and herbs that they had brought with them from home” (Mayat, 1961, p. 18).

Establishing continuity in different ways with the homeland provides a sense of security in an alien place. We see in these actions the need to “perpetuate” India, to be anxious not to relegate her to the hinterland of their consciousness. As Coovadia, in *The Wedding,* states through the narrator, and not without irony:

> *India is a portable country* [emphasis added], to some extent, which moves as people do, accommodating itself freely to new environments. If they started off forsaking her, forgetting her in this and that detail, what would happen at the end of time? (2001, p. 57)

Pahl and Rowsell (2010) drew attention to the travelling of objects, which may be described as *artefacts of identity* (from Holland et al., 1998), which conjure "figured worlds" (2010, p. 76) as they travel and, in doing so, transport identity. They pointed out that Lemke (2000) has argued that some objects may carry timescales, where the age of the objects imbues them with value, while some may not. But even though some objects, such as domestic objects compared to religious objects, may not carry significant timescales, they become imbued with this with the passage of time.

We also tend to forget that places and spaces are not static but are constantly changed by the movement of people and objects. In *Journeys: How Travelling Fruit, Ideas and Building Rearrange our Environment*, edited by Giovanna Borasi (2011), we see how the movement of peoples, objects, and ideas, among other elements, has an impact on the character of the new places of abode.

WOMEN AND OBJECTS IN THE DOMESTIC SPACE

Embedded in the transportation and deployment of domestic objects related to cuisine, we also need to see traditional femininities at play. It is clear that domestic objects are closely connected to reproducing traditional patriarchy in the diasporic home and women, particularly, saw it as their role to transport, preserve, and perpetuate the customs of the inner sanctum of the traditional home in an alien land.

Indeed, we do well to remember that objects are not innocent, but inserted in the macro narrative of exploitation, injustice, and discrimination based on class, gender, and caste differences—a general phenomenon, but especially present in the indentured labour context. Barlett (2005, p. 5) made a similar, general point that "artifacts themselves are not innocent, but instead are situated in relations of power." Many of the domestic objects noted here, "coded as gendered objects" (Mitchell, 2011, p. 41), denote labour-intensive activities and are directly linked to the lives of the subaltern, working class women (see Mukhopadhyay, 2009, p. 271), who straddle the transition from tradition to modernity. Brinda Mehta (1999, p. 153) spoke of the "paradox of positionality" that women embodied, where they enjoyed autonomy in the kitchen but not beyond. Bell hooks (2009) also wrote of the subjugated culture of belonging that black women were subjected to because their manual and creative labour was not recognised. The coolie woman on the plantations continued with her double shift in her home…

NOT JUST AN OBJECT—FROM OBJECT TO ARTEFACT

It is interesting to speculate when the (nondescript) objects changed their everydayness and became artefacts, relics, heirlooms, or souvenirs—objects in a metaphorical gunnysack. I imagine that the kind of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990) that is now being imputed to these objects was, arguably, occurring at a subliminal level. We now see domestic artefacts occupying pride of place in the museum when,

in the old days, they were "hidden" from view and usually relegated to the kitchen, scullery, or backyard.

Mishra (2007) pointed out that initially these artefacts were not preserved for posterity, and it is only with time (and, I would add, increasing critical theorisation) that they began to assume a certain significance. As Mishra stated: "Yet these artefacts lacked any historical significance for the indentured labourers (or their descendants) because as a race they were not trained to link artefacts to the past" (2007, p. 121), and thus, he pointed out, this denied later generations a cultural museum, generations who especially felt this lack when centenaries of indenture would be celebrated. Pahl and Rowsell (2010) pointed out that it is worth considering the process of a museum's selection of objects for its collections.

AESTHETICISATION OF ARTEFACTS, AND RACIALISATION

This leads us to ponder over the aestheticisation of artefacts. Mishra also pointed out that the preservation of these artefacts was "not part of their life-worlds as these artefacts never had any *auratic* [emphasis added] value" (2007, p. 121), and were therefore not valued as cultural capital. This was because, Mishra argued, these artefacts were not seen in a comparative light or in terms of their incipient signification or connotative value because the immigrants were confined to their "private, self-enclosed worlds" (2007, p. 121). It was only with time and from the perspective of distance and history that ordinary, everyday objects become "exhibitionary" items (Burton, 2003, p. 99). It is worth contemplating what is lost and what is gained in such a process.

This tendency is a two-edged sword. Of course, the impetus towards carnivalesque and spectacle in museum culture, especially in our post-apartheid space is ever present, but it should not make us erase the import of these objects in the original everyday spaces that the early labourers inhabited. Indeed, the objects could be deployed to enhance a deeper appreciation for that very history. While there is undeniable "auto-orientalism" (Mukhopadhyay, 2009, p. 271) at work with the projection of an exotic milieu, in the recuperation of these objects we need a reeducation of the role and importance of everyday objects in historical contexts—in order to see and read these objects in a new light. The notion of *sittlichkeit* (the everyday, the customary, and conventional) is fundamental to a critique of wider historical processes and events (Mukhopadhyay, 2009, p. 271). How are objects not just objects, but part of looking glass worlds into which we step, to further worlds beyond… and beyond…? Jean Baudrillard (2009) has drawn attention to the "atmospheric value" of some objects, given their "historicalness", and their specific function of the "signifying of time" (p. 41).

At the same time, and more importantly, it is necessary to critique the extent to which such aestheticisation of objects perpetuates the racialisation politics and sectionalism of the colonial frontier into the present day. Writing of the role of a book like *Nanima's Chest* (Mayat, 1981), which deals with the valuable possessions

(heirlooms) of middle-class, wealthy passenger Indians, the authors pointed out that although the immigrants may have understood themselves

> somewhat passively as belonging to a community, *reflecting* its values and *enjoying* its traditions and heritage, they of course have also been active in its production and reproduction. Within South Africa's contemporary politics of ethnic divide and rule (and its attendant cultural brokerage)… cultural productions could not be politically neutral, even though they emerged from ethics and circumstances that were remote from state sponsorship. (Vahed & Waetjen, 2010, p. 11)

In this respect, are objects, not just objects but seen as "Indian", or "Chinese", or "African," or "privileged Indian middle class," as the case might be? What are the challenges for scholarship such as this to stride the delicate line between excavatory work and reactionary politics? In pondering over objects and their aestheticisation and reification into artefacts, we need to be self-consciously aware of conceptions of a "national people's culture" (Vahed & Waetjen, 2010, p. 12) and the challenges of accommodating "diasporic, ethnic and transnational identifications," (2010, p. 13) and, at the same time, be working for "an openness and 'flow' of identifications" (p. 13), as I shall suggest towards my conclusion.

Against the background of our apartheid history with its separate lived spaces (Lefebvre, 1991), and the present impetus towards museumisation in the new South Africa, there are several challenges. How do we make the constructed *conceived space* (Lefebvre, 1991) of the museum a "shared social space" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 67)? We find that the tendency is to house objects separately, as with the 1860 Heritage Centre in Durban. But how can this space become a space for the collective representation of people's histories and stories. On my visit to the Centre, I was intrigued to see the (African) three-legged pot and the (Indian) grinding/stamping stone placed together for display (I was tempted to ask if this was by design or accident!). I was struck by the way objects constituted the most visible component of the heritage centre, and what was being considered as having heritage value. Many were clearly quotidian objects that were now being imbued with distance, with auratic (having aura) value, to use Mishra's (2007, p. 121) description, cited above. I also noticed many Indian musical instruments and thought of Ramabai Espinet's novel, *The Swinging Bridge* (2003), where she shows the early musical inheritances that come to the fore in transnational spaces. As I looked at the objects at the Centre, I wondered what hidden stories were embedded in them—stories suspended, and hidden from view, and how a class of memory keepers emerged, and others were submerged.

On my visit to the 1860 Heritage Centre the place struck me as a veritable "Cabinet of Curiosities" (see Alter, 2015, para. 2), with its assortment of objects or artefacts relevant to the history of a particular group in South Africa. I realised how far we are from the idea of a "museum without walls," that André Malraux was postulating a while ago (as cited in Alter, 2015, para. 1). This type of virtual museum—*Musée*

Imaginaire—would certainly break down both real and imaginary walls around the notion of our separate objects and artefacts.

Indeed, there was blending and sharing taking place almost accidentally in the museum space. The irony is that, with travel and migration, objects themselves were always transformed within the new country in active relationship with multicultures from other migrations and from local, material culture. Yet, in the old apartheid era and, as a consequence, in the present postapartheid time, the hermetic sealing off of what is considered *Indian culture* persists apace, and the dynamic, intercultural environments in plantation life among Africans and Indians, evident in the use of cooking utensils and fusion and adaptation of each other's culinary traditions, is ignored. It was quite natural to cook samp and beans and *putu* [porridge]—staples in African households—in many rural Indian working-class homes, and they remain among my favourite foods.

Drawing from Appadurai (1988), and with specific reference to Alibhai-Brown who fondly remembered in England the Swahili "*posho* and rice" (as cited in Ojwang, 2013, p. 71) from Uganda, Ojwang noted that,

> cuisines that would otherwise be discarded for their peasant or working-class associations are recuperated precisely because the scenes of peasant and working-class life have been left behind—and because any such recuperation serves to provide foundational myths that hold the immigrants together in their present (dis)location. (2013, p. 71)

The mobility and significance of cultural objects is evident in different diasporic contexts, as attested by Ojwang's study, set in Uganda, for example.

Albeit, artefacts are travelling global tracers of social inequalities. They tell stories of migration, loss, and displacement, and they are ways in which communities also renew themselves and find a voice (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005). In this way, as in this chapter, hidden objects such as the grinding stone emerge from the recesses of history and tell nuanced stories of life past and present, of survival and of injustice, and accommodation of various kinds.

OBJECTS AND (A LONGING FOR) HOME

It is understandable that domestic objects conjure memories and images of home. Discourses on objects are closely linked to discourses of home, and the latter is quite developed in postcolonial criticism (see Govinden, 2008). This is not surprising because the history of colonialism has been marked by travel and movement, by the settler or immigrant experience. This dislocation takes on a peculiar meaning in apartheid South Africa, marked as it was by uprooting, dislocation, and relocation.

The notion of home, generally linked to the domestic sphere of family and belonging and its attendant ideologies, is expanded and used metaphorically in writings on the Indian and other diasporas. Such analysis draws attention to how the idea or memory of home travels—or is translated through artefacts, physical objects,

or values and symbols (as in cultural or religious traditions). It is not surprising that the theme of a politics of home has emerged as a necessary trope in such analysis (see George, 1999).

One of the discursive features that emanates from reflection on the trope of home relates to setting up homes or dwellings and of dismantling them. The notion of the nomad or exile, exhibiting or embracing a state of homelessness is counterbalanced by a desire for rootedness, or the idea of feeling at home.

Relocation, and the sense of locatedness, is always linked to objects. Clifford Geertz (1996) said, "No one lives in the world in general. Everybody, even the exiled, the drifting, the diasporic, or the perpetually moving, lives in some confined and limited stretch of it—'the world around here'" (as cited in Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, pp. 25–26). Indeed, there is always the coexistence of the remoteness of (the original) home and the attempt to (re)create home in immediate space—and objects play a crucial role in the linkage.

The physical experience of homelessness may be appropriated and reinterpreted metaphorically, where the exile or exilic condition is embraced as a desirable state. The state of alienation is not seen negatively as loss, but as a condition that prevents stasis, sedimentation, or conformity. Applied to the intellectual, it suggests a disposition and openness to change and to newness, rather than to hidebound conservatism or tradition. It suggests the ability to transform the negative connotations of dislocatedness into a desirable state of *habitation*. This is certainly the view of Edward Said (1998), who encourages a state of homelessness as a creative condition.

THE PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY

The palpable and crucial role that everyday objects played in the recreating of home through memory—home, the landscape hymned by one's ancestors (Gorra, 1997)—then, cannot be over emphasised. With this extrapolation from postcolonial scholarship, and with further critical reflection, many important and wider lessons may be learnt.

Vijay Mishra, a postcolonial critic based in Australia, and drawing from Naipaul (1964) in *An Area of Darkness,* pointed out that objects were "not just objects" (2007, p. 121) but played a significant role in providing continuity with the homeland, albeit initially in an unconscious way. As Naipaul wrote: "More than in people, India lay about us in things"—in things like a string bed, the drums, "brass vessels," "one ruined harmonium," or "the paraphernalia of the prayer-room" (1964, p. 31).

The discrete and individual objects were not just objects but clearly played a metonymic role, standing for the larger world of home that they represented. As Naipaul stated: "In its artefacts *India existed whole* [emphasis added] in Trinidad" (1964, p. 31). These objects assumed a crucial role in the survival of the immigrants, in the face of dispossession from the motherland, and in the translation to an alien land. They acquired a substitutive meaning in the face of the trauma and melancholia, alienation and estrangement induced by separation from the motherland.

In this way, memory itself, alongside the objects but induced by the objects, becomes the home—a "dwelling place"—where the homeland existed (Burton, 2003, p. 102). And, of course, for the writer, such as Naipaul, as Adorno pointed out, writing, as well, becomes a home: "In his text, the writer sets up house. For a man who no longer has a homeland, *writing becomes a place to live* [emphasis added]" (1974, p. 87).

While memory plays an important role in settlement and reinvention in the new world, we also begin to realise that such remembering comes with its seductions. Writers such as Coovadia (2001) and Rushdie, among others, alert us to memory's truth: "I told you the truth…. Memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality" (Rushdie, 1991, p. 242).

Bahadur (2014) echoed this view, describing this as memory's imperfections:

> Ancestral memory had told my family the story of who we are: brown-skinned people with many gods and peculiar, stubborn habits. It had told it imperfectly. Memory, after all, fails us. That, we expect, especially over generations and across oceans. (p. 18)

This is also what Rushdie conveys in *Imaginary Homelands*: "We will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost… we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities of villages, but invisible one, imaginary homelands, *Indias of the mind* [emphasis added]" (1992, p. 10).

THE PERSISTENCE OF DISPLACEMENT

Memory's imperfections, in my view, reflect back, and intimate the "imperfections" of objects. The meanings and representations that objects stand for are not fixed but changeable. Further, the objects themselves change and are seen differently with the passage of time. While objects assuage displacement, ultimately they cannot replace the displacement, or erase it. In fact, they stand for the displacement they are used to dispel—in that they become constant reminders of that very displacement.

A THIRD SPACE

One appreciates that, in the movement to their new place of abode with their possessions, the immigrants did not transfer in a hermetically sealed capsule. The movement was not a one-dimensional, unilateral process from home country to land of adoption. Postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha (1990) pointed out that with the travel and translation of people and objects to the new environment, a third space—a new reality and idiom—came into being.

On my visit to the 1860 Heritage Centre in Durban I was quite struck by the juxtaposition of the (African) three-legged cooking pot and the (Indian) grindstone (Figure 4.2), as I alluded to already. There are various examples of the way the Indian

indentured labourers adapted to local indigenous culinary traditions, and created a hybridised fusion. This is also true of language (see Mesthrie, 2010), among other entities, where there is continual crossing over.

Figure 4.2. African three-legged cooking pot and Indian grindstone

Indeed, the condition of migration is not a unilinear process but an iterative one, and brings into focus the dynamic nature of the transnationalism that comes into being. Ronit Frenkel pointed out that transnationalism occurs where people live between borders of various kinds, where "immigrants forge and sustain multistranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Shukla, 2003; as cited in Frenkel, 2010, pp. 63–64). She pointed out this is the nature of diaspora, which exists "beyond and through the boundaries of the nation-state," where "multiple forms of identification" coexist and mingle (p. 63).

Accordingly, it needs to be remembered that while objects travelled to the new place of abode, they assumed different meanings and uses in the diasporic space. Indeed, the diasporic space, the adopted home, was not just the place of arrival and resettlement; it acquired a new meaning and identity, merging old and new, familiar and strange. Alongside their utility value, the objects operated in the third space, symbolically, where their owners are described as the "forever-exiled, ambivalent, subaltern subject of cultural difference" (Bhabha, 1994; as cited in Xie, 1996, p. 155). The condition of the third space thus interrogates the penchant for closed, monolithic constructions of identity, and of one-dimensional understandings of objects and what they signify.

Nicole Thomas (2014) argued that it is the very condition of diaspora to engender such ambivalence and duality, of being severed in two, but also of being soldered together, as she extrapolated from Bahadur's (2014) *Coolie Woman* another way of rendering the third space:

> Still connected to the memories of home in Guyana but disconnected by the act of leaving, Bahadur describes her sense of displacement as being severed in two. This *severing of self relates to the nature of diaspora, and a motif of connection and disconnection* [emphasis added] weaves throughout the narrative, drawing parallels to the experiences of indentured labourers severed from imaginary homelands, religion and culture. Bahadur's personal severance reflects on the lives of the women who were physically dismembered by acts of violence from their men. Juxtaposition of the outside and inside spaces she inhabits expresses the diasporic struggle of trying to locate the self in the interior and exterior world of the new world culture. The memory of a distant home is the vein that draws her back to the Caribbean as a young woman where she describes her arrival as "a tingling fusion of inside and out, an electric union of outside and in, *a sparks-flying soldering together of the soul* [emphasis added]" (p. 9). The sensation describes a physical memory, expressing a psychological essence of belonging, whereby a return brings forth an imagined wholeness. As a whole, the narrative is a process of identification that oscillates between boundaries of culture and place, exploring the uncertainty of self and belonging. (2014, para. 4)

THE GUNNY SACK

The metaphor of the gunny sack captures this ambivalence (and heterogeneity) of the third space evocatively. In his novel, *The Gunny Sack* (1989), East African writer now based in Canada, Vassanji showed the infinite variety of the past, related to the place of origin, and its merging with the present, in a new place; and this condition is epitomised by the gunny sack, with its diverse objects, accretions, and collectables acquired along the winding journey and handed down from generation to generation.

The gunny sack, referred to already, is an ancient sack, full of mementoes; it is a repository of dusty stories handed down, a repository of collective memories, from the old world, and those collected in the new. In Vassanji's novel, the disparate contents of the gunny sack are opened up for scrutiny.

> Memory, Ji Bai would say, is this old sack here, this poor dear that nobody has any use for any more. Stroking the sagging brown shape with affection she would drag it closer, to sit at her feet like a favourite child. In would plunge her hand through the gaping hole of a mouth, and she would rummage inside. Now you feel this thing here, you fondle that one, you bring out this naughty little nut and everything else in it rearranges itself. Out would come from the dusty depths some knickknack of yesteryear: a bead necklace shorn of its

> polish; a rolled-up torn photograph; a cowrie shell; a brass incense holder; a Swahili cap so softened by age that it folded neatly into a small square; a broken rosary tied up crudely to save the remaining beads; a bloodstained muslin shirt. (1989, p. 3)

Our lives, with their hotchpotch of accumulated and acquired objects from diverse spaces, shape and reshape, and tell us who we are. Of course, the gunny sack of memory can also be weighty, and there is always room for the discarding of objects and their replacement. Most importantly, the extraction of one object for scrutiny rearranges the rest of the contents. The gunny sack is not static and unchangeable but malleable and changing (this anticipates the image of the ocean, to which I shall move below).

Indeed, our lives are like living, changing, ever expanding, bulging gunny sacks. What objects are in your gunny sack and what are in mine? How much have the contents changed in the last year, ten years? What has been added? What thrown out? Most importantly: How are we seeing the objects, individually and together, differently with each new day? Jurgen Hesse wrote of the "cultural burdens" we carry, and the way in which out "the cultural knapsack" could become a hindrance, and of the need for "travelling light" (as cited in George, 1999, p. 173).

Interestingly, Vassanji, now based in Canada, has written a new book entitled *Nostalgia* (2016), where there is an attempt to be "cleansed" of all past lives, past memories; notwithstanding, there is "leakage" or "persistence of memory," and this condition is called "nostalgia"!

ARTEFACTS WITHIN ECOLOGIES

Pahl and Rowsell pointed out that "communities are constellations of artifacts" (2010, p. 17), which link place, space, people, and artefacts. They represent artefacts within ecologies—hubs, ecology, and place—where there is connection through various modalities, visible and invisible. Pahl and Rowsell argued that the "concept of ecologies is a helpful way in which to see communities as textured, with different sections (i.e. not reified), defined by large and small, commercial and institutional spaces" (2010, p. 18). They rightly pointed out that the "word *community* can represent something complex and changing, contested and contradictory, and subject to forces of colonialism, decolonization, and resistance" (2010, p. 18).

These considerations must be borne in mind, when the notion of community, inflected by apartheid history, is ethnically and racially defined, and museumisation of artefacts is developed. Consideration must also be given to the way different communities operated organically on the ground in spite of, and against, official, structural, segregated arrangements, and how this influenced the crossover of the use and significance of objects, especially domestic objects.

Pahl and Rowsell pointed out that communities are "increasingly recognized as being about place, about social networks, and, most meaningful, about interaction"

(2010, p. 25). And interaction, they reminded us, is about oral storytelling, which is intimately connected with objects.

MEANINGS FOR EDUCATION

What understandings and possibilities for critical pedagogy emerge from this reflection on, and recuperation of, objects in a past historical context such as indenture? How do we avoid a hierarchical, imperialist tyranny in our discursive practices and inject a horizontality in our thinking, where we consider objects that have been hitherto confined to the margins? There are many elements from our discussion here that, arguably, may be critically deployed in the fields of visual literacies and methodologies, and artefactual literacies.

While Pahl and Rowsell spoke of the classroom as the third space, where home and school are blended; I am suggesting that, in the context of historical diasporas (where the third space already exists), the classroom and the general discursive world in education related to artefactual literacies may be considered the fourth space.

The objects exist in a state of diaspora. We need to see diaspora in its widest possible connotations and not erect borders or fences around it. We tend to see the African diaspora, the Indian diaspora, and the Chinese diaspora, for example, as separate entities, and neglect to see the way in which diasporas intersect and intermingle. These intersections occur through flows of migration across the globe, past and present. I have written elsewhere of the need for an inter-diaspora approach, for being attentive to "overlapping domains" to use Said's formulation (as cited in Govinden, 2008, p. 49). This is the central theme and abiding interest in a postcolonial writer such as Amitav Ghosh (see, for example, *The Sea of Poppies*, published in 2008). After all, diaspora is, by definition, about dispersal.

Accordingly, how do we inculcate a critical diasporic consciousness in our intellectual work? And what does this mean and entail? What does it mean to create the notion of diaspora metaphorically in the discursive worlds we inhabit, and become more self-conscious of the spatial politics of our disciplinary borders? Rey Chow captured this well when she stated that if diasporic consciousness is an intellectualisation of the existential condition of dispersal from the homeland, then "diasporic consciousness is perhaps not so much a historical accident as it is an intellectual reality—the reality of being intellectual" (1993, p. 15).

Finding common ground between artefactual literacies in the terrain of visual methodologies with its focus on objects on the one hand, and postcolonial, diasporic discursive work on the significance of objects on the other, as I am attempting to do here, is a provocative comparative and reciprocal endeavour. Herein, arguably, resides and unfolds the agentic space, emerging from a critical reflection on the role of objects, among other issues, that makes one rethink one's relationship to the trauma of a history such as indenture, as it engenders a "radical understanding of meaning making in a human and embodied way" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 134).

BACK TO THE GRINDING STONE!

Accordingly how would we refuse the solidity and opacity of an object such as the grinding stone (Figure 4.1), and see it as malleable and transparent (Carter & Torabully, 2002, p. 155).We have seen that artefacts have a biography, a history, and that it is important to reclaim this history. At the same time, it is necessary to question the way that very biography and history is formulated, shaped, and transmitted.

How can we apply the developing critique of diaspora to our reading of the grinding stone? One of the important critiques of diaspora, as I have intimated, is the attempt to go beyond the conventional understanding of diaspora, where diaspora was always thought in relation to original homeland, where the homeland is seen as the centre, as referent. But we have also learnt to see diaspora as having other centres, such as the host country. The grinding stone, evoking India, may at the same time, also be seen as evoking the cane fields of colonial Natal.

This is certainly the connotation it has always had for me, growing up in a working class home, where my mother (whose own mother came as an indentured child labourer in 1904; see my narration of her story in Govinden, 2008) was naturally adept at grinding soaked monkey-nuts on the grinding stone to make monkey-nut chutney. I soon learnt the art of doing this myself, from the time I was a teenager, and only used an electric blender years later. Walter Benjamin noted, presciently, that the "gap between the function of objects and the desires congealed there became clear only when those objects became outmoded" (as cited in Brown, 2009, p. 145).

In a perverse and ironic way, the inquiry into and contemplation of objects, as I do in this chapter, slowly transmutes into a liberatory project, in the widest Freirean sense, where objects, and the objectified (passive and coerced into anonymity through a weighty palimpsest of systemic factors) become free, vibrant, self-supporting, active subjects. Breaking down our disciplinary walls, and invoking memory work, poetic narrative, and history (without a capital *H*), among other elements, becomes a richly rewarding educational enterprise!

The point I wish to stress is that such a change in my seeing—the change in the visual—is effected by my explorations and musings at a theoretical level. Indeed, there is a constant reciprocal and dynamic interplay between (material) object and reflection on object, with the reflection gradually changing the object. When we see objects in a "discursive continuum" (Rooney, 1990, p. 6), and not as static, fixed objects, sedimented with particular meanings, we free objects in different directions, and induce a certain fluidity in our thinking about objects.

By engaging in dynamic interactions in a "dialectic of mutations" (from Carter & Torabully, 2002, p. 171), we become open to changing understandings not only of objects-in-histories and of our intellectual work, but also of identity and our very existence. To cite and adapt Elizabeth Grosz, "the thing is born [and, I would add, reborn] in time as well as space" (2009, p. 125).

(IN PLACE OF A) CONCLUSION

It is clear that I am writing this chapter from an engaged and robust, albeit expansive discursive positionality, gleaned from years of critical reflection, but also from a deeply personal place—a place that is entrammelled with the history of movement, a longing for home (in the land of my birth, yet long denied, and in the land, albeit of my grandparents' adoption)—living continually with loss. And living with gain.

In many ways, this chapter is a submerged tale of myself: my personal and collective history, but also of my hopes and dreams of reaching for a self and a world that is not defined and confined by that earlier colonial and, subsequent, apartheid history—a self that expands infinitely…

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NOTE

[1] A gunnysack was a coarse hessian bag that the indentured labourers used to carry an assortment of belongings; it was also used metaphorically, as in the novel by Vassanji (1989).

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PART TWO

OBJECT BEGINNINGS

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NKOSINATHI SOTSHANGANE, NAREEN GONSALVES,
PIETER DU TOIT AND DAISY PILLAY

5. THE VANDA, THE ROSE, AND THE BAOBAB

Inspirational Display Objects as Fertile Sites for Opening up Narratives of Teacher Researcher Professional Identities

COMING TOGETHER AROUND OBJECTS

Nareen Gonsalves, Pieter du Toit, Theresa Chisanga (together with a team of colleagues at her university), and Daisy Pillay are all higher education teachers and researchers (teacher researchers) working in very different university settings in South Africa. Their initial engagement as academics interested in objects and their interpretive possibilities for educational research happened when they participated in the international symposium, *"Not Just an Object": Making Meaning of and from Everyday Objects in Educational Research.*[1] As part of the symposium, participants, including Nareen, Pieter, and Theresa, were requested to bring along objects or photographs of their selected objects and be part of the 3-day engagement and exhibition. This meeting was the start to a dialogue about the three objects featured in this chapter—the rose, the wire baobab, and the Vanda orchid—and the basis for exploration and inquiry into the interpretive possibilities of objects in opening up narratives of teacher researchers' professional identities.

Daisy Pillay has a deep interest in the field of teacher identity studies. In her engagement with teachers working in different educational settings, she is passionate about opening up teachers' understanding of the complexity of their identities relational to dynamic and shifting educational contexts and possibilities for ongoing self-transformation. In this chapter, Daisy performs a role as researcher, narrator, and coauthor in facilitating a creative process of bringing together the three different objects as a three-dimensional assemblage. An assemblage, according to Allen (1995), "can be very much like a dream" with pieces of multiple and unrelated things juxtaposed to convey "a meaning or a story, that can scarcely be put into words" (p. 34). This chapter juxtaposes different object images, accompanied by written object pieces and reflective narratives, as a site for opening up new ways of experiencing and thinking about what teacher researchers in higher education can be, and can do differently (Meyer, 2011).

D. Pillay et al. (Eds.), Object Medleys, 63–80.

ASSEMBLING DIFFERENT DISPLAY OBJECTS

The three objects at the centre of this chapter, a wire constructed baobab tree, a paper rose, and a Vanda orchid plant, vary greatly; yet they are all wedded in their categorisation as display objects. According to Riggins (1994), objects that are purposefully displayed in particular personal–professional spaces can fall into different categories and they may offer exciting clues about interpersonal dynamics in such spaces (p. 107). The orchid plant selected by Nareen Gonsalves and the handmade paper rose chosen by Theresa Chisanga and her colleagues can be seen as display objects in Riggins' (1994) category of the public sphere of life representing interpersonal dynamics and the recognition of particular relationships in which "self-presentation takes precedence over functionality" (p. 103). The handmade wire baobab tree selected by Pieter du Toit could be categorised as an indigenous object—referring to it being locally made in geographically distinct areas, as well as its status as a legendary tree. According to African legend, the baobab is a tree that wished to be the greatest tree in Africa. The wise spirit heard its request, reached down from the sky, pulled the tree from the earth, and placed it upside down. "Now", said the spirit, "I have made you unique. In return, you will grow strong and become an African landmark, known as the tree of life, and many will prosper from your growth." This legendary symbol, represented as a handmade wire baobab, has become Pieter's constant companion as a university teacher researcher. Display objects surround human beings, encapsulating memory and social meanings in intimate ways that "assert status… circulate value, demarcate our habitats and habits.…as well as to connect and disconnect us" (Candlin & Guins, 2009, p. 1). Deepening our understanding of the dynamic relationship between these "things and thinking" (Turkle, 2007, p. 9), between human and non human, is a complex, intimate, and entangled experience because of the trajectory and circumstances of time under which the objects came to be displayed (Riggins, 1994; Turkle, 2007).

Generating data about the three display objects happened over eight months. The original written object pieces that were submitted for the objects symposium were developed further, based on discussion and reflections during the symposium. These object pieces served as source material for this chapter. The pieces were submitted to Daisy who then worked with them to develop a tentative chapter description that she found to have interesting resonances across the work done by all the authors working in very different contexts. This was then e-mailed to Nareen, Pieter, and Theresa and her team. They were asked to read the draft chapter description and respond to Daisy's suggestions for deepening the discussion around particular ideas and issues that were relevant to a focus on display objects as fertile spaces for opening up narratives of teacher researcher identities. This back-and-forth process happened organically and mostly via e-mail conversations, and generated longer substantive written pieces by each of the authors. The final version was sent to the authors to read and to revise any misinterpretations that might have occurred, and to also

comment on issues of representation and narration that Daisy took responsibility for and described as an "assemblage of display objects." Any additional information was inserted as a tracked comment, which Daisy then finalised before sending for peer review.

The idea of an assemblage was borrowed from Pat Allen, who explained it as "the art of putting things together to form a new expression" (1995, p. 33). Allen went on to say that in assembling objects, we should "play with grouping them in pleasing arrangements…arrange and rearrange them as the spirit moves you" (1995, pp. 33–34). The section below represents a pleasing arrangement for discussion and analysis that is contingent and open to new and different shifts.

PART 1: ASSEMBLING THE DIFFERENT DISPLAY OBJECT PIECES

In Part 1, Nareen, Pieter, and Theresa and her team each present their individual display objects accompanied by written texts. This initial process forms the basis for deeper autobiographical reflections as a space for the authors to "construct and deconstruct the narratives of their lives" (Chambers & Hasebe-Ludt, 2009, p. 145) relational to, and mediated by, their display objects in the different forms they take and the values they subscribe. Each of the authors begins the object inquiry process with experience of trying to express the display object as a way to respond to and affirm individual values and priorities, while the reflective object piece opens up spaces for imagining new ideas and perspectives using familiar activities of assembling and creating (Haraway, 1987). These reflective pieces also provide a newly created fertile space for showcasing attention to each individual's experience of "beauty, [their] own aesthetic" (Allen, 1995, p. 34) in their day-to-day lives.

My Vanda: Nareen Gonsalves

I am an academic at a university of technology and my display object, the blue Vanda orchid (Figure 5.1), originated in tropical Asia. It is a very special plant, not just for its unusual colour but also in the way that it hangs free—from the roots to its very tip totally unprotected, untethered, and vulnerable. The Vanda is unusual in the way that it grows, clinging to rocks and tree bark, and requiring very little soil. It is a genus in the orchid family. This plant is special because of the beauty and variety of blooms it produces as well as the unusual nature of its growth pattern.

The blue Vanda has, for me, been a very special plant, not just for its beauty and unusual colour but also in the way that it grows. I remember the day I got the plant—the excitement I experienced at having a thing of such beauty, and the nervousness of whether I was going to be able to care for it and keep it alive. This very same excitement and nervousness is what I carry into my classroom at the beginning of a semester. The excitement of meeting new students and learning about their experiences, and the nervousness of whether I will be able to offer

Figure 5.1. The vanda orchid

them the support and guidance they need to keep them engaged in the learning experience.

When I first got the plant it had flowers on it, and I followed the instructions I was given with regard to caring for the plant (watering, fertilising, and light). I remember hanging it in my dining room window, which was a west-facing window, for a few years and while the plant grew, it never flowered again which was quite a disappointment for me. Initially I thought it was acclimatising to its new

environment but after a couple of years I decided I needed to change something. I could not really water it any more than I was; I also knew I could not plant it in soil because that is not how these plants grow, and the roots were really long (almost hanging down to the floor), so I decided the only option left was to change the position. I moved the plant to an east-facing window where, after a few months, to my sheer joy it flowered for the first time since I had it, and it flowered every year while it was there. What I find so amazing about it is the way it hangs free—from the roots to its very tip totally unprotected, untethered, and vulnerable, drawing nutrients from the air and water (it does need to be watered every day and fertilised on a regular basis). The reason I have chosen this plant is because it symbolises, for me, beauty and development that occurs despite the vulnerability of being so exposed to the elements.

Reflections on the Vanda by Nareen: The Embodiment of Professional Self-Growth through Dialogue and Openness

This plant is displayed in my personal home setting and it symbolises my love for beauty and the desire for growth that embodies vulnerability. My Vanda symbolises for me the embodiment of the perfect environment, which allowed it to flourish, and the many things that contribute to its growth. Orchids need the right amount of water, the right growing medium, the right amount of light, and the right position in terms of where they are placed in relation to other plants for them to thrive. The embodiment of the perfect conditions for its growth gave rise to the beautiful display that I see in the picture.

This reflective experience has made me think about my classroom in terms of what I take in with me. Do I really embody my knowledge, skills, and attitudes and take that into the class with me so that I can give of my best? And what about the embodied knowledge (Leitch, 2006), my students bring with them? Do I, do we, really value it? When I say *we* I am referring to us teachers as facilitators as well as to the students. I see these two ingredients as being extremely important for a successful class. An important aspect of education is actually to get students to understand the importance of the knowledge they bring and to encourage them to build on that.

I find that when I am totally present in the classroom, and totally committed to providing the right amount of care, my classes are so much more enjoyable, engaging, and successful. When I am not totally present, and a little distracted or tired, I find those classes get a bit difficult and lacklustre, not very fulfilling, and definitely more difficult to get through. It was interesting that I observed parallel behaviour in my plant.

This object-reflective writing narrative was a really vulnerable, but also aha moment for me because it provided greater meaning for my life as a teacher. I have always believed that students need the right conditions to flourish, and the right conditions include placement in the correct programme, getting the right

amount of care from the people around them, which could mean being, left to work on their own, or having someone watch over them constantly. It could also mean a lot of support from their peers or none at all. It also includes a recognition of the knowledge they come with, placing value on it and building on it rather than disregarding it. It means nurturing this knowledge and acknowledging its authenticity. It also means understanding that each student is different and has different needs.

Another important aspect of this plant is the absolute freedom it has in its growth. Its roots hang free, the leaves are free, and it seems rather odd that it would grow the way it does with its roots so exposed. This gives the plant a certain vulnerability. But does this not have some meaning in terms of how we can thrive once we have exposed our real selves? My reflective gaze exposes my inner being and encourages me to dwell on who I am and what I can become. Sharing this exposed self to those around us creates a certain vulnerability, honesty, and respect which allows for greater development all round. We also need to accept that our students come with their own vulnerabilities that need to be understood and nurtured.

The plant embodies its growing conditions, which determine whether it thrives or perishes. For me there is a lesson in that the more we contain ourselves the more we cut ourselves off, the less I and we share, the less I and we grow.

The Paper Rose: Theresa Chisanga, Gladys Ashu, Pamela Mavume, Mandisa N. Dhlula-Moruri, Mukund Khatry-Chhetry, Sookdhev Rajkaran, Lazarus Mulenga, Nkosinathi Sotshangane

We, Theresa Chisanga and a team of researchers (the Rose Team), are based at a rural comprehensive university. We focused our gaze on a beautiful blooming white rose that was made from a few fragile sheets of facial tissue pulled together by a single piece of string (Figure 5.2). This object piece centres its inquiry on this object whose "life" began in a moment of play during an encounter with a troubled student who needed an ear and an encouraging voice.

This object of a beautiful, blooming white rose is made from Kleenex tissues, transformed in a minute at the deft hands of a student (used here with her permission). The student visited one of our team members in her office in a rather distressed state and after a little chat, was cheered enough to play around and make this incredible object. The academic in whose office the object was created always keeps a box of facial tissues, which come in handy on such occasions.

The rose occupied an empty space on the bookshelf in the office for a long time and enjoyed a great deal of attention from many people who passed by. It even brought about many attempts to recreate it because many people wanted to learn how to make it. Our object piece centres its inquiry on this handmade rose whose life began in a moment of vulnerability, fragility, and play. The object has taken on a symbolic function, embodying the voice of the team and our collaborative experiences as educational researchers.

Figure 5.2. Paper rose

Photographs of the handmade rose were taken and the experience was shared with our team, who are a group of individuals within the university representing a diverse range of disciplines including health, library and educational sciences, linguistics and language studies, not to mention research itself. On the face of it, we are strange bedfellows, each perhaps working on our own with the fragility of a single sheet of facial tissue. However, we have grown together, like the individual petals in the rose, driven by a common interest—the will to improve our respective practices, and the desire to grow academically and contribute meaningfully to our institution's research capacity and output.

Reflections by the Rose Team: The Centrepiece of Better Ways of Thinking and Being as Teacher Researchers through Our Caring and Sharing

The rose object becomes a fertile space for us as a team to explore our vulnerability and fragility as academics struggling to contribute to institutional transformation and knowledge creation through research and scholarship. As a team, we want to use this contained and collective inquiry space that embodies the spirit of ubuntu (Harrison, Pithouse-Morgan, Conolly, & Meyiwa, 2012, p. 12) to reconnect us to our common purpose: to develop our learning and teaching capacities by researching our practice and making the outcome public. Selected examples of reflections from some individual members of the Rose Team (Figure 5.3) are presented below.

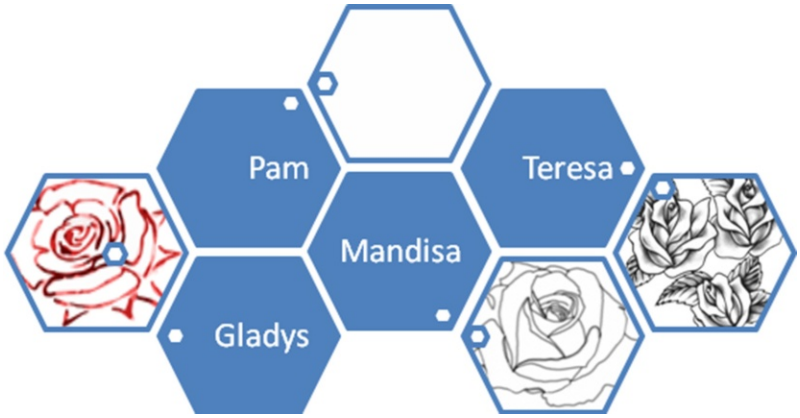

Figure 5.3. Mapping the rose team

Theresa: Incredibly, the reflections on the rose and the story behind it brought out much of what has kept us together as educational researchers seeking to make a difference in our practice in an institution that, everyday, cries out for innovative and transformative approaches to teaching, research, and every other practice associated with it. The rose holds a double lesson: first, in the process of its making and the intricate process required for one to hold each sheet and fold it carefully in a particular way. Once you master that, it is so simple and can be done in minutes. You do, however, have to have the interest and the inspiration to engage. All of this is very symbolic to the processes of learning, teaching, and research. Second, the rose for us shows that, though we are different and may have our differences, we are united in our quest for success in research, both as individuals and as a group. Like the petals, our contributions are not the same nor equal but, together, we form a unit. The unit, like a family, gives care, concern, and support. We freely give these to each other and we all acknowledge what the group means to us, as evidenced in our commitment to meet every week and update one another on where we are in our work, and to share our successes and frustrations.

One of the characteristics of self-study is that it is collaborative in nature (Pithouse, Mitchell, & Weber, 2009; Samaras, 2011). We work together to make meaning as we review each other's contributions. We ask questions and make suggestions in the best way possible to address whatever is on the table and, in the end, we have a completed whole. Once again, like the multilayered and multifaceted flower, cleverly woven together as our rose object, we have a better presentation or a better paper. As a result, we have together presented papers at conferences, collaborated and published together, and have had two doctoral candidates and several master's candidates graduate.

Pam: For our group it is mutually beneficial to come together as a research group to contribute knowledge from our diverse educational faculties. For me, the white rose object symbolises the humility, sincerity, loyalty, and charm of attracting colleagues to come together to promote the research activities in our various disciplines. This symbol of love, passion, and wisdom brings about something of value in our education—that of sharing and producing more information and knowledge for future generations.

Mandisa: Though the white handmade rose object happened incidentally, I find it apt in the descriptions of self-study methodologies. They call out our purity of soul as we look back on our personal histories and how they shape who we are today; they demand that we open ourselves to scrutiny by other people as we practise transparency that speaks to the trustworthiness of our studies (Bailey, 2007). The fact that the creator of the flower was in pain speaks to the pain that comes with self-analysis and exposure which, like the flower, results in a beautiful unit in the form of a completed study, paper, or project as well as inner healing as individuals.

Gladys: The bloom, to me, represents a symbol of fulfilment that came about only as a result of collaboration. A single sheet of that fragile facial tissue cannot blossom on its own; but when put together with others, they form that beautiful rose. I was vulnerable as a lone academic researcher struggling in my small world. Sometimes I was stuck and had to abandon everything. The hard work and many hours put to such research can become a waste. But joining the group has actually assisted me to move out of my little office—to share my research ideas with other colleagues and to assist each other individually and collectively. This has been the fulfilment of the group as symbolised by the bloom.

The Wire Baobab: Pieter du Toit

I am a specialist in higher education at a research-intensive university. My object piece brings into dialogue my thinking about, and thinking through, the wire constructed baobab tree (Figure 5.4) through the narratives it inspires about my practice.

I chose the baobab because it is an African landmark and a symbol associated with the origins of creation by the indigenous San people. The African baobab is one of the world's hardiest trees, thriving in the most arid environments.

The baobab tree is my symbol and metaphor. It is also the tree under which some Africans traditionally meet to decide issues of common concern. For many indigenous tribes it is the embodiment of wisdom, reference, teaching, respect, leadership, longevity, health, and life. The name *baobab* means "the time when humanity began" and it is therefore no wonder that the San people associate it with the origins of creation. This is not an ordinary baobab tree that is to be found in

Figure 5.4. The wire baobab

nature—landscape, as we know it. Rather, it is a reconstruction of what we observe as human beings, using all our senses. In this way, the making of the object is aligned with the notion of new meaning making. It was created by one of many South African black artists who, more often than not, need to survive by selling their art(efacts) within the informal economic landscape. But, closer to my own passion and self, this object enriches my academic landscape as a tangible visual item that is displayed in my office. The object is brought into the classroom and to every learning opportunity created for students. It is included in the learning material my students receive at the commencement of each academic year, in the form of a photograph. I have chosen this object because it inspires all narratives I share with others about my practice. And I have chosen it because it is legendary.

Reflections on the Baobab by Pieter: The Epicentre of Pulling and Placing the Teacher Self Upside Down in the Comfort of Community

The baobab is symbol of my practice. I see every one of the higher education practitioners who are my students as a baobab—a unique tree from which many will prosper. I consider every colleague a baobab tree, aspiring to become the greatest in

their field of specialisation, especially in an educational sense. In order for them to thrive, I need to pull them out of their comfort zones and place them upside down. This is what I would expect higher education practitioners to do with their students. I want each of my colleagues to grow strong, maximise their potential, and become a global landmark from which their students will prosper. They need to learn how to thrive amidst the most arid environments because higher education has become dis-formed.

The intricate wiring seen in this object is indicative of our teaching practice, which is multidimensional in nature. This multidimensionality calls for an epistemology that is holistic and constructivist. The creative way in which the baobab was constructed represents the need for higher education practitioners, such as my students and me, to construct innovative learning and assessment opportunities for our students. Becoming a creative higher education practitioner should be evident in all roles that need to be enacted, such as designer of curricula, facilitator, and assessor of learning. I am an advocate of the scholarship of teaching.

Promoting scholarship of teaching is evident in the action research scholarship that forms the epicentre of my being as an academic. This focus inevitably brings to the fore the ontological question I need to address in the work I do: Who am I as an academic?

PART 2: MAKING DEEPER MEANING OF THE INDIVIDUAL DISPLAY OBJECTS

In this section, Daisy finishes off the assemblage of the different display objects (see Figure 5.5) by mixing up the different narrative experiences and reflections (Allen, 1995, p. 34), that the teacher researchers offered as an important part of creating a three-dimensional experience. This mixing up and working across the different responses, trying to make sense of moments of connectedness, was quite a challenge. Daisy wanted to ensure that, in the mixing up, she would showcase differences yet also create points of sameness (Haraway, 1987; Meyer, 2011).

Drawing on the idea of *métissage,* as a theoretical construct and textual practice, enabled Daisy to represent this interpretive layer of the object inquiry process. According to Chambers and Hasebe-Ludt (2008), métissage means "'mixed,' primarily referring to cloth of two different fibers" (p. 141). Using métissage as a theory and praxis (Zuss, 1997), enabled Daisy to reconstruct narrative texts with strands of individual voices as well as to resist any fixedness and self-closure (Falzon, 1998) with regard to blurring disciplinary boundaries, "genres, texts, and identities" (Chambers & Hasebe-Ludt, 2008, p. 142).

In working with these moments of joining the objects (Allen, 1995, p. 34), Daisy developed three key pieces that illuminated points of affinity taken from additional reflections by the teacher researchers. She paid careful attention to the experience of committing to each piece or, as (Chambers & Hasebe-Ludt, 2008, p. 142) emphasised, "retain[ing] the integrity and distinctiveness of the individual texts/voices," while at the same creating new spaces for meaning making:

- Display objects inspire a particular kind of existence as self-reflective teacher researchers.

Figure 5.5. The métissage

- Display objects inspire embodied presence as teacher researchers.
- Display object inquiry energises dialogue with self–other as teacher researchers.

Display Objects Inspire a Particular Kind of Existence as Self-Reflective Teacher Researchers

Objects can provide a constantly changing lens through which to view the world and teacher researchers' work. Education and educational research are creative processes, and working with objects can encourage one to look at everyday objects in creative ways. This creativity opens up different avenues for exploring everything we see, hear, feel, and do in our everyday experiences. An everyday object can inspire learning (Turkle, 2009) when one can view it with a critical eye or when someone assists you to look at it from a different angle or perspective. Nareen convincingly pointed out that, "It is a matter of reflecting on objects to give us a different perspective of things. Objects inspire us to see connections wherever such exists."

Object inquiry is evocative and emotional, and there is an element of love and care involved in making meaning of our experience collectively. The spirit of ubuntu, according to Theresa, "is the soft spot where creativity flourishes, and

self -transformation is made possible. Once you approach life this way, there is vulnerability." Vulnerability, incites creativity and this, Lazarus pointed out, makes transformation possible: "In the hands of a creative person, fragile sheets may be transformed into a rose that inspires learning." "Objects", Sookdhev added, "help us to look at academia and research from a different perspective. Objects enable one to develop ideas and stories to enhance learning, and to organise information and knowledge to make it accessible to others." The object, whether used educationally or culturally as symbol, is to enhance meaning making as shifting through time (Lawler, 2008, p. 12). To researchers, objects open up possibilities for developing new knowledge in teaching and research because, as symbols, they are understood culturally as representing more than themselves. By linking our display objects to our practice as academics, our experience in the midst of this dialogue (Falzon, 1998) contributes to the development of a particular kind of existence (Lawler, 2008, p. 12) as teacher researchers.

Display Objects Inspire Embodied Presence as Teacher Researchers

Making connections with particular display objects can open up new and exciting ways and different avenues for exploration. Mukund explained that

> through objects, one can go deep to unfold all those hidden stories of that particular object. Working with objects can enable us to adapt gracefully to changing classroom situations as we learn from stories and experiences of the others in the group.

Making connections through sharing and communicating our object inquiry research process can make educational research more productive, and inspires embodied change in educational practices and research perspectives. Theresa confidently expressed the point: "Sharing with my students and colleagues by acknowledging my feelings about objects and my attitudes exposes my vulnerability and influences my interpretations of my lived experiences." Lawler (2008) suggested that narratives provide a means to understand our personal–professional "identity in its sociality since narrative identity places us within a complex web of relationships" (p. 13) and subsequently blurs the notions of the fixed, autonomous, coherent self. Mandisa insightfully explained that, "objects make it easier to ask more in depth questions, thereby deepening thinking and learning about the principles and practices that I bring in to make meaning of my everyday life experiences."

Working with tangible objects is very much a sensory experience and therefore inspires thinking in an embodied, holistic way. Nareen emphasised how "object inquiry opens up new ideas and possibilities for being totally present—in mind, body, spirit—and to look at students from a different perspective. And, it is a starting point for us to look at research in different ways." Thus, object inquiry creates

openings to experience the personal–professional as a fluid and inextricably linked process (Richie &Wilson, 2000).

Display Object Inquiry Energises Dialogue with Self–Other as Teacher Researchers

Object inquiry can help us realise that research is everywhere. Theresa pointed out that, "Display objects are not about *them,* but about *me* and *us* and everything around us." Each teacher researcher's story about a display object is important and it arouses more thinking about who we are and what we want to be. Sharing reflections with colleagues arouses interest in the practice of interacting with, and learning from, objects.

Working with objects can energise teacher researchers because it is not about making generalisable claims, instead we tell a story of interest to other research practitioners, particularly the young researchers, as an opportunity to share knowledge and for team and capacity building. Nkosinathi reminded us of his philosophy, "Each one teach one," that drives his agenda to ensure continuity of knowledge from one generation to the other. Barbara Hardy (1975) observed that we could hardly live without telling stories, both to others and to ourselves and as Lawler (2008) offered, "it is through such stories that we make sense of the world" (p. 12), and who we are as individuals and as social beings.

Pieter explained,

> Object inquiry as an approach to research allows us to think innovatively in terms of the self, departing from the traditional deficit-based questions such as: "What is wrong with my practice?" "What problems do my students experience?" Instead, we are energised in our commitment to contribute to the higher education environment in which we work.

Object inquiry involves research processes that can transform aspects of our practice because as human beings we entrust moral and practical responsibilities to objects, like Pieter's picture of the baobab, to act on our behalf (Latour, 2005).

As a research approach, object inquiry is a potent space for constructing new meanings of, "Who are we as teacher researchers?" as an entanglement of human and non human actors (Latour, 2005). Objects can be used as a practice metaphor, or what Lawler (2008, p. 13) described as "interpretive devices" through which human beings make sense of, and generate, an understanding of the complexity and intricateness of their lives and identities as teachers and researchers. Pieter reminded us that, "It is under this tree called educational research that we as communities of practice meet, to discuss how we come to be the way we are, and to engage in interpreting our stories of self" within a "historically constituted world" (Moore, 1994, p. 119)—as would the wise Africans traditionally do.

PART 3: FINISHING THE ASSEMBLAGE—DAISY'S LEARNING AS NARRATOR, COAUTHOR AND TEACHER RESEARCHER

Giving a three-dimensional experience to the display object inquiry process created an alternate expression and space to experience, think, and learn (Allen, 1995, p. 34) about teacher researcher identities. In asking herself, "How has this experience of connectedness with display objects as an assemblage opens up new ways of thinking–theorising teacher researchers identities?" and "What difference does this make to educational research, and why?" Daisy came to recognise and acknowledge self–object connectedness as a lived and changing space, open to ongoing configurations and reconfigurations. The social meanings that display objects evoke through inquiry reveal how they can be used to exercise power and agency (Candlin & Guins, 2009), circulate values of collaboration, openness, caring and sharing as individuals, and connect individuals to new ways of thinking and working as teacher researchers.

The openness to change and growth through social dialogue (Falzon, 1998) is not a linear process, but rather through fragments of many different experiences and critical voices that make self-change possible. Engaging in the display object inquiry process as assemblage "creatively produced through various raw materials available" (Lawler, 2008, p. 11), offered potent spaces for the creation of new and alternate meanings of being teacher researchers (Deleuze & Parnet, 1987). Assembled as experiences of critical moments and memories, teacher researcher identities are constituted as multiple, momentary, and "made up" (Lawler, 2008, p. 11).

The teacher researcher self, understood in the midst of dialogue with inspirational display objects, opens up momentary spaces for encountering the other in open and embodied ways. The gluing of object narratives as a "momentary experience" (Allen, 1995, p. 34), is open to alterity. Promoting openness ensures the continuation of dialogue about who we are, and the desire for what we want to be as university academics and researchers within and in response to particular conditions that are produced by the design of institutions (Pillay, Pithouse-Morgan, & Naicker, 2017) in the present higher education landscape.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The reflective process that the teacher researchers engaged in for making visible symbolic and social meanings of their display objects opened up particular momentary object entanglements as spaces to experience and think differently about their day-to-day lives as academics (Candlin & Guins, 2009, p. 11). According to Fransson and Grannäs (2013, p. 7), such a shift enables each individual to visualise what personal meanings they could draw on from their object-mediated experiences to negotiate the dynamic professional learning spaces in which they find themselves. Narratives of professional identities were elicited from this symbolic meaning making process: For Nareen, her Vanda orchid object experience represented the embodiment of

professional self-growth through dialogue and openness; for Theresa and the Rose Team, the paper rose object experience represented the centrepiece of better ways of thinking and being as teacher researchers through their caring and sharing in critical ways; and for Pieter, the wire baobab object experience represented the epicentre of pulling and placing the teacher self upside down in the comfort of community.

The teacher researchers drew on their life experiences to illustrate how being in dialogue with their objects can make visible their personal working theories which, according to Fransson and Grannäs (2013, p. 7), "pattern our lives" as individuals and as researchers in intentional and unintentional ways. Naming these patterns through visual and written reflections in the object inquiry process opens up potential spaces for the generation of new ideas and perspectives for reconnecting with the professional self through openness and dialogue with others (Turkle, 2007). This simultaneous movement of experiencing while thinking about and imagining new spaces, ideas, and perspectives, makes this an aesthetic experience (Allen, 1995).

"Like a dream" (Allen, 1995, p. 34), this chapter brought together display objects of "different fibres" (Chambers & Hasebe-Ludt, 2008, p. 141) to show how teacher researchers can participate in creating narratives of different selves and communities that are energised by openness and multiplicity. Display objects can provide us with important clues about how we negotiate our daily lives and the choices we make as teacher researchers in higher education. The intimate link that exists between display objects that populate the personal–professional spaces that academics inhabit are relationally constituted spaces with "temporal depth" (Riggins, 1994, p. 105) and offer moments of possibility and hope for teacher researchers' self-transformation.

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NOTE

[1] 3–5 February, 2016, Durban, South Africa. http://coh.ukzn.ac.za/Files/Media/Documents/Announcement%20Documents/International%20Research%20Symposium%20and%20Exhibition%20Call%20for%20Proposals.pdf

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THOKOZANI NDALENI AND KATHLEEN PITHOUSE-MORGAN

6. A STOVE, A FLASK, AND A PHOTOGRAPH

Learning Together through Object Inquiry in Self-Study Research

BUILDING ON A RICH HISTORY OF OBJECT INQUIRY IN SELF-STUDY RESEARCH

Self-study methodology originated in the field of teacher education in the early 1990s and there is now a substantive body of published self-study research by teacher educators and teachers and, increasingly, by professionals in other fields. Self-study focuses on the researcher's own professional learning in a particular context and the implications thereof for the growth of professional practice and ways of knowing. Hence, it repositions teacher educators, teachers, and other professionals as agents of their own learning (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015). However, even though self-study methodology centres on the researcher's own professional practice and learning, it requires interaction with others to benefit from diverse viewpoints (LaBoskey, 2004). These others can include colleagues or peers who, as critical friends, have a common commitment to "[acting] as a sounding board, [asking] challenging questions, [supporting] reframing of events, and [joining] in the professional learning experience" (Schuck & Russell, 2005, p. 107).

There are no prescribed self-study research methods and so self-study researchers draw on a variety of largely qualitative research practices to generate, represent, and interpret data (LaBoskey, 2004). Although methods for self-study research can comprise commonplace qualitative research methods such as interviews, observation, and journal writing (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009), methodological inventiveness is a recurring feature of self-study research (Whitehead, 2004). Methodological inventiveness entails creativity and innovation in the development of research methods that diverge from the conventional to "enable new, valid understandings to develop; understandings that empower practitioners to improve their work for the beneficiaries in their care" (Dadds & Hart, 2001, p. 169).

One of the more innovative research methods used in self-study research involves working with objects or artefacts, which can be understood as objects that have a particular personal, sociocultural, or historical significance and that are made or modified by humans (Prown, 1982). According to Allender and Manke (2004), "self-study research in teacher education has a history rich in the use and analysis of artifacts, often providing tangible evidence of the realities of teaching and learning"

D. Pillay et al. (Eds.), Object Medleys, 81–98.

(p. 20). This coauthored chapter builds on and adds to that rich history of object and artefact inquiry in self-study research. The chapter brings into dialogue the voices of three Southern African teacher educators, Mandisa N. Dhlula-Moruri, Makie Kortjass, Thokozani Ndaleni, and their doctoral research supervisor, Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan. In South Africa, *research supervisor* is the term used to denote someone who advises and mentors a graduate student during her or his research project. Usually, South African graduate students have only one supervisor.

Mandisa, Makie, and Thokozani are working at two universities in South Africa and are using self-study research to study their professional learning and practice in the areas of consumer studies education (Mandisa), early childhood education (Makie), and English education (Thokozani). They have all chosen to use object inquiry as one of multiple methods in their self-study research. Mandisa, Makie, and Thokozani are also part of a larger self-study research support group of critical friends, which meets monthly to share work in progress and give constructive feedback.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter was developed over an 8-month period from a collection of data sources: (a) object pieces written independently by Mandisa, Thokozani, and Makie; (b) an audio recording of a conversation facilitated by Kathleen in which Thokozani, Mandisa, and Makie shared and discussed their object pieces; and (c) reflection pieces written individually by Makie, Thokozani, and Mandisa in response to the audio recording. In her dual role as research supervisor and coauthor, Kathleen collated the object pieces and reflection pieces and looked across them for markers of interpretive possibilities of object inquiry in self-study research. To enhance clarity and consistency, Kathleen lightly edited the object pieces and reflection pieces. She used these pieces as material for developing a rough draft of the chapter, which she then shared with Thokozani, Makie, and Mandisa for further input. The chapter was completed through interactive revision by the four authors, the book editors, and a peer reviewer.

The object pieces written by Mandisa, Thokozani, and Makie responded to an initial prompt given by Kathleen: "Choose one object that captures an aspect of your educational research."[1] Although these pieces were created individually and centre on three very different objects embedded within diverse sociocultural contexts—a stove (Mandisa), a traditional flask (Thokozani), and a photograph of student teachers (Makie)—each one illustrates the educative significance of collaboration and supportive relationships. Hence, the object pieces offer vivid instantiations of sociocultural theoretical perspectives (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996) that recognise teaching and learning as collaborative, relational, and "culturally imbued" (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 826).

In a Southern African context, a sociocultural perspective on teaching and learning can be understood in relation to *ubuntu*. Ubuntu is an ethical philosophy

that is encapsulated in the statement, "*Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu,*" in isiXhosa, "*Umuntu, umuntu ngabantu,*" in isiZulu, "*Motho ke motho ka batho,*" in seSotho or, "A person is a person because of other persons," in English. Ubuntu highlights the value of communal human characteristics such as caring, reciprocity, and respect for another person's dignity (Reddy, Meyer, Shefer, & Meyiwa, 2014).

In keeping with a sociocultural emphasis on the educative power of relational and collaborative learning, the chapter is arranged as a kind of collective performance, in which the authors enact particular roles and relationships (Pelias, 2008). Mandisa, Makie, and Thokozani are the lead performers, while Kathleen plays a backstage part. In considering the chapter as a performance, the opening object pieces can be understood as monologues or as compositions "in which a single person speaks alone" (monologue, n.d.). Through these object monologues, Mandisa, Thokozani, and Makie "reveal not just autobiographical factual details, but [also] inner thoughts, feelings, attitudes, values, and beliefs" (Saldaña, 2008, p. 197).

The monologues are followed by three dialogue pieces that Kathleen composed using extracts from the individual reflection pieces written by Makie, Thokozani, and Mandisa. Kathleen started by using a free online English-language learning tool, WordSift (wordsift.org), to help her map out some preliminary ideas. Kathleen copied and pasted the reflection pieces into the online WordSift text box. The WordSift programme then created a tag cloud, showing key vocabulary used in these pieces. From there, Kathleen developed three central ideas that she thought encapsulated the most significant realisations expressed by Thokozani, Mandisa, and Makie in relation to interpretive possibilities of object inquiry in educational research:

- Learning through experiencing different conversations.
- Making educational research personal—making personal research educational.
- Understanding the learner or student is critical.

Kathleen then went back to the reflection pieces to identify noteworthy parts that connected with each of these realisations. She clustered these parts into three initial dialogue groupings and then edited the clustered dialogue sections to make them more concise and coherent. She also tried to ensure balance and movement between the voices of Makie, Thokozani, and Mandisa. Overall, the arrangement of the dialogue pieces was a back-and-forth process that took place over several weeks.

The dialogic format was chosen with the aim of showing, in an interactive way, how professional learning through object inquiry can be collaborative, relational, and culturally imbued. Pelias (2008) explained that, in a performance, a monologue "comes forward as a 'what is'" while a dialogue "stages 'what might be'" (pp. 191–192). The use of dialogue in this chapter is intended to show how individual views and knowledge can be strengthened, challenged, and broadened through conversations with critical friends in which "empathic understanding"

(Bresler, 2008, p. 230) is sought. As Bresler (2008) clarified, empathy, or the ability to identify with feelings and beliefs of another person, is dialogic and "in that dialogue, the researcher/performer is touched and expanded, not just in terms of factual knowledge, but also in her resonance to the world" (p. 230).

The first dialogue piece illustrates how sharing and discussing their chosen objects deepened and extended Mandisa, Thokozani, and Makie's understandings of the interpretive possibilities of object inquiry. It highlights the value of working with objects in a polyvocal fashion by "bringing into dialogue multiple points of view" (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015, p. 2). The second dialogue piece reveals Mandisa, Thokozani, and Makie's growing understanding of how working in new ways with everyday, familiar objects can expose unexpected possibilities for professional and personal learning. The third dialogue piece makes visible their realisation of the real-world implications of object inquiry for making a qualitative difference to their professional practice and ways of knowing as teacher educators. The chapter closes with a collective consideration of wider implications of the four authors' learning.

OBJECT PIECES

Mandisa's Mother's Stove (Figure 6.1)

The first key question in my doctoral self-study research is: What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history? In responding to this question, I have made meaning of and from my mother's Kelvinator stove as an educational artefact.

Figure 6.1. Mama's kelvinator stove: An old friend

My mother taught my late brother, my two sisters, and I to make and bake cakes when I was seven years old, and that was the start of my history with the stove. This was one of my childhood memories of collaborative learning, which have gone a long way to making me the teacher educator that I am today.

I grew up in Zimbabwe. In December 1966, when I was eight years old, we moved house: from Bulawayo to Gweru; from electric lights to candles, paraffin, and gas lamps; from an electric stove to a wood stove; and from the second largest town in Zimbabwe to a mission station in a rural area, 32 kilometres from a small town. Incidentally, we only realised that our new home had no electricity on our arrival at dusk when we looked for light switches on the walls and found none. And so, we had to learn to cook and bake on a wood stove.

When we left Bulawayo, my parents left all their electrical appliances in the old house. A few years later, the mission was electrified and when the lights first came on, my parents fetched the old fridge and stove from the township house and we used them for a few years more.

The mission was about 32 kilometres from Gweru, the nearest town, and my parents always went to town on Saturdays. My paternal grandparents lived about six kilometres away on their farm, and came to church in the mission every Sunday. All four of us, my late brother included, took turns to bake cakes for tea after church. Our grandparents always complimented us on our cakes, which was a motivation to try new cake recipes. My parents encouraged us to plan recipes before the weekend, and my father would then buy the ingredients in time for Saturday's baking.

We lived far from town and had no telephone in the house. My parents' friends would usually visit on a Saturday. Sometimes they would find my parents absent. I would quickly bake something to go with the tea we would make while they waited for my parents to come back from town. Whilst they had their tea, I would start on a meat stew and cook it in a casserole dish while we continued with whatever we wanted to do. And my mom would come back home to entertain the guests with a meal.

Then, in 1973, my mother got it into her head that she needed a new stove. She justified her request by making my father see how I needed to be encouraged in my love for cooking with a good stove. My father asked her for the specifications and she told him she wanted a stove with a rotisserie, a clock, and timer (these features had just come into fashion). My father went to his favourite furniture store, Bradlows, and had them find such a stove. About a week later, he took my mother to the store. The stove was at the far end, opposite the door. As my father later recounted, they walked up to the stove and when they got close, my mother said, "This is not it!" She turned around and walked right out of the store. My father was embarrassed, and followed her out and explained to her the features on the stove that she had specified, and asked her why she wouldn't even look at the stove. My mother declared that that was not the stove she wanted because it was not a Kelvinator! They went home. When my father explained to her that Bradlows did not sell Kelvinator products, she

told him that because he was such a loyal customer, the shop should find him what he wanted. So he went back to Bradlows and asked them to find the right stove. They found it in another store, bought it and sold it to my father.

This stove made me feel special because it was bought with the idea of nurturing my love of cooking. In this respect, the stove played a very significant role in my learning how to bake and cook. We would get feedback on our baking and cooking from our parents and grandparents. My father was the best critic of all. My mother always made sure my father knew who had prepared each dish or meal for the day and he would comment on the food. His comments were always frank and, as a result, we all strove to do better. I can now see how this has influenced the teacher educator I am in that I always want to nurture my students by giving them feedback whenever they contribute in the learning and teaching situation. I also encourage other students to give feedback whenever a student or a group of students has made a presentation.

Instead of simply complaining about whatever dish I had made, my parents would make a suggestion on what I could add or do to make it look or taste better. Looking back, I can see that from this, I learned the importance of positive feedback and collaboration. I discourage nonconstructive and negative criticism in my sessions with my students. I always want them to think positively so that they all learn together, collaboratively, and from each other.

From my mother, I learned to assert myself in matters of buying and getting exactly what I paid for: I always encourage my students to be confident in making their voices heard in their group tasks and presentations in their collaborative learning sessions, as well as to stand up for their beliefs.

Because I blossomed with affirmation from my significant others, I learned the importance of mentoring aspiring cooks. Whenever practical cooking sessions are held in our department, we are invited to give some critique on the dishes prepared, and we also encourage the students to assess each other's dishes. The dishes are prepared in groups, collaboratively, and critiqued in the same way.

To this day, my mother's stove works just fine, with only a rather loose oven door that has suffered from the moves the family has made over the years. The stove's longevity has taught me the importance of choosing brands that are durable, and in my work as a teacher educator I too strive to be a "brand" that is durable. Whenever I am home, I always take time to check that the stove is working by making at least one dish. It feels as if I am reconnecting with an old friend who never changes. The stove exudes an air of efficient calm that I always aspire to. As I cook on it, the stove will not watch the pots, because that is not what it does. That is what I am supposed to do and, if I forget, the stove reminds me by burning my pots. By the same token, each member of a group in collaborative learning has a clear role to play as an individual who is part of a team. So, between my mother's Kelvinator stove and me, there is always that connection and collaboration.

Thokozani's Igula (Figure 6.2)

I chose my *igula* (a traditional flask) to represent my research interest: Teacher learning of isiZulu-speaking English language teachers in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. I opted for this cultural utensil used by amaZulu people because my research is a collaborative self-study involving language teachers as participants. The igula epitomises collaboration in terms of its creation and when it is in use. The casing, which is similar to a woven grass basket, is the product of two or more people. One person is responsible for weaving the grass to cover the container. There may also be someone whose responsibility it is to scoop out the seeds of the

Figure 6.2. The traditional flask: A valued gift

dry pumpkin-like vegetable to create the portable container. The tenacity involved in the making of this container signifies the diligence and dedication I put into my research in order to understand the English language teacher learning phenomenon better. The main purpose of the handle of the container is to make the utensil user-friendly. Looking at the handgrip of my object, I recall that the emotions of research participants must be well catered for.

The igula is created in such a way that its contents remain fresh for a long time. As a finished product, the container is used as a flask to store cool water or some other nutritional beverage such as raw milk and *amasi* [fermented cow's milk]. Amasi is like yogurt and can be either drunk or eaten with stiff porridge called *uphuthu*. The nourishing contents that are kept in the container symbolise my research findings that will enrich my professional learning. In addition, when the container is in use its contents are shared by a group of people, which in my research relates to the collaborative nature of my study. Through my study, I have become more aware of how teacher learning occurs when teachers interact and share ideas in their quest for teacher knowledge. When I scrutinise the container, I remember that people sometimes keep taking sips from the container when relishing its contents and this alerts me to the recursive nature of a self-study research process, because my progress as a researcher is not an event but a lifelong process.

My igula is a traditional item that has been used by amaZulu, my cultural heritage community, for a number of centuries. This igula has been in my possession for more than a decade. In the old days, there were no cupboards or refrigerators inside which such a container could be kept. To keep its contents fresh, its handle was used to hang it from the roof rafters of a grass-thatched house. At my home, however, the igula has a special place on the display cabinet because of its sentimental value. To other people it might appear to be an ornament, but for me it triggers fond memories of my personal history. My mother-in-law offered it to me as one of the wedding presents on my marriage. According to my amaZulu cultural heritage, the exchange of gifts symbolises that the families of the bride and groom are bonded into one.

In my research, this object represents my cooperation with participants in order to enhance our understanding of English language teacher learning as isiZulu-speakers. It reminds me of how, as time went on in our research sessions, we developed cordial relationships. We would end up discussing other personal and professional matters that were not directly linked to the research project. Some participants even sought advice from each other on how to teach certain aspects of the English language.

The people who were involved in the creation of this object were the grandmother of my spouse and one of my sisters-in-law. Later, I learned that the grandmother was the person who wove the covering of the igula. My sister-in-law assisted by scooping out the contents of the dry pumpkin-like vegetable to make the container

and then polishing its outside. In my research, these family members reminded me of my critical friends who assisted in my research journey. For me, these were colleagues who played a critical role by offering assistance as well as suggestions on data generation and interpretation. These critical friends were also using self-study as a research methodology and therefore, when I encountered problems in my self-study research, I relied on them for advice. Consequently, my research was sustained by a culture of collaboration. Therefore, I developed my individual "understandings because and only because of the collaboration" (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015, p. 6).

A metaphor that symbolises and strengthens the importance of the igula to me is a group of amaZulu people performing a traditional dance. In that dance the audience claps hands and sings simultaneously whilst the dancers stomp their feet on the ground at exactly the same time. The dance is performed with precision because everyone involved is striving towards the same goal. Similarly, in my collaborative self-study, my participants and I reached a common ground. What started as my self-study research went as far as inspiring my research participants to engage in their own teacher learning.

Working with my igula as a research object evoked various emotions in me. With respect to my personal experience, it aroused fond memories that filled me with nostalgia. For example, I remembered three close friends with whom I formed a study group during my secondary school years. We used to inspire one another as we aimed to be proficient in speaking English. We wanted to emulate the best journalists of the newspapers we used to share. Some of those newspapers, we took from our white bosses who employed us as garden boys over the weekends. Moreover, our mothers were domestic workers in white families' houses and returned with magazines and newspapers to our homes. These reading materials were used and discarded by their employers and contributed to the enrichment of our general knowledge as well as our command of English. The closely-knit cover of my object signifies that people learn more by cooperating with others. All those friends of mine have since passed away. I feel sad because I am aware that if they were still alive, they would be happy about my academic achievements. I have a feeling that if they were still around, they would have worked collaboratively with me as researchers.

The emotion of despondency arises because my mother and my maternal grandmother are also no longer alive. The nutritious beverages that my igula used to carry represent the hard work my mother always put into my education. I learned from my mother the amaZulu expression of "*umuntu, umuntu ngabantu* [a human being does not exist in isolation from others]." In addition, my grandmother would remind me not to look down upon other people because I would always need them in my life journey. My igula, which is fragile if not handled carefully, reminds me of my grandmother's words. I have realised that in my self-study I need to collaborate with others if I want to succeed academically.

Makie's Photograph (Figure 6.3)

The photograph[2] of a group of student teachers enrolled for the Bachelor of Education (BEd) Foundation Phase (Grades R–3) programme symbolises my research topic: Cultivating an integrated learning approach to early childhood mathematics. These student teachers received a bursary for tuition from the KwaZulu-Natal provincial Department of Education in South Africa. Approximately 1,200 students were registered at the nine centres in the province by a private higher education institution offering the BEd programme to foundation phase and intermediate phase student teachers in 2013, specifically in the rural areas. I was based at a student support centre as a teacher educator responsible for teaching BEd, foundation phase

Figure 6.3. A photograph of student teachers: Unlocking the potential

and intermediate phase, student teachers. The Department of Education embarked on this initiative due to the shortage of foundation phase teachers in the country, especially in rural areas.

As an experienced teacher, I learned that the key role of the foundation phase is to lay a good foundation for young learners so that they will be able to acquire knowledge, skills, and values for future learning. As a teacher educator, experience has taught me to make sure that student teachers are able to grasp the concept of bridging informal learning into formal school learning, especially with Grade R, which lays the groundwork for Grades 1–3 learning.

The building in the background of the photograph signifies the importance of knowing the background of the student teachers in order to address their needs. The old Roman Catholic seminary with strong, attractive red bricks is used as the student support centre. It is located near a forest, on a farm very far from the main road. This meant that many students who could not afford to pay for transport by taxi had to walk a long distance to get to the centre every day from the informal settlement where they stayed. The student teachers experienced many problems during their training. Because the bursary paid for tuition only, they had to be supported financially by their relatives to pay for food and accommodation. I felt that my role went beyond teaching student teachers as I found myself caring for them, bringing food and providing money to some of them.

By showing the student teachers that I respected them and acknowledged the problems that most of them had, I gained their love and trust. I listened carefully and with genuine interest as they described their experiences prior to receiving the bursary. Some of them had lost hope of ever getting any qualification because their families could not afford for them to attend urban tertiary institutions. The smiles on their faces in the photograph are symbolic of their joy at being afforded the opportunity and the hope that they will be able to make a difference at the schools in which they will be working and in their own homes. This taught me not to take things for granted.

The metaphor of weathering a storm represents and reinforces the significance of this photograph for me. The student teachers survived many difficulties but persevered, succeeded, and are now in their final year of study. I was amazed by the dedication they displayed during lectures. As a result, they performed really well in assignments, tests, examinations, and in their work-integrated learning.

The teachers in the schools where the student teachers did their work-integrated learning were impressed with the way in which they taught foundation phase learners. I travelled with a colleague to visit the schools, most of which were located in deep rural areas. The roads to most of the schools were in terrible condition. Many of the teachers were working in dire circumstances and teaching children who experienced difficulties because of poverty and other unfavourable conditions. Therefore, as teacher educators we needed to ensure that the student teachers would be well prepared for their various roles, which could go beyond teaching. Even though some of the schools were so isolated, when we got to them

we realised that the teachers and children exuded enthusiasm. This was very motivating for us.

Two years after being involved in the preservice teacher education programme in the rural area, I was employed at a university in an urban area in the early childhood education discipline. The experience I brought encouraged me to inspire students in early childhood education to reach their potential. I felt that it was important to use innovative strategies to improve my practice. My students come from diverse cultural backgrounds and it is important for me to consider this when I plan my lectures.

In my experience, the early childhood education discipline is often neglected and viewed as inferior to the higher grades. I feel that I need to constantly motivate the students and show enthusiasm so that they understand the value of working with young children. I strive to commit myself to making a difference.

As I move forward with my work as teacher educator, I acknowledge what I learned from working with students from disadvantaged communities. I embrace learning as a two-way process. I hope to engage the student teachers more intensely in the process of learning to teach. My goal is to set high expectations for my students and myself so that together we can weather any storm. The photograph symbolises my commitment to making a difference as I proceed with my work in early childhood education.

DIALOGUE PIECES

Dialogue 1: Our Objects Were Entries to Discussion

This initial dialogue piece illuminates how communicating about their selected objects with each other as critical friends intensified and expanded Mandisa, Thokozani, and Makie's awareness of the educative potential of object inquiry.

> *Makie:* Explaining to Mandisa and Thokozani what my object was about instilled confidence in me and validated that I knew what I was talking about as I have experienced it.
>
> *Thokozani:* Mandisa and Makie alerted me to other views through which I can look at my object. For instance, Mandisa suggested that we deliberate about the proper Nguni language name for my object. And, my critical friends helped me to have a direct English translation for my igula: a traditional flask.
>
> *Mandisa:* Thokozani and Makie helped me to bring out more from within myself about my object, which will positively affect my work with other artefacts. I found the input by critical friends to be eye opening because of my tendency to put things in certain spaces and "enclose" them without thinking about or utilising them further than the usual use I have for them.

Thokozani: From my critical friends, I learned that my object cannot be only for reflection. To me, that meant I should not only use it to remind me about what happened in my life some time ago. Makie and Mandisa pointed out that working with my object could make me more reflexive. In my understanding, that meant I needed to do introspection about my research and teaching practice.

Makie: Listening to my colleagues explaining what their objects meant to them gave me more ideas about how I could continue working with objects in my own research project. Our conversation made me understand how, as Shanks (1998) highlighted, "the artifact is itself a multiplicity. Its identity is multiple. It is not just one thing" (p. 11).

Thokozani: As Mitchell (2011) pointed out, our objects were entries to discussion. For instance, Mandisa talked about the importance of constructive feedback and mentoring of her students. Those comments arose out of her discussion about her object, the family stove, but they drew my attention to the importance of my object in relation to, particularly, my responsibilities as a teacher educator.

Mandisa: The conversation we had made me realise just how versatile an object can be in an educational setting, particularly if stories and views are shared. Sharing is about understanding our individual objects as well as how they can have similar meanings for us even though they are different in nature, and how the meanings and possibilities can be meshed together for a more significant and profound meaning. I especially liked our acknowledgement of similar significance we all made from the three objects in relation to the different subjects and levels for which we are preparing the student teachers in our care.

Makie: I also found that, as an early career academic, it was motivating to work with other researchers. The space that we were working in was not intimidating. I felt free to voice ideas and inputs.

Dialogue 2: Even Domestic Objects Could Assist Me to Better Understand the Outside World and Myself

This dialogue piece shows Mandisa, Thokozani, and Makie's emergent appreciation of how working in new ways with commonplace objects can reveal surprising opportunities for professional and personal learning.

Mandisa: One of the lessons I learned from our conversation is that the objects we work with do not have to be fine and expensive.

Makie: I must admit that I never thought I could be able to reflect on my practice through working with everyday objects.

Thokozani: I was interested to realise that, as Riggins (1994) showed, any ordinary object in my house can become a source of dialogue. I became aware that even domestic objects could assist me to better understand the outside world and myself.

Makie: It feels empowering to have these thoughts coming to mind about my experiences; they were there all along, but surfaced as a result of working with everyday objects.

Thokozani: This could matter because educational researchers need to use a variety of prompts in their studies, some of which can be objects.

Mandisa: I used to take things and objects around me for granted until I started on retracing my personal history as part of my self-study research. Now I am able to look back to how I came to be where I am and appreciate the person that I am still becoming. According to Pahl and Rowsell (2010), objects from our homes speak to us in different voices depending on where we are with them. For example, the Kelvinator stove at home was just an old friend that I had an emotional attachment to, but once it came to mind in a learning space, it spoke in a different voice as I reflected on how it had influenced my life from a collaborative learning perspective.

Thokozani: These objects are full of meanings that are associated with our personal as well as our professional lives. To my understanding, the objects that we find in our homes, places of work, and public spaces can symbolise many things. What interested me was that the intrinsic features of an object might sometimes not matter as much as the meanings that they represent for me as a researcher (Mitchell, 2011).

Mandisa: Looking at the objects in our lives can help us to reach deeper into ourselves for the significance of lessons learned from, and the potential of, the objects—both in educational settings and in educational research.

Dialogue 3: We Should Ask Ourselves, "What Do We Want Them to Carry?"

The third dialogue piece presents Mandisa, Thokozani, and Makie's recognition of the practical value of object inquiry for enhancing their work and learning as teacher educators.

Thokozani: Our discussion reminded me about the significance of using objects in my teaching. It became clearer to me that understanding of some hard-to-grasp concepts can be facilitated when objects are used. For instance, Makie explained that as she worked with objects that were familiar to both rural and urban students, her thinking and practice changed as the objects brought concrete evidence of teaching that was understandable to all the students.

Makie: Our conversation also emphasised the importance of taking into account the conditions under which South African schoolteachers work. For example, when working with student teachers to create learning and teaching support material to be used in the foundation phase, we need to think about objects that are easily available in different communities and that young children will be familiar with, so that they will be able to understand and make meaning of what is being taught.

Thokozani: As we were discussing, I became aware that using objects could also make education more student-centred. I can design collaborative learning and peer assessment tasks in which students can analyse an object. Some of the objects can be brought from students' homes, and students as individuals or as groups can also create objects.

Makie: We made connections in discussing our three objects. We emphasised the importance of taking the backgrounds and the diversity of our students into consideration by engaging with a sociocultural theoretical perspective. This alludes to understanding our students and using strategies that will make learning interesting. We also focused on interacting with students and connecting with them in a sociocultural way, for example, asking students to bring into class objects from their communities that relate to the topics we are teaching.

Mandisa: There was a point made about my stove being a link between Makie's photograph and Thokozani's flask, after which Makie made a point about us all being in the process of producing teachers because "we are cooking them." A joke was shared about putting the students shown in Makie's photograph into my stove for cooking and the product being kept in Thokozani's flask! But the joke took on some significance when Kathleen came up with the idea that we could encourage the students to cook something for themselves to put into their own flasks to carry around with them when we send them off to go out to schools—not on their own, but with the flask. We should ask ourselves, "What do we want them to carry?"

COLLECTIVE LEARNING

Through a tapestry of object monologues and dialogues, this chapter presents individual and joint learning about how everyday objects that surround us, such as stoves, flasks, and photographs, can become more meaningful for us as educational researchers and educators. All the objects that we meet on our journey of life can have some significance that can be cultivated to enrich personal and professional learning. These objects might seem to be lying dormant, but when they are closely scrutinised, and reexamined in conversation with critical friends, they can elicit multiple meanings. An object can conjure

memories that otherwise might not be quickly and easily activated. And objects can bring to the fore parts of ourselves that cannot easily be expressed in words. Through working with objects, as through following points on a map, we are able to make deep and thoughtful connections, which can be retraced in any direction (Riggins, 1994).

The dialogue pieces illustrate the educative energy of collaboration and empathic exchanges in object inquiry. They show how object inquiry "is more valuable if you are willing to explain [to others] what you learned and what you might do differently" (Samaras, 2011, p. 13), and if you are prepared to heed others' viewpoints and suggestions. Interaction can encourage us to look at our own objects from multiple perspectives, thus adding richness to individual reflections. Through dialogic object inquiry, we can challenge ourselves to develop flexible, innovative, and culturally imbued practices to make our research and teaching more accessible and useful for others.

Making public our experience of learning through working together in developing this chapter is significant in the sense that it might inspire other educators and educational researchers to engage in similar collaborative explorations. Collective object inquiry can serve as a means to connect educators and educational researchers who often work alone, and can remind us that as human beings we do not exist in isolation from others.

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NOTES

[1] This initial prompt was extended using a series of self-study artefact inquiry prompts developed by Anastasia P. Samaras (2011, pp. 105–106).

[2] Informed consent was obtained from the students to include this photograph in the chapter.

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7. FROM A CRUTCH TO A BUS

Learning about Educational Leadership Research and Practice through Referencing and Mapping of Objects

> The objects which surround us do not simply have utilitarian aspects… they serve as a kind of mirror which reflects our own image.
>
> (Dichter; as cited in Berger, 2016, p. 14)

PUTTING THE CHAPTER INTO CONTEXT

In reflecting on the scholarship in educational leadership research, it appears that what counts as data in educational leadership research has generally been viewed very narrowly. The discipline has relied heavily on more traditional methods to produce data. For instance, interviews, observations, survey questionnaires, and document analysis have dominated the way scholars generate data in educational leadership research (Deacon, Osman, & Buchler, 2009; Muijs, 2011). Adding voice to the limited methodological tools deployed in the researching of educational leadership, Michael Samuel's evocative call in his keynote address to the 13th international conference of the Educational Management Association of South Africa (EMASA), regarding possible alternative methodological approaches and methods to "expand a potentially moribund discipline of education management and leadership," warrants thoughtful attention (Samuel, 2012). In response, this chapter focuses on an alternative methodological practice in researching educational leadership, namely object inquiry. The chapter weaves an account of educational leadership data production and interpretation invoked by objects (Hurdley, 2006). It relates how working with objects can help us define and redefine who we are as leaders. It recounts how objects can prompt us to reexamine our leadership learning, experiences, and practices (Nordstrom, 2013). More importantly, it signals possibilities for learning about educational leadership research and practice through object inquiry. Thus, the key question that underpins this chapter is: How and what can we learn about educational leadership research and practice through object inquiry?

The authors of the chapter, Sagie Naicker, Rashida Khan, Sibonelo Blose, Freedom Chiororo, and Inbanathan (Inba) Naicker, are researchers in the discipline of educational leadership in the Southern African context. Inba currently serves as

D. Pillay et al. (Eds.), Object Medleys, 99–114.

the doctoral supervisor[1] of Rashida, Sibonelo, and Freedom, and was supervisor of Sagie's successfully completed doctoral study. Sagie, Rashida, Sibonelo, and Freedom engage with objects in their doctoral studies. For the purposes of this chapter, each of them wrote object pieces related to some aspect of educational leadership. In his dual role as doctoral supervisor and coauthor, Inba engaged in sustained collaboration with the four in developing their contributions to this chapter.

The chapter commences with a dialogue that reveals who we are as authors and the objects that prompted our object inquiry. Next we explain what we understand by educational leadership and object inquiry. Thereafter, drawing on Riggins' (1994) concepts of referencing and mapping of objects, we describe the objects and present the individual accounts of leadership invoked by the objects. We then deliberate on how referencing and mapping in object inquiry can contribute to understandings of educational leadership research and practice. We show how knowing in educational leadership research and practice may be enhanced through object inquiry.

INTRODUCING THE AUTHORS AND THE OBJECTS

The dialogue below captures briefly who we are as scholars, our links to educational leadership, and the objects that are drawn on in the chapter. The dialogue was constructed from a number of e-mail and verbal exchanges we as coauthors had during the development of this chapter.

Inba: Okay, having supervised one of you and currently still supervising three of you in your doctoral studies, I guess I can pull rank on you by getting you to go first to relate something about yourselves. Let's start with Sagie.

Sagie: Well Inba, as you already know, I am a leadership and management coach. I have served in many leadership positions in a number of organisations and have even lectured in the discipline of educational leadership and management. I have a PhD…

Inba: Okay, Sagie, and you Rashida?

Rashida: Well guys, I completed my master's degree in teacher development studies a few years back and am currently reading for a doctorate in educational leadership. I am doing a collaborative self-study focusing on Muslim women teachers enacting leadership in schools.

Sibonelo: Wow! Sounds interesting Rashida. And, Sagie, what was your PhD about?

Sagie: My thesis was titled, "Piecing Together the Leadership Puzzle: A Self-Study of Practice" (Naicker, 2014a), in which I examined my leadership practice. I also published an article from my thesis titled, "Digital Memory Box as a Tool for Reflexivity in Researching Leadership Practice" (Naicker, 2014b). What about you, Sibonelo?

Sibonelo: I am presently a lecturer in educational leadership and management. I am also a doctoral student pursuing a study titled, "Leading from the Middle: Lived Experiences of Deputy Principals across School Quintiles."

Freedom: What made you focus on deputy principals, Sibonelo?

Sibonelo: Well, prior to becoming a lecturer I served as deputy principal at a public secondary school. My personal and professional experiences as deputy principal prompted my study.

Inba: Great, Sibonelo! We have not heard about you, Freedom?

Freedom: You see, I am not local. I am an international doctoral student from Zimbabwe studying at a university in South Africa. My study focuses on the narratives of secondary school heads as leaders of learning in high achieving schools in Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe.

Rashida: Are you a full-time student, Freedom?

Freedom: Yes, Rashida. I also do some part-time lecturing in some undergraduate modules at the university.

Sagie: What about you, Inba?

Inba: Well apart from having supervised your PhD study Sagie, and the current supervision of the PhD studies of Rashida, Freedom, and Sibonelo, I lecture at master's level in educational leadership and management and supervise a number of PhD and master's studies in the discipline. I have recently coedited a book with my colleagues, Daisy and Kathleen, titled, *Academic Autoethnographies: Inside Teaching in Higher Education* (Pillay, Naicker, & Pithouse-Morgan, 2016). But enough about me—what about your objects and your interest in them?

Rashida: My chosen object is a photograph taken at my undergraduate graduation ceremony. It brings back such wonderful memories. It reminds me of my learning of leadership from significant people in my life in a cultural setting that traditionally stifled female leadership.

Inba: I am curious to know more, Rashida, but let's give Freedom a chance.

Freedom: I knew Inba will pick on me next. Similar to Rashida, I draw on a photograph of a school bus—but my object is not the photograph, it is the bus. I used to commute in this bus when representing my school at extramural events. This bus signifies the leadership excellence of the school leaders who served the school.

Inba: Okay Freedom—let's hear from Sagie.

Sagie: My object is a crutch with an attached wheel chair emblem. While they are symbols of disability, they do not constrain how I define myself as a leader.

Inba: Thanks Sagie. Let's wrap up with Sibonelo.

Sibonelo: I know it's not Valentine's Day today but my object is a red, heart-shaped stress ball. For me it symbolises the position of a middle leader or deputy principal in the school context.

WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP?

In this section we unpack what we understand by educational leadership and related terms. We view leadership as an activity that comprises three core components: influence, vision, and values. It is an ethical relationship of influence directed towards the attainment of organisational goals and outcomes (Christie, 2010). It is intentional influence, underpinned by clear personal and professional values of the leader, over other people (or groups) in order to attain a particular vision (Bush, 2003). When leadership is practised in the context of educational institutions such as schools, universities, and colleges, it is referred to as educational leadership. For instance, a school principal galvanising a group of teachers to improve school performance through rational persuasion is an act of educational leadership.

Leadership cannot be fully understood without reference to its related term, management. Management is about structures and processes that keep an organisation on course to attain its vision (Christie, 2010). It is concerned largely with activities such as planning, organising, coordinating, and controlling directed at goal attainment (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011). Acts of strategic planning by the school management team, strategic deployment of human resources in a school, and construction and operationalisation of a structured school timetable are examples of educational management activity. While leadership and management are distinct processes, they are two sides of the same coin. Both processes are needed for an organisation to function optimally. Therefore, in the discourse of leadership in this chapter, management is subsumed in it.

The discipline of educational leadership and management comprises four interrelated building blocks: theory, practice, research, and policy (Bush, 2010). In this chapter we look at two of the building blocks: educational leadership research, and how it contributes to our understanding of educational leadership practice. Bush (2010) clarified that research is often used to understand, or to interrogate, practice so that what constitutes effective leadership practice can be disseminated to a wider audience. When good practice is made public, the potential for systemic improvement is enhanced.

WHAT IS OBJECT INQUIRY?

We cast our gaze in this section on our understanding of objects and object inquiry in relation to educational leadership. Objects are ubiquitous, permeating the environment in which we find ourselves. To paraphrase Turkle (2007), we live our

lives in the presence of objects. There are objects "that we make, design, consume, talk about, remember, or try to forget," and some "can be tragic, absurd, contentious, or revelatory" (Walker, 2016, p. 1). In schools, colleges, and universities we are surrounded by a plethora of objects, for example, chalkboard dusters, class registers, student cards, trophies, buildings, and course guides, which hold particular meanings for us. Notwithstanding the prominent presence of objects in our lives, "only recently have objects begun to receive the attention they deserve" in research (Turkle, 2007, p. 6). Turning to research in the social sciences, Mitchell (2011) illuminated the growing awareness of the potential of objects in social research. Given this emerging focus on objects in research, what might this mean for research in educational leadership? How might it lead to a different knowing of educational leadership?

In our experience, when people are asked to talk about the objects in their lives they generally relate an expanse of information. Riggins (1994) categorised this information as *referencing* and *mapping* of objects. When people talk about the content of the object, that is, "the history, aesthetics or customary uses of the object," the term, referencing, would apply (Riggins, 1994, p. 109). For example, a school principal referring to a special pen given to her by a teacher as a gift might talk about it as an instrument that is made of metal, has very attractive decorative designs covering it, and is very durable. When people relate referencing information, it generally tends to be "brief and superficial" (Riggins, 1994, p. 109). Objects, on the other hand, have the power to connect people to ideas and relationships. Objects have the potential to serve as companions in the relating of life experiences (Turkle, 2007). They can "serve as entry points for the telling of stories about the self and…. personal relationships" (Riggins, 1994, p. 109). For human beings, every object can tell a story (Pahl, 2012) but the objects themselves do not determine the stories they inspire (Turkle, 2009). It is the people who determine the stories the objects invoke because of "the particular moment and circumstance" they come into the person's life (Turkle, 2007, p. 8). Riggins (1994) categorised this information or accounts that objects generate as mapping. For instance, in the earlier example, when referring to the pen given as gift by a teacher, the school principal might recount a story associated with the teacher. The pen might then serve as a prompt to talk about the professional relationship she shared with the teacher.

REFERENCING AND MAPPING OF OBJECTS

In this section, we look at both the referencing and mapping of the objects that Sagie, Rashida, Sibonelo, and Freedom have selected. In the four first-person accounts that follow, the objects are described and their uses explained from a referencing (Riggins, 1994) perspective. Additionally, from a mapping (Riggins, 1994) perspective, the accounts reveal the specific identities and meanings Sagie, Rashida, Sibonelo, and Freedom invoked in interaction with the objects (Hurdley, 2006).

Object Piece 1: Sagie's Elbow Crutches and Wheelchair Emblem—Symbols of Ability, Achievement, and Agency

At the peak of my youth, I met with a motorcar accident that resulted in paraplegia. This altered my being significantly. The objects that I selected are a pair of elbow crutches and a wheelchair symbol (Figure 7.1), which I use as assistive devices to mitigate the challenges of paraplegia. The crutches, crafted from aluminium for lightness and strength, allow me to become mobile and independent—especially at times when I am faced with architectural barriers that prevent me from using a wheelchair, and in terrains that are difficult for it to negotiate. Without the crutches, I believe that I would be a prisoner in my wheelchair and my freedom to experience the world and achieve in different spheres would be limited. I see my crutches as a part of me and, without them, I am incomplete.

The wheelchair emblem that I use in my motor vehicle signifies my identity as a person with a disability. As a motorist who has a special need, I display the sign prominently in the vehicle to get access to specially designated parking areas for wheelchair users. The drawback to using this emblem is that it reinforces my identity as a person with a disability.

Figure 7.1. Sagie's objects: A pair of crutches and a wheelchair emblem

Beyond their physical state, my crutches shape and define my identity and signify to people that I am a person with a disability. This sometimes triggers social, emotional, and psychological barriers in the people I come into contact with. When people see me using crutches, some of them see differentiation and they respond to me with the lens of otherness. Sometimes the response is one of awkwardness, uncertainty, pity, condescension, disregard, compassion, empathy, or acceptance as

an equal. People with disabilities are often seen as being different and the othering perpetuates prejudice and discrimination. The labels of a person with a disability, a paraplegic, and being differently abled redefined who I was and I struggled to accept this identity that was determined by my medical status.

I am of the view that because I am conspicuously visible, I am persona non grata in spaces that are really important. At the physical level, I appear to be very conspicuous and people stare at my unusual swing-through gait with my crutches, or when I wheel myself in a shopping mall. Whilst I am overly conspicuous, paradoxically I am invisible in the workplace because I struggled to gain the respect of my colleagues and seniors. As a superintendent of education and a leadership coach, I found it difficult to lead and influence others because of the stereotypes associated with disabilities. My personal experience of discrimination and prejudice heightened my sense of social justice and this shaped my values and beliefs, which in turn influenced my leadership practice. Like the crutches, I too am strong; in various leadership positions, I have supported and carried the organisation and, together with other team members, moved it closer to its vision and goals. On looking at the photograph of my crutches, I contemplated my leadership style and the philosophy that underpins my leadership practice. The crutches sharply brought into focus the notion that the crutches offered themselves to me in an act of service. Likewise, I am drawn towards servant leadership and offer leadership as an act of service to the organisation and people who work there. In my leadership practice, I served others enacting the servant leadership dimensions, which include emotional healing, empowering, putting subordinates first, behaving ethically, and servanthood.

To offset the stereotypes associated with people with disability I learnt that I would have to prove to other members of the organisation that I was a competent and capable leader of the team. I therefore worked very hard to debunk the disability stereotype. I led by example and made earnest efforts to role-model behaviours and attitudes that were expected of other team members. I was able to influence decisions and when others sensed that I was authentic, this strengthened relationships based on trust. The reflective stance that I adopted increased the awareness of how I was leading and this stimulated growth to assuage the prejudice I experienced. Closer examination of the photograph shows that I arranged the crutches to form the letter, *A*. To me this represented ability, achievement, and agency. The wheelchair emblem has lesser prominence in the photograph because I believe that social barriers rendered me as a person with a disability—not my physical paraplegia. As I faced social, psychological, and physical barriers, I made conscious efforts to overcome these barriers to appear to be "normal," and adopted an agentic leadership style. When I looked at the crutches and wheelchair emblem, I experienced a range of emotions. I felt a sense of frustration and irritability when I reflected on the attitudes and prejudices that I encounter whenever people respond to my medical condition with aversion or antipathy. I felt frustrated because my character, competencies, and abilities were not considered as leadership. This did not sit well with me and I responded, seeking fairness. In spite of the trials and tribulations that I have faced as a person with a disability, I nevertheless regard

it to be a positive and fulfilling experience because it afforded me the possibility to grow as a leader. I took disability as a challenge that offered me opportunities to transcend limitations and become a fuller being. Therefore, the dominant emotion that I felt when I looked at my crutches and wheelchair emblem was one of joy. I felt a sense of elation because of my accomplishments as an educational leader on account of my abilities rather than my dis-*ability.*

Object Piece 2: Rashida's Graduation Photograph—Inspiring Leadership Values of Sharing, Caring and Hard Work

This photograph (see Figure 7.2) represents my undergraduate graduation. It was my first tertiary qualification and dates back to 1998. It is common practice to take photographs to celebrate achievements such as this, however, it is not obligatory. Some cultural groups do not take photographs. As Muslims, we are traditionally only permitted to take photographs from a side or back view. Because I wanted to celebrate this glorious moment, I transgressed cultural norms and didn't mind taking this front view photograph in celebration of a defining milestone in my life. In the photograph, the image on my right is my father and to my left is my husband. The moment captured in this photograph is cherished by my family and friends because I was the first female in my immediate and extended family to graduate with a tertiary qualification. To me this photograph is of enormous significance because it captures two pivotal role models in my life who influenced my leadership values and vision. It is through emulation of their values and practices that my leadership as a Muslim woman was shaped.

Figure 7.2. Rashida's object: An undergraduate graduation photograph[2]

Living in an extended family with aunts, uncles, and grandparents was a common feature of many Muslim families in my community. Steeped deep in patriarchy, the men of the family ruled the roost. Muslim females were not encouraged to study but to attend to issues of the household. My father, however, was not cut from the same cloth as other Muslim men. He at times deviated from traditional norms in order to ensure that his children were progressive irrespective of their gender. The photograph takes me back decades and brings back fond memories of my dad. My earliest memories of him were of him working in the Early Morning Market, running his own fresh produce business handed over to him by my paternal grandfather. He handled the business with a firm hand and soon became a very successful businessman. His caring and sharing nature has always been a constant reminder that we should be grounded by ethical values in whatever we undertake. His daily reading of the morning newspaper, together with his business interactions, self-educated him in a lifelong quest for perfection in the business and family contexts. His knowledge of current affairs was remarkable. He was a great leader of the family and of his business. As a Muslim teacher leader, I draw on his values of sharing, caring, and hard work in my day-to-day practice. But most importantly, I draw on his personal philosophy that if you want people to succeed you have to empower them. My relationship with fellow teachers is characterised by sharing my knowledge with them to capacitate and empower them so that they become better teachers. A leadership of care also underpins my practice. When I engage with people around me, I often remind them of my personal motto in life: Do good and good will follow you. I believe that by caring for both teachers and learners, commitment towards working for better performance is strengthened. When I went to high school, my dad ensured that I was given everything of the best because I had to become "somebody." He always motivated me and encouraged me to excel in my studies. I learnt from him that to be a good leader you have to motivate and inspire people to achieve organisational and personal goals. Indelible in my memory, is the day of my graduation. As he congratulated me his eyes welled up with tears. Joy, pride, or sadness I did not understand, only my father could understand.

The photograph also shows my husband who, an academic himself, was and still is the biggest supporter of my academic journey. From the time we first met he has motivated me to reach for the stars. His continued support and motivation towards my professionalisation as an educator has been an instrumental factor in shaping me into the strong Muslim woman I am today. He not only encouraged my daughters and me to study, he also made it a daily ritual for us to read the newspaper. The reading of the newspaper afforded us the opportunity to improve our general knowledge. His kindness and compassion towards me as a Muslim woman in the 21st century gave me the courage and strength to break some of the shackles that prevent Muslim women from taking on leadership positions. He encouraged me to try out other leadership opportunities, apart from those I occupied at school. He was instrumental in me joining his educational consultancy business, which entailed training educators in whole school development and staff evaluation. His leadership

of our immediate family was always filled with compassion, care, and unwavering support. Coincidentally, they were very similar values to those my father inculcated in me. These values inform my daily practice as a teacher leader.

Object Piece 3: Sibonelo's Stress Ball—While the School Principal Is the Head, the Deputy Principal Is the Heart of the School

My object is a red, heart-shaped stress ball (see Figure 7.3). It is made of foam rubber.

Figure 7.3. Sibonelo's red, heart-shaped stress ball

The rubber makes the ball flexible. The ball is small in size so it fits comfortably in the palm of the hand, and can be squashed by hand. The stress ball was presented to me as a promotional gift by the South African National Blood Services three years ago.

The red heart-shaped stress ball for me symbolises the position of a deputy principal at a school. The deputy principal is a senior leader in a school and is often called upon to deputise for the principal in his or her absence. Deputy principals serve as a link between the school principal and heads of department. I have occupied the post of deputy principal for a number of years. The flexibility of the stress ball can be likened to the malleability of the role of deputy principal: at the drop of a hat, they may be called upon to deputise for the school principal.

The very nature of the position of deputy principals may require them to perform more than one task at a time because, in addition to performing their policy-assigned work tasks, they may be called upon to carry out delegated work from the school principal. This may overwhelm the deputy principal thereby causing him or her to feel

the pressure and stress of the additional work. This can be equated to a state where the stress ball is squeezed. The deputy principal therefore needs to develop work routines to manage the workload and this may involve sharing work responsibilities with other stakeholders in the school. This may involve delegating some of the work tasks to departmental heads and teachers who work closely with these stakeholders. Only when they successfully accomplish their work tasks or effectively delegate tasks to others do deputy principals experience a state of equilibrium. This can be likened to the stress ball returning to its original shape. Therefore, I would regard the deputy principals' work as a "squash and rise" process. This shows the need for resilience on the part of a deputy principal in order to survive in the work-intensive school environment.

The stress ball is heart shaped. While the school principal is the head of the school, it is the deputy principal who is the heart of the school. The heart is a pumping organ that distributes blood filled with oxygen and nutrients to components of the body in order to ensure that they are nourished and oxygenated so the body can function well. This process resembles the work of a deputy principal in a school because it is the task of the deputy principal to liaise and service school stakeholders such as the representative council of learners, teaching staff, and parents about the business of the school in order to ensure smooth functioning of the school.

The stress ball is red in colour and the red colour represents danger. In my experience, the deputy principal spends considerably more time at school compared to the principal who has to leave the school, often at short notice, to attend meetings and for other school business. It is, therefore, the deputy principal more often than not who has to lead instruction in the school. This shows the critical nature of the position. If the deputy principal does not take charge and perform his or her key roles and responsibilities, the possibility exists that the school may be thrust into danger. These dangers may manifest themselves in poor learner performance or school dysfunctionality.

Whenever I cast my eyes on the stress ball it arouses two key emotions in me—patience and care. The stress ball reminds me of the importance of patience in leadership. Because the work of a deputy principal can be overwhelming at times, I learnt that these challenging circumstances are not permanent: they shall pass through the application of better management of my work. The heart shape of the stress ball symbolises care and love. Ethical leaders need to be caring about the people they lead. Without care, leadership becomes impersonal and has the potential of traversing a path of misleading. Reciprocally, I believe the school itself can do more to ensure care of the deputy principal. Failure to do so in the long term may result in *heartbreak*.

Object Piece 4: Freedom's School Bus—A Jewel of the School Associated with Excellence

My chosen object is my school bus (see Figure 7.4), which belonged to the school I attended in Zimbabwe. The bus was a 1999 luxury coach with a seating capacity of 70 people. For a mission school (a school founded by Christian missionaries and

managed by the Roman Catholic Church under the jurisdiction of the Zimbabwean Ministry of Education), this bus seemed a bit too fancy to be owned by the school. Only private schools could afford such luxurious buses. Owing to the generosity of a wealthy school governing body member who paid half the costs of the bus and the school the other half, the school was able to procure the bus. It had a powerful sound system and two television sets. I recall watching movies or presentations on the television set when on the bus. The bus had comfortable seats and could recline if you wanted to rest. The dominant colour of the bus was white, which made it easily noticeable. The three blue stripes and the school logo on each side of the bus made it unique and easily distinguishable from other buses. This bus has been at the school since 2001 when I first enrolled there as a student. It was the most valued asset of the school and was regarded as the jewel of the school. The bus served different purposes for different school stakeholders. Its main purpose, however, was to transport students to academic events and extramural events such as speech contests, interschool debates, and sporting competitions. Securing a seat on the bus, for students, was an indication of academic or sporting excellence. It meant that you were chosen from among hundreds of students to represent the school in an academic or extramural event. Being on the bus was a prized identity for students to have.

Figure 7.4. Freedom's school bus

The bus to me is a metaphor of the school. The bus has a limited seating capacity, which is similar to the limited places for students at the school. The school only took the best students who met the stringent academic entry requirements. Similarly, the bus only took the best students chosen on merit to represent the school in selected

events. I was chosen on a number of occasions to go on the bus. This was made possible by the bus driver (school head), driver's assistants (teachers and support staff), relationships I made with other passengers along the way (other students), and finally my parents who paid for my journey through school fees. The driver (school head) remains the most important and influential person for me. He made it possible for me to reach my educational destiny. The school head's vision and influence as well as his planning, organising, and coordinating of school activities with his staff were some of the factors that led to my successful academic journey. The school head was a conspicuous figure in the school and was an exemplary leader.

The bus carries personal stories of leadership for me as an individual and reminds me of the leadership of the school head. When I first saw the school bus, I yearned for the day I would be on it. Because of this desire I had to work on a plan that would allow me to secure a seat on the bus. This was quite a challenging task because almost every student had the same dream. I began familiarising myself with the criteria of what it took for a student to be on the bus. I soon learnt that it was excellence in academic activity, sports, and debates that got you a seat on the bus. Hard work became an integral part of my life with the goal to excel in all spheres of school activity. The school head, a dedicated leader of learning, repeatedly reinforced the idea at school assemblies and other gatherings of students and staff that a seat on the school bus was synonymous with excellence. He convinced us that a prized ride on the bus was only possible if you excelled academically or in extramural activities. I finally got to go on my first trip on the bus when I was elected president of the school dance club together with my twin brother who was the deputy president of the dance club. We were both high academic achievers and played for the soccer team as well.

Whenever I look at the bus, I am reminded of two words: *inspiration* and *perspiration*. I am reminded of the inspiration of the school head. Through his creative leadership he was able to build a culture of excellence at the school. This value of excellence permeated all facets of school life. The bus became the object in the school that symbolised excellence. Perspiration relates to the hard work put in by both teachers and students. Under the leadership of the school head, teachers had to go the extra mile in order to ensure that students excelled. Students themselves had to work hard in order to be recognised as top performers in various facets of school life in order to earn a seat on the bus.

HOW AND WHAT ARE WE LEARNING ABOUT EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP RESEARCH AND PRACTICE THROUGH REFERENCING AND MAPPING OF OBJECTS?

In reflecting on the four object pieces, our inference is that referencing and mapping in object inquiry provides us, as researchers in educational leadership, with another set of tools with which to make meaning of educational leadership practice. In

particular, we have identified three significant aspects of our learning when objects are studied beyond their referencing characteristics in favour of the stories and memories they invoke (mapping).

New Possibilities Emerge from Object Inquiry for Making Sense of Leadership Practice

Sagie, for example, saw object inquiry as an alternative approach to research his own leadership practice. He explained that the narratives generated from working with objects were rich and "soul searching." The words of Berger (2016, p. 16) are relevant here when he claimed, "studying objects is a useful way to… gain insights into … the soul of man." Sagie added that the material objects assisted him to elicit deeper underlying notions of prejudice and discrimination he experienced as a leader. The visuals of the objects were constantly ingrained in his mind and were easier to access than ideas in text form. The objects themselves evoked deep emotions and brought to the surface how he experienced leadership as a person with a disability. By unpacking the meanings conveyed by his objects, he was able to reexamine his experiences and practices as a leader.

Object Inquiry Can Contribute to Our Understanding of Values That Can Underpin Effective Leadership Practice

Sound values are key to ethical leadership practice (Bush, 2003). Rashida's graduation photograph served as a tool for reflection on her learning of leadership values from significant people in her life. Through dialogical reflection (Hatton & Smith, 1994) prompted by the photograph, Rashida was able to make visible the values she learnt from her relationships with her father and husband. The values of sharing, care, compassion, and hard work were harnessed by her and used to anchor her practice as a teacher leader. Similarly, for Freedom, the school bus was about the value of excellence that the school head consistently emphasised. The school head's quest for excellence in academic and extramural activities filtered down to the students who knew what they had to do to be regarded as high flyers. A leadership practice that foregrounds high expectations creates an organisational climate wherein followers strive for quality output.

Objects Can Serve as Reminders of the Vital Attributes Good Leaders Can Possess

Sibonelo recounted how his object taught him the importance of resilience as an attribute for educational leaders. The changing of the shape of the stress ball when pressure is applied to it, and its return to its original state when the pressure is removed, was likened to the resilience the leaders need in the practice. In school leadership practice, educational leaders are often called upon to multitask owing to their onerous workloads. This may sometimes result in dubious decision making

that can put the school as an organisation at risk. A confident leader will be able to "bounce back" from the consequences of poor decision making and steer the school to safety (Ledesma, 2014). Thus, the characteristic of resilience can separate exemplary leaders from mediocre leaders (Coutu, 2002).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The focus of this chapter was on how and what can be learnt about educational leadership research and practice through referencing and mapping of objects. The chapter has shown how object inquiry can contribute to an alternative form of knowing in educational leadership research. It has indeed prompted some rethinking in terms of the employment of creative and innovative methods in educational leadership research in order to come to know differently in the discipline. Further, the four object pieces conveyed significant aspects of leadership attributes, leadership values, and leadership roles and styles that are key drivers of leadership practice. Thus, when objects are studied beyond their referencing characteristics in educational leadership research, the stories and memories they invoke (i.e. mapping) can provide valuable insights into the how, what, and why of educational leadership practice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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NOTES

[1] In the South African higher education context, a supervisor is an academic who mentors a student during the conceptualisation and execution of the student's research project.

[2] As part of visual ethics, the faces have been blurred to protect the identities of the individuals photographed.

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LISA J. STARR, ZANIB RASOOL, HALEH RAISSADAT
AND DAISY PILLAY

8. A TIN BATH, A COOKING POT, AND A PENCIL HOLDER

Object–Self Dialogue in Educational Research

STUDYING OBJECT–SELF DIALOGUE

Objects are an integral part of our surroundings and, as people, we interact with them for their everyday use or aesthetic appeal. Objects are, among other things, "displayed" and "read", and they are also "loved… remembered [and] studied" (Candlin & Guins, 2009, p. 1). Turkle (2007) advised that we can "consider objects as companions to our emotional lives or as provocations to thought" (p. 5). Similarly, Mitchell (2011) demonstrated how attending to the connotative and denotative meanings of objects can assist in illuminating not only what the object is to the naked eye, but also the many hidden stories behind the object such as its creator, reason for its creation, and location of its creation.

Scholars such as White and Lemieux (2015) have highlighted the entanglement between human and nonhuman in the formation of teacher identities. White and Lemieux (2015) articulated that objects "provide… a lens through which to deconstruct the sometimes problematic, frequently unarticulated and even inchoate nature of… the conditions, practices and products of what constitutes becoming a teacher in the 21st century" (p. 269). Object–self entanglements can thus be understood as tangible and expressive means that enable people to explain, justify, and make sense of their personal–professional lives in relation to others and to the world at large (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

While White and Lemieux (2015) wrote specifically about objects in relation to teacher identities, this chapter extends the application of their work to educational researcher perspectives. In the chapter, objects are considered as markers for exploring personal–professional perspectives in educational research, through the stories objects tell, to reveal social constructions of self—knowingly or unknowingly (Turkle, 2007). In particular, the chapter explores domestic objects and their powerful connections to researchers' day-to-day lives and their intellectual practice (Turkle, 2007). In offering a reflective account focussed on selected domestic objects, the chapter addresses and locates beliefs, values, and understandings around the meanings of being an educational researcher. The chapter reveals how, by studying these seemingly innocuous everyday and not so everyday objects, researchers can

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extend the symbolic, metaphoric, social, and cultural meanings of their day-to-day lives and identities in relation to objects, and mediated by them (Candlin & Guins, 2009).

INTRODUCING THE AUTHORS

Lisa J. Starr, Zanib Rasool, Haleh Raissadat, and Daisy Pillay are scholars and researchers working variously in universities in Canada, South Africa, and the United Kingdom (UK). The type of research that each woman conducts varies greatly. Zanib is a community researcher and doctoral student working on community literacy practices in the UK. Lisa is a feminist scholar and researcher working in Canada in a faculty of education. Haleh works as a mathematics and engineering learning specialist and is a doctoral student in educational studies in Canada. In her research, she takes a social justice perspective on HIV and AIDS education with girls in Iran. Daisy is a South African academic working at a school of education, and she has a passion for teacher identity studies. Zanib, Lisa, and Haleh started their object inquiry research process by writing object pieces[1] exploring the provenance and meaning of their selected objects. In this chapter, Daisy serves as coauthor, narrator, and facilitator to support Zanib, Lisa, and Haleh's critical and interpretive object–self dialogue process.

OBJECT PIECE 1: TIN BATH BY ZANIB RASOOL

I remember the Northern towns, when I was growing up, which were once well known for their industrial smoke and smog from factory chimneys and grey skies. When I am feeling nostalgic, objects help me to reminisce on my past—a tin bath evoking memories of a happy childhood. The water was heated in a kettle and, one by one, my siblings and I were summoned to have a bath by our exhausted mother. Mother would scrub us with carbolic soap until we each shone like a new halfpenny, and then put us to bed despite our protests of wanting to go out and play a bit more.

Tin baths made from cold hard steel, copper, or bronze (see Figure 8.1) provided the warmth of home, love, and security. Our tin bath hung on a large hook on the backyard wall; it was there in the snow and in the sun: seasons came and went and so did our childhood. The tin bath evokes remembrance of a period in time when there was employment provided by a thriving steel and mining industry; life was poorer with householders having little money, but it was also simpler with close community ties that no longer exist.

The past is important to me because it informs people of who I am, where I come from, and it ties me to my history and heritage through objects in my home such as Islamic scripture wall hangings. While doing my doctoral assignment on objects and artefacts, I became more aware of how important cultural artefacts are and that, as we assimilate over time, my cultural objects will disappear and the stories relating to them will be lost; a part of my South Asian cultural heritage will be gone forever.

Figure 8.1. Tin bath (copyright Karl and Ali and licensed for reuse under creative commons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0 http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/3039917)

I am interested in how South Asian communities like mine retain memories linked to their cultural heritage and, alongside that, try and negotiate a new life here without losing too much of their past. This kind of research—through women writing about their lives—links with women's studies and feminist theory on the gender roles of women in society.

I wrote the poem below when asked to comment or add anything else to my object piece.

The Tin Bath Days

Fading memories of a childhood that came and went so very quickly,

Now remembered through objects of yester years,

A tin bath that hung on a nail in the corner of the yard of my happy home, number 69; two up two down terrace house.

Conjuring up memories of a care free, fun childhood when things were so simple and we were grateful for what little we had but we were rich in so many other ways.

Memories evoke longing for days gone by as I fondly remember that dented old tin bath.

OBJECT PIECE 2: THE POT BY LISA J. STARR

When I was an adolescent, my mother used to have a pot of herbs simmering on the stove—her attempt to rid the house of the smells associated with various foods cooking (see Figure 8.2). Honestly, I hated the smell of those herbs; they made me want to hold my breath as I walked through the kitchen. Despite my protests over the smell, my mother would not remove the pot or its contents. As that memory came back to me, instead of focussing on the foul smell, the functionality of the pot is what spoke to me. It was not used for its original intent, cooking, instead it was being used in a way that I found offensive. My mother embraced it all. Despite its perceived purpose, the reality is that the pot, despite its condition or intended use, meant something more to someone else.

Inside the pot is a thick, rich almost primordial liquid, an essence that simmers and churns over a low constant heat. The pot is heavy, solid, and well worn after years of daily use. Once, it was a shiny, bright feature but now the outside is discoloured from constant heat and stained with layers of grease and food that have spilled and splashed nearby.

Figure 8.2. The pot

Despite its appearance, the pot holds the simmering liquid without trouble—as functional and practical as it has always been. The lid fits tightly so the juices inside never escape, although occasionally the lid comes off to release the intimate, natural smells within. Every now and then, a little more is added but the recipe really has not changed much over the years. The pot has been on the stove so long that no one really notices it anymore. The pot is just there, doing its job, filling the room with its familiar smell. Even the sound of the liquid smouldering inside has become background noise to the comings and goings of the room.

In one of those same familiar, unremarkable comings and goings, innocently, the stove is bumped enough to ever so slightly move the pot from its traditional spot. Maybe it is the uneven change in temperature or even the simple act of slightly changing location, but the pot cracks. Only a tiny fissure at the base, but that one small, almost invisible flaw changes everything; the temperature inside becomes too hot, the liquid that so often just stews unnoticed begins to bubble and boil over, spilling down the sides. The smell, so familiar becomes tainted with a pungent, acrid odour of something burning. The pot is removed from the heat and the liquid, for the first time in many, many years begins to cool; the familiar comforting sounds and smells that have emanated for longer than anyone can remember, evaporate into the air leaving an almost tangible hollowness. No one thinks to look inside to see that what was once a rich liquid with a smell as germane as the pot itself, has become a solid, dense, impenetrable layer on the bottom—it seals the tiny flaw in an adamant layer—is fused to the base of the pot. The pot though disregarded and visibly flawed remains beautifully functional.

OBJECT PIECE 3: THE PENCIL HOLDER BY HALEH RAISSADAT

This object has been a pencil holder for almost as long as I have been a learning specialist (see Figure 8.3). I painted it during my first retreat with my learning specialist colleagues. Ruth, one of my colleagues, kindly offered to hold the retreat in her country house. She was a free spirit, unlimited by the boundaries of the artificial meanings of professionalism. As a learning specialist, she always did what she thought was right for her students. The retreat was on a beautiful day, May 18, 2012, just a few months before Ruth retired. I was thrilled when she told us we would create our own artwork as part of the retreat activities. She was an artist herself. I also felt a bit insecure, creating "art" in Ruth's presence.

This coffee tin pencil holder was my creation, and it is a representation of my hopes and disappointments and my desires and aspirations to provide my students with strategies that help them learn math better as well as my aspiration to empower Iranian girls to protect themselves against HIV and AIDS. I keep the pencil holder visible, beside my monitor, as a reminder of our team's strengths, beliefs, and goals. A pencil holder and its contents symbolise my job at the university, which is a metropolitan university in Montreal with more than 43,000 students. About 6,500 of them are international students. The university has many more immigrant students who do not fall into the international student category. However, they deal with the same challenges of being foreign to the environment and the educational institution. Although globalisation has had its effect on societies and their educational systems, different cultures still value education differently, and different countries have different educational systems. This has an impact on students' educational experience in Canada. It can also affect how students study, prepare for exams, attend classes, and interact with their professors and classmates.

Figure 8.3. The pencil holder

The writing implements remind me of my students who struggle in their learning, no matter what background and nationality they come from. It only takes one discouraging elementary math teacher to make a student fear math for the rest of his or her academic life; and it only takes one unprotected sexual encounter to make an individual HIV-positive for the rest of his or her life.

DISCUSSION

Daisy worked with the object pieces that the other three authors wrote about, their domestic objects, to elicit and highlight the "interplay of powerful socialising forces" (Falzon, 1998, p. 87) shaping individual beliefs and perspectives and personal–professional relationships. As women academics and feminist researchers, the object pieces made available how Zanib, Lisa, and Haleh each struggle with different forms

of marginalisation—Zanib and her experience as a member of migrant families in the United Kingdom, Haleh, an Iranian woman of a minority grouping living in Canada, and Lisa and her experiences of being labelled as being psychologically different. The process of composing and naming their personal–professional selves opened up reflective and creative spaces for renegotiating and repositioning themselves and their taken-for-granted beliefs and practices.

Following on from the object pieces, Daisy posed the following question to Zanib, Lisa, and Haleh in Skype discussions: "How has your thinking or practice changed, evolved, or become clearer through working with objects?" Daisy then worked with the transcribed discussions to organise them into three talking points specific to Zanib, Lisa, and Haleh. In what follows, the discussion of each talking point offers Daisy's perspective in dialogue with those of Zanib, Lisa, and Haleh.

Talking Point 1: Haleh and Her Reflections on the Object–Self Dialogue as a Creative, Contained Space for Repositioning the Researcher Self

> My object brings back memories of my first years in university. I was certain that I would pursue research to make a difference in the HIV and AIDS status quo, although I was uncertain as to how. This unprofessionally painted object was originally a coffee container. When I started painting it, I did not know what the final product would look like. I just knew I wanted a pencil holder. The strong white dots in random places symbolise my hope as a researcher in improving AIDS education and my efforts in helping students learn math, however random these hopes and efforts are. The brush lines may take different paths, but they are all in one direction, sharing the same goal, helping students improve their personal and academic lives. (Haleh, transcribed Skype conversation, August 25, 2016)

The pencil holder with all its writing implements is an inspired object choice to represent her life and her responsibility as a researcher. Object work and her emotional investment in it fuel Haleh's identity as a researcher and her sense making through qualitative research. This object speaks to her personal aspirations and interests as a woman researcher, an academic, and a professional. Working from within and from outside of herself, and occupying that middle ground, signalled a different choice and a new way of negotiating the multiple truths that confront Haleh—personal truths, truths of the diverse research participants, the students she teaches, and the broader dominant research agendas at play. To work within and outside the dominant research paradigms is an important tension that Haleh holds as a researcher.

> I keep the pencil holder visible, beside my monitor, as a reminder of our team's strengths and the beliefs and goals we share. My hopes and disappointments in the policies that support or deny HIV and AIDS education for girls in Iran, and my math students' struggle in learning, are regardless of what causes the struggle. My desire is to provide my students with strategies that help

> them learn math better; my aspiration is to empower Iranian girls to protect themselves against HIV and AIDS, and my responsibility is to be right in the middle. (Haleh, transcribed Skype conversation, August 25, 2016)

Being in the middle, revealed two values in tension. First, being different in her approach to research and generating knowledge and, second, being able to work within the normative or dominant research agendas. The excerpt below reveals how Haleh was able to keep the creative tension in the spaces between her personal aspirations and interests, and the interests of the broader research community which Christopher Bollas (1987; as cited in Turkle, 2009, p. 302), described as "held in symmetry and solitude by the spirit of the object." Teamwork as critical to understanding diversity as a complex multiplicitous entity is what made the pencil holder Haleh's object of choice.

> The pencil holder with all its pens, pencils and markers in assorted colours; some bigger, some smaller; some bolder, some thinner; and some smoother, some rustier remind me of the diversity of both my research participants and my math students. The different brush effects on the pencil holder symbolise our team of learning specialists, each with different specialties and strengths. Our specialties sometimes overlap and sometimes are unique to us. In a pop, it is all one piece, a team moving in one direction. Each writing implement in the pencil holder symbolises the role that each participant's voice plays individually and collectively in changing the policies related to HIV and AIDS education. (Haleh, transcribed Skype conversation, August 25, 2016)

In composing her object piece, Haleh was drawn to an idiosyncratic object, her pencil holder and the writing implements it holds. Haleh's chosen object has social meanings that hold power and special status in her life because of the particular moment and circumstances in which it came into her life (Riggins, 1994) as a doctoral student and researcher. The object–self inquiry process provoked Haleh emotionally and intellectually to build a personal working theory about and on cultural diversity and the nuances of the educational experiences of minorities, marginalised people, and students in particular. Whether they are the struggling mathematics students she teaches, or the Iranian girls struggling to protect themselves against HIV and AIDS, she acknowledges her responsibility in creating some middle ground for negotiating her personal and professional beliefs and intentions within the broader normative structures she works in. The pencil holder, this aesthetically pleasing and yet functional possession, becomes a passionate companion in her life experience while each writing implement is a symbol of the roles that her research participants' voices play in enabling change in HIV and AIDS education. Haleh acknowledges her creative role in connecting and bringing into dialogue her personal interests and aspirations, and dominant research agendas and discourses about learners' experiences. Finding a middle ground, through the process of creating her object piece, opens up the space to link theory to practice and to understand that creativity is at the "start and heart"

(Turkle, 2009, p. 298) of the complex and multiple relationships she has to negotiate as a person and a researcher engaging in educational research.

Talking Point 2: Lisa and the Object–Self Dialogue as a Symbolic Space for Creative Self-Redefinition

Lisa's playful and artistic creation of the symbolism of the pot in the object inquiry process reflected different possibilities and shifts in her thinking and feeling about herself and her approach to research. Turkle reminded us that in object work, one has the opportunity "to discover and defy reality as it is presented to us" (2009, p. 300).

> As I grapple with my identity as an academic diagnosed with generalised anxiety disorder (GAD), I struggle with the labels that I fear might be associated with my diagnosis. The common view, that one is flawed or broken, is one that occupies much of my thinking. Yet, as much as I question how others might view or judge me, there is a tremendous sense of relief in understanding myself, and the behaviours that are understood as obstacles, to be enablers. (Lisa, transcribed Skype conversation, August 25, 2016)

The pot as object and as metaphor has potential for Lisa to understand herself differently as a person living with an anxiety disorder. The process of recreating the pot image powerfully captures Lisa's emotional experiences of reconnecting with her mother. The foul smelling pot and its content, transformed, captures an alternate and beautiful space for her to connect with her life, work, and relationships—beyond her "psychological flaw."

> Despite my protests over the smell, my mother would not remove the pot or its contents. As that memory came back to me, instead of focussing on the foul smell, the functionality of the pot is what spoke to me. I realise now that an object whether tangible or intangible is one that in this case evokes an emotional response. (Lisa, transcribed Skype conversation, August 25, 2016)

In this reflective excerpt, we develop greater awareness of the power that the object holds for Lisa because emotion is in the heart of this relational space—revealing nuances of the many aspects of the self that are deeply enmeshed in her feminist–researcher–scholar trajectory.

> Emotions evoked while engaging with the object piece have brought out and made visible meanings of self as academic and researcher that I was unaware of. I work from a very different paradigm—very subjective. I am embedded in the research and grounded in a postmodern paradigm. We learn through conversation, through connecting. That's how the world works.

Lisa's newfound respect for herself as a "useless pot" encourages and challenges her to take on new perspectives and ways for negotiating the dominant research agendas/genres. She acknowledges that initiating transformation of self cannot

take place without being integral to the learning and connected as member to the greater whole—we intentionally and unintentionally communicate "what we know, understand and have experienced" (Brockbank & McGill, 2007, p. 79).

The pot, an everyday object associated with women's daily chores, within the dynamics of the kitchen, is brought under the scrutiny of Lisa's researcher gaze. It arouses an emotional experience and an intellectual expression of acceptance and validation, highlighting for us the power of women's ways of living (her mother), and her own life as a person with GAD. Object inquiry, has opened up a space for understanding the GAD self as integral to Lisa's creative responsibility as researcher and meaning maker, "experimenting with the world of things to produce new things from the fluidity or flux that eludes everyday need, or use value" (Grosz, 2009, p. 129).

Talking Point 3: Zanib and Her Object–Self Dialogical Spaces for Nostalgic Reinvention

Working with objects opens up productive spaces for probing our understandings of how to live in the world and how to negotiate what personal or communal experiences we want to share in "reimagining our senses of selfhood" (Ojwang, 2013, p. 73). We learn from Zanib's object explorations, the tensions she has to negotiate as a community researcher: objects as nostalgia versus objects as spaces for reinvention.

> Objects intertwine with our histories and narrate our migration stories of moving from one continent to another, place to place, with suitcases filled with things that are memories of the old home. Objects are a way of capturing the experience of migration, the feelings of loss of home, and the rootlessness—such as the loss my mother's generation must have felt coming to Europe from South Asia in the 1960s. (Zanib, transcribed Skype conversation, August 30, 2016)

In describing objects and lives as intertwined spaces of migration experiences and rootlessness, Zanib also acknowledges the power they offer for imagining new senses of selfhood. The entanglement of self and objects to the past, future, and present are powerful socialising discourses for creating a sense of continuity in one's "homelessness" (Said, 1994), as Zanib so powerfully explained:

> Through artefacts and objects, the older generation continue telling their stories to their grandchildren and keep their cultural heritage sustained for that bit longer, and as Pahl, (2004, p. 339) reminded us "artefacts within the homes carry powerful family narratives and relate to family histories and cultural identities." (Zanib, transcribed Skype conversation, August 30, 2016)

Pulled in different directions, these powerful domestic objects and the narratives they carry perpetuate notions of home and stories of womanhood (Govinden, 2017); and these narratives happen knowingly and unknowingly:

> Through objects in my home including the Islamic scripture wall hangings, the family photos, and the fridge magnets, which I collect on my travels, I can narrate my life. As Digby (2006, p. 185) reassured, "objects transit cultures, places, time and weave together our past, present and future." (Zanib, transcribed Skype conversation, August 30, 2016)

Presently "at home" domestic objects, like Zanib's hot tub, are containers of comfort in a different cultural space and "coded as gendered objects" (Mitchell, 2011, p. 41). They also offer momentary and fleeting glimpses of reinvention, of who I am, where I come from, and how I want to be known. To a Muslim woman of a minority group in the UK, a community researcher, and doctoral student, as new openings they make available the different social formations Zanib participates in, where voice and agency may be exercised differently and in asymmetrical ways.

Zanib provided a powerful narrative of the dented old tin bath that she associated very fondly with her home life as a migrant family, especially her great appreciation of her mother, and of sadness and loss. The tin bath for Zanib is a symbolic marker of the social and cultural life of poorer immigrant families and the close community ties that were shared. The tin bath offers a nostalgic, stable, and comforting space for her to be both "within and outside ourselves" (Winnicott, 1971; as cited in Turkle, 2009, p. 65). In the "interconnectedness rather than separateness between" (Grosz, 2009, p. 128), she may be able to question her taken-for-granted perspectives of the past lives of minority women's groups and the dominant gender theories and unequal division of labour, to develop another perspective in the production of minority women and their ways of being.

INTERPRETIVE POSSIBILITIES OF OBJECT–SELF DIALOGUE IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

This section pieces together salient points that the authors illuminated through their conversations and written pieces about object inquiry and its interpretive possibilities for educational research. The three talking points presented above are exemplars of metaphorical escape, revealing how functional domestic objects collapse into objects of beauty and memories of nostalgic reinvention, creative–symbolic redefinition, and creative repositioning as educational researchers. Object inquiry and women's writings about their lives open up spaces for "dialogical" personal–professional "interplay" (Falzon, 1998, p. 88), and possibilities to change what many might see as marginal and unimportant into something that is remarkably positive and integral to their abilities as researchers.

Through our conversations around the object inquiry process, we found common ground in everyday social interactions to understand the complexity of lived experience as potent spaces for catalytic research and embodied ways of thinking, feeling, and being as educational researchers. Our key learnings are captured in the moments below:

1. *Object–self dialogue creates spaces for embodied connectedness.* In such spaces, "self and object feel reciprocally enhancing and mutually informative" (Bollas, 1987; cited in Turkle, 2009, p. 302) in the experience of naming one's values and traditions as researcher. This relational dynamic between object–self connections is both emotionally and intellectually enmeshed (Turkle, 2009), and opens up a different understanding and awareness in how we think and access self with objects. In breaking the object–self boundaries in uncontrived and authentic ways, meaning making from deep within enables an outward shift, and we take risks to loosen up and know self and our place in the world differently. Turkle (2009, p. 302), described this challenging and provocative process with objects as one in which "individuals… become lost on the way to finding themselves."
2. *Object–self dialogue activates breaking boundaries through personal stories and memories*. As a fertile and powerful source for making way to new ideas and relationships as researchers, object–self entanglements challenge researchers to revise our values and meanings and to develop a more embodied, complex, and dialogical conception of respect (Falzon, 1998, p. 61) in everyday situations. Zanib reminded us that the lives of ordinary people are never ordinary or mundane, and the mundane, everyday objects, such as the hand-painted coffee tin pencil holder, opened up new doors for rethinking and developing beyond personal experiences that are dangerous and self-imprisoning (Falzon, 1998). In negotiating women researchers' professional lives as agents of social change, object–self engagement calls on us as researchers to stand from a position of respect, open to dialogue with diversity and multiple perspectives. Haleh's emphasis on the need to respect each other's difference while simultaneously trying to respond to that diversity in ways that productively break down boundaries arouses possibilities for connectedness (Meyer, 2011). For a dialogical conception of respect, the other is respected as that which is different—like the different coloured pencils all sharing the same container.
3. *Object–self dialogue provokes researchers to adopt perspectives as instruments of social change.* As respecting and respectable beings, they respond with sensitivity to the complexity of day-to-day lives, which, according to Falzon (1998), encourages questioning and resistance of the routines of our formulaic ways of thinking and acting and the acknowledgement of perspectives, values, and approaches different from our own. As Lisa pointed out, objects call on us to explain the what, how and why we tell the stories we do. Importantly, object stories invite those seeking to develop their personal aesthetic and wholeness to ultimately become instruments of social change (Allen, 1995).

FINAL THOUGHTS

Dialogue with different domestic objects such as the tin bath, cooking pot, and pencil holder, can offer contained, healing, and comforting spaces for women researchers to engage in creative, dialogic, and mutually informing processes and exercises for

excavating and making sense (naming) of the inextricable personal–professional links (Richie & Wilson, 2000) shaping everyday life. Object–self dialogue can simultaneously provoke resistance to partial, idiosyncratic ways of thinking and acting in the world, and a moving outward with renewed sense of respect and a developed personal aesthetic (Allan, 1995). Moving beyond one's embodied knowledge (Leitch, 2008) in order to seek out difference and disturb and resist routines and prevailing structural and cultural habits and practices (Falzon, 1998), makes tangible one's courage to act as an instrument of social change. Object–self dialogue opens up tangible spaces for advancing fresh insights into social constructions of the researcher self (Riggins, 1994), and for genuinely cultivating an attitude of openness, risk taking, and uncertainty to alternate ways of thinking and knowing as individuals and as researchers.

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NOTE

[1] The object pieces were inspired by prompts in Anastasia P. Samaras (2011, pp. 105–106).

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9. SPONTANEOUS SHRINES AND THE STUDIO DESK

Learning from Working with Objects through an Arts-Informed, Practice-Led Lens

PROLOGUE: THINKING AND WORKING IN A STORIED AND VISUAL WAY

Kathleen: Adelheid and Shauna, what do you as artists like or dislike about the academic texts that you usually read?

Adelheid: I don't like it when texts use very elite academic language that overcomplicates what the author is talking about.

Shauna: I like it when the academic text includes a narrative or story.

Kathleen: How can you imagine academic texts being more artist friendly?

Adelheid: I think visual references throughout could be good. Artists often think and work in a more visual way.

Shauna: Dependent on the text, I like when there are images; if it does not fit the work then I do not find it necessary. Literary art such as a story, poem, or lyrics can also be relatable.

Kathleen: I also prefer academic writing when it tells a good story with illustrations (whether visual or otherwise) and without jargon.

COMPOSING THE CHAPTER AS A STORIED ACCOUNT

The short exchange presented in the prologue offers insight into why this chapter has been composed as a storied account featuring visual illustrations and the narrative elements of *characters* and *dialogue* (Barone, 2008; Coulter & Smith, 2009). As Coulter and Smith (2009) pointed out: "Because of the conventions of education research, researchers tend to write as if they were viewing events from a great distance… as if to convey to the reader a sense that no human being had a hand in the study" (p. 584). By contrast, through the illustrations and narrative elements in this chapter, the authors are revealed as integral to the story.

The prologue signals the roles and relationships of two central characters, Adelheid von Maltitz and Shauna Rak, both of whom are artists, researchers, and art

D. Pillay et al. (Eds.), Object Medleys, 129–146.

teachers (artist–researcher–teachers). While characters in literary texts are usually fictional, the chapter draws on the genre of creative nonfiction in research (Barone, 2008) to present Adelheid and Shauna as complex, multifaceted actors whose perspectives and actions affect the story that is presented (Coulter & Smith, 2009). In addition to introducing Adelheid and Shauna as main characters, the prologue also introduces Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan in the role of narrator or storyteller. Kathleen is a South African teacher educator and researcher whose work focuses on professionals initiating and directing their own learning to enhance their continuing growth, and implications thereof for education in the professions. She is not an artist, but is interested in learning from and with artists about "possibilities inherent in infusing processes and representational forms of the arts" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 58) into educational inquiry and practice. At the time of writing this chapter, Adelheid and Shauna had never met in person because Adelheid was situated in the city of Bloemfontein in South Africa and Shauna in the city of Montreal in Canada. Kathleen noticed interesting resonances across object pieces[1] written individually by Shauna and Adelheid and so invited them to participate in an online transcontinental exchange of ideas.

The chapter was developed over a 10-month period from the two initial object pieces and subsequent e-mail correspondence between Kathleen, Adelheid, and Shauna. The object pieces and e-mail correspondence served as the data sources for composing the chapter. The extended period over which the chapter was put together allowed the authors time to grow, learn, and reconsider understandings and processes of working with objects through an arts-informed, practice-led lens. The organisation and narrative elements in this chapter unfolded organically as the three authors engaged with Shauna and Adelheid's object descriptions and reflections. To enhance narrative coherence and flow, Kathleen lightly edited the original object pieces and she pulled out excerpts from the e-mail correspondence that seemed particularly relevant to the storyline that was emerging. She also asked Shauna and Adelheid for additional explanations and examples when she felt that further clarification would enhance the accessibility and usefulness of the chapter. Kathleen then arranged the object pieces and e-mail correspondence excerpts into a first draft of the chapter, which she shared with Adelheid and Shauna for their responses and revisions. The chapter was finalised through a back-and-forth revision process involving the three authors, the book editors, and a peer reviewer.

OBJECT PIECES: SPONTANEOUS SHRINES AND THE STUDIO DESK

This section of the chapter presents the individual object pieces composed by Adelheid and Shauna. In her object piece, Adelheid is looking at the phenomenon of spontaneous roadside memorials as something that is very private in the public sphere, whereas Shauna is considering her personal studio desk as a very private, closed space that she draws from and takes into her public life as artist–researcher–teacher. Seen from a narrative perspective, these object pieces offer insights into

the complex characters and practices of Shauna and Adelheid as artist–researcher–teachers.

Both Adelheid and Shauna's object pieces centre on objects arranged for specific, nonutilitarian purposes in everyday places and spaces. Seen through an arts-informed lens, such object arrangements can be understood as *found installations*. Found installations blend the two art forms of (a) installation art, which has been defined as art "made for a specific space exploiting certain qualities of that space" (Delahunt; as cited in Cole & MacIntyre, 2008, p. 289), and (b) found art, where the "primary source of images… may be *found material* or *already existing images*" (Weber, 2008, p. 48). Installations and found art can be used with the intention of making "research more accessible to diverse audiences" that are less academically elite (Cole & MacIntyre, 2008, p. 289). Installations are commonly "exhibited in a variety of venues atypical to academic work" (Cole & MacIntyre, 2008, p. 289), and found art is often sourced from commonplace personal or public items such as family photo albums or billboards (Weber, 2008). Also, in installations and found art, the selection and arrangement of particular materials can bring issues of public concern into the personal lives and thoughts of a nonexpert audience (Cole & MacIntyre, 2008; Weber, 2008).

Adelheid's Object Piece: Transformative Power of Dynamic Threshold Places and Objects

I lecture in drawing and sculpture at a South African university. My artwork primarily takes the form of sculptural installation, which comprises three-dimensional works that are often quite large and activate the space they occupy. Many of my sculptural pieces often coexist as an installation and not individual pieces of sculpture.

My research is concerned with the transformative power of dynamic threshold places. These are places associated with trauma and death, such as spontaneous shrines, national memorials, graveyards, and site-specific sculptural installations articulating trauma, loss, and death. I focus primarily on roadside shrines within South Africa (see Figure 9.1) as dynamic threshold places with the potential to encourage transformation in the bereaved as well as passing motorists (Collins & Oppie, 2010). The transformation referred to here is the emotional state of the bereaved. The roadside shrine is identified by individuals in contemporary society as a necessary component of commemorating and mourning the loss of a loved one due to a motorway accident. This contemporary ritual is very much a personal decision on the part of the bereaved rather than a structured part of the mourning process that is usually arranged by a religious institution. By means of constructing a roadside shrine, the bereaved possibly move from a passive state of shock to an active state of making and implementing a part of the mourning process they believe is important. In this process of decision making and implementation of a personal ritual (such as building the roadside shrine), I

Figure 9.1. A roadside shrine along a motorway in Bloemfontein as a construction of private objects changing public place to private sacred place

believe there is very possibly a transformative effect on the emotional state of the bereaved.

I collect earth from roadside shrines and use the earth within my sculptural installations as a transitional object, imbued with the memory of the trauma, which potentially encourages transformation of anxiety within the viewer. I understand a transitional object as one that allows an individual to shift from one state to another. For example, a wedding ring could be a transitional object shifting the couple from unmarried to married, a doorway is a transitional object that allows the shift from outside to inside or vice versa, a baby's sleep soother assists in the transition from awake to sleeping. Specific sites such as the roadside shrine are transitional places because they may be the last place of life and first place of death and also they are mourning sites that play a part in the mourning process. Thus, the earth from site-specific places such as the roadside shrines is used as a transitional object because it is not only specific to being a sample of the last place of life and first place of death but it may also allow the viewer to shift emotionally.

The exploration of roadside shrines is a mechanism with which to contextualise and generate new insight concerning objects and sculptural installation. I did my initial research by means of making artworks from the materials and objects found at roadside shrines as well as building installations on specific sites of road trauma.

Figure 9.2. "Untitled" (by Adelheid Camilla von Maltitz, July 2014)

The installation shown in Figure 9.2 is built along a motorway in Bloemfontein near a high road accident site. It makes use of site specificity to articulate or reference road deaths and spontaneous shrines. In this work, I brought most of the different earths and stones to the site, whereas for other works I collect earth and objects at roadside shrines.

In the work shown in Figure 9.3, I collected site-specific earth samples and objects and placed each one into a Perspex tube with the specific GPS coordinates marking each. I tried to reference many sites of trauma as a collection in a door-like threshold object.

The works of artists such as Doris Salcedo are very successful in transforming everyday objects into sacred objects and activating the space in which they are exhibited. Salcedo's work is concerned with pain, loss, and trauma. She has a special interest in the people who have been disappeared due to a politically troubled Columbia. In some of her works, Salcedo incorporates objects (such as a dress or shoes) given to her by the family of the disappeared victims in Columbia. These objects are imprinted with the memory of the disappeared person by whom they were worn. The use of objects directly related to the trauma being referenced creates a transitional object, which I believe assists in transforming anxiety. Meskimmon (2011) examined Salcedo's work as a "threshold state," but rather than her work representing thresholds, it "enables a dynamic, process-based, participatory mode of interpretation to be developed" (Meskimmon, 2011, p. 35). Salcedo's work does not leave the viewer stuck in the horror of people being disappeared. Her work allows the viewer to move though states of anxiety, grief, and mourning.

Figure 9.3. "Threshold" (by Adelheid Camilla von Maltitz, March 2015)

In the same way, I believe the earth at site-specific places of trauma like roadside shrines is an object that has the potential to function as a transformative object. When I collect samples of earth they are specific and small and function more like objects than places. However, when earth makes up the place of trauma, like when the bereaved identify the place where their loved one died and construct a roadside shrine at that specific place where the accident occurred, the earth remains the place and not an object. Constructing roadside shrines as part of a mourning ritual is largely dependent on identifying the specific place. Bennet (2010) explained how it is necessary for ritual to have a setting or it loses its potency. The earth and its site-specific nature, either as a sample that becomes an object or as a place, enables transformation.

Roadside shrines are makeshift, impromptu, and impermanent structures. Even though they are not legally protected by local municipalities (in South Africa), it appears to me that there is a respect for them on a governmental as well as a personal level. They are usually not tampered with but will not be maintained either (except by the bereaved). It makes sense therefore that the question be brought up: "How ethical is this removal of the earth which is part of the site of someone else's grief?"—but I cannot answer that question. By removing samples of earth from the site of someone else's grief and using these samples in my sculptural installation I

am referencing the sacredness of these private spaces which are in a largely public domain, while simultaneously disregarding the sacredness due to my actions. The bereaved are not included in the project.

As a lecturer, I work with sculpture students who have to find their own ways of articulating ideas and concepts visually through three-dimensional materials and space. In my own research, I investigate the dynamic qualities of earth as both a place and an object and by doing so I explore how places of trauma have the potential to transform anxiety. I compare ways in which artists deal with concepts such as trauma and loss and the way in which spontaneous shrines, permanent memorials, and graveyards do the same. I unpack the elements that make some objects and places more successful in how they approached this difficult subject matter and how both viewers and bereaved respond. By means of often first working with materials and object, making "stuff" and experimenting, and then reflecting on this process, we are able to think—through making, instead of first thinking then making (Ingold, 2000). Thinking through making in the sculpture studio relies heavily on objects of all forms. I believe that by allowing objects to become part of the thinking process rather than only shaping objects (or materials) after the thinking process, objects are at their most valuable because they can assist in finding deeper insight. In doing so, the usual process of working is reversed.

Shauna's Object Piece: The Studio Desk—An Artistic Landscape

My preferred art forms are painting and assemblage, often portraying abstract expressionism and surreal images. Assemblage is defined by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City as an art method where "the banal, often tawdry materials retain their individual physical and functional identity, despite artistic manipulation" (2009, Assemblage section, para. 1). Abstract expressionism is

> An artistic movement made up of American artists in the 1940s and 1950s, also known as the New York School, or more narrowly, action painting. Abstract Expressionism is usually characterized by large abstract painted canvases, although the movement also includes sculpture and other media. (MoMA, 2009, Abstract Expressionism section, para. 1)

Inspired by artists such as such as Jean Paul Riopelle and Lee Krasner, I have explored the act of intuitive painting, often layering thick paint on the canvas to create a language through the movement and application of the paint. In addition, I have explored assemblage using digital images. Through my research as an oral historian, I was able to develop a digital story in the form of a multisensory art installation, using family photographs, personal photographs, archival images, and soundscapes to educate the public about the nuances of the Holocaust. I am also a teacher of art education. I have had the privilege of working in various classrooms and community art centres across Canada with children, adolescents, and adults in an effort to enrich their lives through the arts.

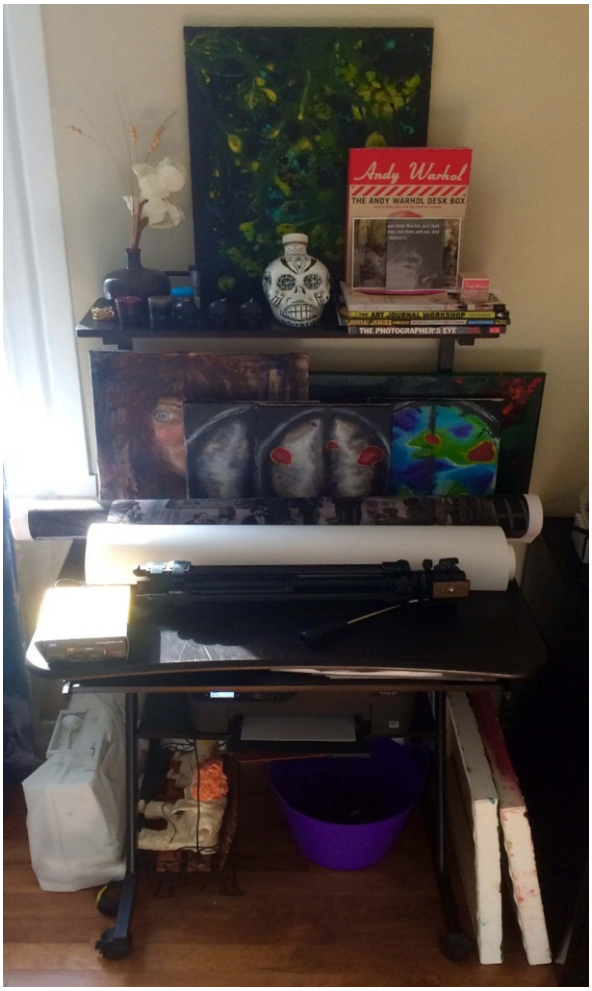

Figure 9.4. "Studio Desk as an a/r/t/" (by Shauna Rak, 2016)

The room I call my studio is also known as the storage room, because being an artist and teacher requires a lot of "stuff." Some people call it junk; I like to call it potential. Alongside the window in the corner of the room is my studio desk (Figure 9.4). I chose this desk because of the variety of objects that it holds—each object, through its purpose and representation, exhibits a fragment of my own individuality. As an art educator, I wear many hats. My artist–researcher–teacher selves are clearly displayed within my studio desk: as the objects are interspersed, so are my identities as they combine into my personal makeup. Each object has been carefully displayed on a specific shelf in a specific location based on size, value,

and colour. Symbolic of my own artistic practice, the balance of the composition on the desk is essential. The desk was purchased from a discount store for convenience in my last apartment, which was nearly the size of this studio. The desk's purpose was, and is still, both "alien" and "normal" (Riggins, 1994, p. 112) because I prop my printer in the appropriate place, yet do not use the desk as a functional working space but as storage and a display rack. The desk acts as a space to exhibit objects that fuse together as I carefully demonstrate my artist and teacher identity through displaying my personal artwork alongside an Andy Warhol tool kit, ruler, and pencil sharpener.

On the top shelf, I also store stacks of books. In Riggins' terms these books are "social facilitators" because they display knowledge (1994, p. 113). They are books about crafting, journaling, photography, and other artful mediums. I believe, however, that because they are tucked away in my studio, a room that is normally closed, they remain private reminders of personal knowledge, and inspiration for my craft, teaching, and research. The rest of the top space is filled with "disidentifying objects" (Riggins, 1994, p. 112): tiny wax skeleton candles, a hand-painted skeleton tequila bottle, and a Bouclair flower vase. These objects' purposes serve purely for composition. I do not light the candles, drink the tequila, and the flower is fake. The alien use of these objects aligns with my artist identity, in the way that I exhibit an intertextual space, yet also portrays a clear depiction of "status" through the "apparent cost" of these objects (Riggins, 1994, p. 112).

On the main level of the desk, I keep research devices I purchased during my Master of Arts thesis period. These devices are "active" (Riggins, p. 111). They do not stay in this place at all times, but move around with me when I implement my researcher self: for example, my tripod. As an oral historian in my artist–researcher–teacher practice, I am interested in the body language and atmosphere of the space that my interviews are conducted in. Moreover, as an artist and researcher, I like to record productions of performances and exhibits that I conduct in various spaces. The tripod allows me to carefully analyse my observations and transfer them into my a/r/t practice.

The last shelf of the desk is where my printer and paper remain. These objects function normally, and are also displayed on the desk as they were intended. These objects also specify our social and economic status because the printer was purchased on sale at a big bulk store and my fiancée continues to steal paper from his family home to save me a buck. Lastly, on the floor underneath the printer is a cluster of objects (Riggins, 1994) that have been consciously displayed this way to deflect "attention away from [the] artifacts" (p. 114). The cluster is comprised of a sewing machine that I bought off Kijiji[2] yet never learned to use, old ceramic dolls on a bench that I created in pottery class, which I am not convinced are nice enough to display, a purple bucket filled with wires, old cameras, and other electronic devices we never use, a garbage bag filled with art supplies that do not fit in the cupboard and, lastly, my projector, which is the most used object within this cluster yet adds no aesthetic appeal to the room.

Finally, my paintings are interspersed upon the studio desk. These are a cluster of abstract expressionism and surreal images, which are my preferred style of painting. Painting is an exploratory process for me. Through these paintings, I explore a participatory involvement with my self, the paint, the tools, brushes, and the canvas—similar to my teaching style. I have not yet hung the paintings; some are finished and some works in progress. The process, progress, and keeping of these paintings further reflect the notion of time, development, and evolution of my three-tiered identity of artist–researcher–teacher.

For me, this desk can be explored in the way Mitchell (2011) described an installation space. Akin to Mitchell, who paralleled Delahunt's (2007) definition of an installation as art "made for a specific space exploiting certain qualities of that space" (as cited in Mitchell, 2011, p. 47). The desk is also an "artful arrangement" (Mitchell, p. 47) within a specific space, conveying a message that is both personal and reflective of my values and philosophies. Moreover, in exploring Mitchell's (2004) work, *Was It Something I Wore?* I have created my own representation of identity through objects instead of garments. In working with this object, I learned about the nuances of my identity through my artist–researcher–teacher self. Each fragment of this desk explores the amalgamation of my personalities, the multitude of distinctions and also the similarities. My uses of organised clutter were most prominent and I believe are indications of my artist style because my images are complex, colourful, vivid, and multifaceted—and of my teacher style because I explore a creative and playful approach to pedagogy—and lastly, of my researcher style, which has been informed by narrative inquiry, intergenerational sharing, and arts-based research, all of which are layered in experience, perspective, and creativity.

In my self-reflexive object inquiry, I am unfolding nuances of my artist–researcher–teacher identity and considering how such discoveries might enhance my practice as artist–researcher–teacher. Through the use of assemblage on my studio desk, I am learning about new compositions, textures, and materials that can be used to provoke new meaning and dimensions to my art practice. As a researcher, I am beginning to understand the complexity of objects. This will add rich layers to the collaborative storytelling work that I practise as an oral historian. Lastly, as a teacher, the studio desk as a source of data has allowed me to consider the many ways that objects and narratives can unfold within classrooms using participatory and interactive teaching methods.

As an artist and researcher, my desk remains a personal and private experience. However, as an art educator my studio desk has become a pedagogical initiative that speaks to the curatorial nature of the classroom space. Through this point of view, the teacher and the students become curators of their own classroom space by approaching the space as more than its four walls—but by its potential to evolve through artistic and collaborative initiatives. This would create a more engaging and provoking environment. By entering into this domain as an art educator, I believe we are also developing a relationship between teacher, student, and space, wherein

this is a shared atmosphere. Allowing students to work and reflect creatively by developing educational initiatives through art that can transform the classroom space from a desk to a shrine is engaging and inspiring for the students. Through this, I believe we are inviting students to develop a richer and more meaningful learning environment and an appreciation for space and objects as art.

DIALOGUE PIECES: LEARNING THROUGH INTERACTION

This section of the chapter presents two dialogue pieces, which Kathleen arranged using lightly edited excerpts from e-mail correspondence. Dialogue can be understood "as a necessary part of all narrative texts, [through which] different points of view [are] expressed by different [characters]" (Coulter & Smith, 2009, p. 582). Dialogue can help readers to come to understand more about the characters in a story and to see how growth happens through interaction between characters (Coulter & Smith, 2009).

Dialogue Piece 1: Working with Objects as Artist–Teacher–Researchers

In the first dialogue piece, Shauna and Adelheid exchange and reconsider ideas about working with objects in relation to their practices as artist–researcher–teachers. This dialogue piece draws on e-mail correspondence that was prompted by Kathleen's suggestion that Adelheid and Shauna ask each other some questions from their unique standpoints.

Shauna's Questions to Adelheid

Shauna: Adelheid, how do you incorporate everyday objects into your teaching?

Adelheid: In the first and second year sculpture modules, students each have one project (out of the three projects that make up their module) that deals specifically with found objects. During this assemblage project, I start by taking the students to a wonderful scrap metal factory shop in Bloemfontein. At this factory shop objects are grouped into categories, for example, scales, anvils, lamps, forks, locks, sewing machines, and many more really strange and wonderful categories. The objects have all been used and discarded. Some of them are very old or antique. None of the objects is new and most of them do not work anymore. Many, but not all the groups of objects are metal. These objects all have a rich sense of having had a life of use. Because they are so worn, they also have a sense of having hidden stories. So before giving the students the project brief or asking them to come up with ideas for their artwork, we visit the factory shop and they all get to choose R150's-worth[3] of objects (at times it may be one object and at other times, many). Once we get all the objects back to the studio, we have group discussions about the objects the students chose. During this session, the students talk about what interested them and made them choose their objects and also, they can reveal

some fictional stories that might be hidden within the objects. In this way, the objects are used to initiate and lead a rich discussion. The artwork that the students then make is primarily based on these objects. They may add more objects or not use all or any of the original objects that they started with, but the work is based on the identity and narrative of objects. This project is in a way led and driven by objects. It forces the students to think further about identity, structure, and material.

Shauna: In your object piece, you speak about ritual as a healing process. How do you think ritual can be incorporated into teaching in classrooms?

Adelheid: I first became interested in roadside shrines when observing daily visits being made by a bereaved mother and daughter (or that's what it looked like) to a specific shrine that is on my route to work. I began thinking how the repeated visits to the shrine was part of their mourning ritual and I wondered how that relates to my own need for repetitive methods in my artwork. For me, ritual is closely related to repetition. I find I need to make use of a repetitive process (usually making moulds and daily castings in resin) within my practice. This repetition has a soothing, calming, maybe even therapeutic influence on me. There is a wide variety of rituals that are present within the classroom or studio space. The ritual of preparing module guides helps focus the project and the learning outcomes that the lecturer is aiming for. Within the classroom, group discussions are rituals of reflections that allow students and lectures to learn by means of sharing knowledge and insights. The ritual of using research diaries as a space for deepening the concept or theme that is being addressed by the student is also very valuable.

Shauna: How do the public sculptures and rituals influence your art making?

Adelheid: The roadside shrines have a constant influence on my own art practice. I constantly consider and make connections with the abstract concepts within the roadside shrine and my own art-making practice. Some of these abstract concepts are the threshold, private and public, sacred place, materials, remembrance, and repetition as therapy. To illustrate, below is a conceptual statement and photograph of the work I completed in June 2016 (Figure 9.5).

The (in)visible threshold between life and death is investigated by challenging the opacity in materials such as earth and bone, to the extent that a threshold is suggested which is completely transparent. Opaque earth and bone have the ability to be transparent both visually and metaphysically. The metaphysical or intellectual transparencies of the materials are apparent in their capacity to contain memory. When sites of trauma are visited, the materials at the site enable the visitor to make a closer connection to that which was lost. Similarly, earth was taken from a specific motor vehicle accident site, connecting the artist to a lost loved-one by containing the memory of both the last moment

of life and first moment of death. The earth further references bloodstains, while the cremated bone, white and untarnished by blood and flesh, is all that remains of a body. The violence, trauma, death, and memory at a specific place are sterilised in the attempt to understand both the visible and the invisible at the threshold between life and death.

In my work, I do not consider all of these abstract concepts embedded in roadside shrines. I try to focus on one or two for a specific work. I always work with earth found at roadside shrines as an object from these places that contains hidden memory in the materiality. Articulating by means of material is what makes art (specifically sculpture) so different from language and the use of text. To come to understand the materials is much like learning to read and write. However, every artist has to develop her or his own visual language. This process is therefore unique to each artist and, in my case, I believe in and trust the materials I choose to use even though the hidden memory cannot be seen or calculated scientifically. They are accessed through a creative process.

Figure 9.5. "Invisible Threshold" (exhibited at Pretoria Art Museum, during Sasol New Signatures exhibition in 2017; phototgraph from the Sasol New Signatures 2016 catalogue)

Adelheid's Questions to Shauna

Adelheid: Shauna, what kind of participatory and interactive teaching methods do you use specifically? And how do they relate back to the objects in your studio desk installation space?

Shauna: My teaching philosophy resonates deeply within my own art, literary, and research practice. I believe in instilling independence, confidence, and unique quality within my students' work. As an educator, researcher, and artist I also promote the value of art education and collaboration as a means to enrich lives, values, and community. My love for teaching stems from my background in art education where I learned about the roles of play, individual expression, and creativity that are crucial when teaching and working with students. I believe in instilling independence, confidence, and unique quality within my students' work, which I practise through an interactive teaching style. This allows students to explore their individual growth and style at their own pace. Process is of utmost focus in my teaching style, and student development and expression of self is highly valued. I align myself with education theorists such as Gude (2007), whose main principles include but are not limited to, playing, forming self, investigating community themes, encountering difference, attentive living, empowered making, deconstructing culture, and reconstructing social spaces. Akin to Gude (2007), I am constructing my studio desk through performance, development, and exploration, where I am merging my three-tiered identity as an artist–researcher–teacher but, moreover, constructing a space that forms this identity through the amalgamation of the objects it holds.

Adelheid: Do you see your studio desk installation space as a reflection of the most personal space of your conscious or even unconscious mind? It is interesting to me that this space stays closed and private. Can you elaborate on that privacy?

Shauna: My studio desk is one part of the studio. I see this space as one of reflection, achievement, but also disappointment. It is an extension of my art and writing process that speaks directly to my researcher–artist identity. My art and writing process is incredibly intuitive, however, I bounce from project to project, stress over the application of paint, or evolution of text not moving or developing in ways that I had imagined. With this comes constant reflection. This space is private to me because of this ongoing struggle of ups and downs that I experience as an artist and researcher. The struggle is hard for me to articulate to other people who walk through my house, and so this place becomes private, one that only I can understand and where these struggles remain behind the closed door.

Adelheid: Can you talk a bit more about how you work with installation in your artistic practices?

Shauna: I began working with installation for my master's thesis in art education where I created a multisensory art installation using photography, projection installation, archival images, family photographs, sound, and performance to explore my grandmother's story of survival during the Holocaust as a tool for understanding and learning about difficult knowledge. The installation operated on a loop where large images were compiled and projected onto a wall with faint background noises such as bird chirping or soldiers marching. Each image was an assemblage created to reflect certain narratives of my grandmother's story, while I narrated the moment using her tone and language in an effort to capture her essence. Currently, I am working on another installation, which I refer to as a participatory art installation. The final product is presented through large-scale projected images that I took on my visits throughout Poland. I then invite the audience into the projected image as a means to explore issues of visitors and connectedness to sites of trauma through an arts-informed installation.

Dialogue Piece 2: Working with Objects in Educational Research and Practice

In this second dialogue piece, hosted by Kathleen, Adelheid and Shauna draw on the object pieces and dialogue pieces to respond to the overall theme of the book in which this chapter is located—*Object Medleys: Interpretive Possibilities for Educational Research*. Adelheid and Shauna review their learning through the multilayered process of composing the chapter and reconsider the usefulness of working with objects in educational research and practice. Kathleen organised the sequence of the dialogue piece, using lightly edited excerpts from e-mail correspondence in which she had asked Shauna and Adelheid questions from her perspective as an educational researcher and teacher educator.

Kathleen: Adelheid and Shauna, has your thinking about working with objects in educational research changed or developed through our process?

Adelheid: My thinking has developed through this discussion with Shauna. It seems clearer to me that the inclusion of objects in educational research that deals specifically with creative research is able to ground both the project and the researcher–teacher presenting it. Creative research is very fluid and visual, and it is not always easy or possible to articulate. It is sometimes unpredictable and very process orientated. The use of objects, either in a creative project or as a keystone for the teacher presenting the project, appears to add a welcome and often necessary element of stability.

Shauna: My thinking has developed throughout the process of writing and conversing within this article. In my research, I have used objects as a gateway to personal stories and histories—ways of uncovering the past and learning about one's life experiences. In addition to uncovering new insights to objects

through my own writing, Adelheid's creative outlook on educational research has generated new meaning to the use of found objects as a means to evoke stories and connect to one's identity.

Kathleen: How does working with objects matter to you as educational researchers?

Shauna: My thinking about objects has been incredibly formative in my own research. My research, which focuses on oral history and trauma, has evolved in richness and depth through the use of testimonial objects. Using objects has elicited stories, emotion, and memory. Through their nostalgia, I gain insight into the lives of those who once possessed these objects, the people who now possess them and, moreover, the distance and richness they gain through travelling in time and place. Through this process, I have also begun to adopt objects within my own art practice. These objects have allowed me to explore multisensory art mediums through their ability to engage touch, taste, smell, sight, and auditory capacities while also educating my audience through a full sensory experience when they interact with my work.

Adelheid: For an educational researcher specifically working with sculpture and installation, the stability that objects provide during the process of creating either a project or an artwork is crucial. Stability allows one to explore without getting lost. And exploring ultimately leads to the discovery or development of an individual's visual language. This visual language takes the form of materials, textures, colours, tastes, and smells. I believe the inclusion of objects at different levels/stages/areas of developing a project—teaching as well as creating—may therefore be a key aspect to encouraging the development of the ability to visually articulate a concept.

Kathleen: And how could working with objects matter to others in education?

Adelheid: The use of objects to enhance visual articulation may well be useful to educators in other fields. Getting students to move away from articulating an idea or concept with text and language, but rather to visually articulate, may encourage out of the box thinking. Once that has happened, I believe the quality of work as well as the process of learning can be improved and the students can move back towards articulating by means of text with a fresh perspective. The inclusion of objects into the learning process can encourage and perhaps enable this.

Shauna: I believe objects transmit knowledge, and elicit meaning and compassion through each student's individual life experiences. When incorporating objects within the curriculum, I trust that educators are provoking students to think critically about the history these objects possess—and also about their own connections to these histories, further eliciting empathy and understanding among students.

CLOSING

Adelheid and Shauna both identify as artists, researchers, and teachers and this chapter has demonstrated how they approach objects from these multiple vantage points. Their exchanges have shown both theoretical and practical experimentation in relation to objects, while also demonstrating the meaningful purpose that working with objects can bring to art, teaching, and research practice.

The methodologically innovative process of collaborating with Kathleen in composing the chapter as a storied, visually illustrated account elicited deep responses from these two artist–researcher–teachers and made them relook at their practice in new ways. And Kathleen, as a nonartist teacher educator and educational researcher, was able to facilitate and learn from Shauna and Adelheid's practice-led exchange of ideas. Adelheid and Shauna's personal thoughts, experiences, and interactions have been presented in a transparent, candid, and dialogic way with the aim of being accessible to nonartists. They offer insights for both artist and nonartist researchers and teachers into approaching objects with arts-informed innovative and pedagogical consideration.

Taken as a whole, the chapter has revealed how, through time, place, and personal attachment, creative encounters with objects can elicit understandings of self—and also sociocultural understandings through emotion and responsiveness to these objects. Using the arts as a resource in working with objects can enable us to connect to objects on a more emotional level, allowing us to understand our own histories and also those of others through shared experiences. Pedagogically, approaching objects with an arts-informed, practice-led lens that makes palpable the touch, sight, and smell of an object can allow us to understand the strong impact multisensory education can have on students.

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NOTES

[1] The object pieces were originally written in response to prompts developed by Anastasia P. Samaras (2011, pp. 105–106).

[2] Kijiji is an online classified advertising service.

[3] R150 (South African Rand) is equal to approximately US$11.

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10. A MICROSCOPE, A STONE, A CAP, AND A LAMPSHADE

Objects as Conduits for Recognising Teaching Practices as Teacher Leadership in Higher Education

UNDERSTANDING TEACHER LEADERSHIP AS PRACTICE

This chapter focuses on how objects can serve as tools for thinking and reflection about teaching practices as teacher leadership. In the chapter, leadership is viewed as *practice* rather than as *position*. A leadership as position perspective in higher education assumes that academics only take on a leadership identity when they are appointed to leadership positions that are part of the leadership structure of the institution (Juntrasook, 2014). Traditionally in higher education research, there has been a dominant view of recognising formally appointed leaders (leadership as position), for example, vice-chancellors, deans, and heads of schools (Richards, 2011). These formal academic leadership positions are part of the structural fabric of the institutions. This, however, is a rather constraining view of leadership in higher education.

By contrast, a distributed leadership perspective, which informs this chapter, conceptualises leadership very broadly. The key principle of distributed leadership is that leadership is not seen as the sole preserve of the officially appointed leaders in an organisation. A distributed leadership perspective embraces the notion of leadership being stretched across the organisation to include not only formally appointed leaders but also individuals within the organisation who have expertise to enact leadership in practice (Spillane, 2006). It engages leadership expertise wherever it exists in an organisation rather than only drawing on leadership through formal position (Harris & Muijs, 2005). This view of leadership thus embraces the idea of leadership being fluid rather than fixed.

From a leadership as practice viewpoint in higher education institutions, the teachers (commonly referred to as lecturers in South African higher education) may be drawn into leadership practice because of the special knowledge, skills, or affinities they may have in a particular area. For example, within academic disciplines in higher education, a lecturer may take the lead in organising a research seminar for staff and students because of particular expertise the lecturer has. When the

D. Pillay et al. (Eds.), Object Medleys, 147–162.

"activity or inter(actions)" determine who leads, it is termed leadership as practice (Juntrasook, 2014, p. 25). Unfortunately, this type of leadership has not received much attention in higher education research (Fahimirad, Idris, & Kotamjani, 2016).

A significant expression of distributed leadership is teacher leadership where teachers (lecturers) are drawn into the leadership practice of the institution to play roles as leaders within their lecture rooms and beyond (Harris & Lambert, 2003). Teachers demonstrate leadership in various ways such as facilitating communities of learning, striving for pedagogical excellence, nurturing a culture of success, translating ideas into sustainable systems of action, sharing expertise and knowledge with other teachers in order to improve teaching and learning, working collaboratively with peers and observing and critiquing each other's lessons in order to improve pedagogy, engaging in reflective practice, and action research (Grant, 2012; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Crowther, 2009; as cited in Lai & Cheung, 2015). Drawing on autoethnographies of teachers in higher education, Pillay, Naicker, and Pithouse-Morgan (2016) made visible some of the teacher leadership roles academics are enacting in their lecture rooms such as engaging in creative pedagogies, transforming pedagogic spaces, inculcating collaborative values, becoming agents of social change, mentoring students and fellow colleagues and, more importantly, becoming self-reflective practitioners. Furthermore, Marshall, Adams, and Cameron (2001; cited in Richards, 2011) identified the following teaching-related leadership behaviours demonstrated by academics: familiarising students with the scholarship of academic work, developing a sense of community among teachers, taking an active interest in students and giving advice and support to help them achieve their academic goals, leading by being a role model, and being generous with their time and expertise.

INTRODUCING THE AUTHORS AND THE CHAPTER

The authors of this chapter, Tamirirofa (Tami) Chirikure, Asheena Singh-Pillay, Nomkhosi Nzimande, Angela James, and Inbanathan (Inba) Naicker, are higher education teachers located at a university in South Africa. In what follows, we briefly introduce these authors and describe the objects that have inspired the chapter.

Tami is a higher education teacher in science education. He considers himself a transnational teacher, having taught in four different countries: Zimbabwe, Cuba, Swaziland, and South Africa. The object he selected is a microscope. A microscope is an occupational object used by scientists in laboratories to examine specimens that are generally not accessible to the naked eye. He views the microscope as a metaphorical tool to think through his practice as a science teacher educator. The microscope also arouses his thinking about the beliefs and values that underpin his teaching practices.

As a senior higher education teacher in science education, Angela has always been intrigued by the beauty of nature and the interrelationships therein. It therefore comes as no surprise that her chosen object is selected from nature. She chose a small

stone as her object. The stone was given to her by her 1-year-old granddaughter. To her this stone stimulates many thoughts about her pedagogical practices.

Nomkhosi is a higher education teacher in curriculum and education studies. Her object is a brightly coloured cap with the inscription, "Stand together for rights: LGBTI rights are human rights" on the front of the cap. LGBTI is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex identities. Nomkhosi received this cap as a gift for participating in an awareness campaign for the promotion of the rights of vulnerable groups organised by the South African Department of Justice and Constitutional Development.

As a higher education teacher in science and technology education, Asheena considers herself to be an activist and advocate for a socially just and contextually relevant science and technology education. She selected an upcycled lampshade that she personally made from household waste. She constructed it from disposable plastic spoons and a plastic 2-litre cold drink bottle. Her story of her upcycled lampshade illuminates her beliefs, values, and expectations for teaching and promotes deep reflection about her pedagogical practice.

Inba teaches in the discipline of educational leadership and management at a higher education institution. He has an affinity for transdisciplinary research and has recently worked on projects that promote transdisciplinary work. He is passionate about seeking new methods to inject into educational leadership research in order to produce knowledge differently in education leadership and management. In developing the chapter, Inba played the roles of facilitator and coauthor. Based on collective input from his coauthors, Inba helped piece together the various sections of the chapter.

In the collective construction of the chapter, issues of quality and rigour in research were attended to by making transparent and explicit the processes involved in the production of the chapter. The chapter was also written in a manner that was aimed at making it accessible to a range of readers (Mishler, 1990).

To begin with, Tami, Angela, Nomkhosi, and Asheena each wrote an object piece in response to prompts provided by Samaras (see Samaras, 2011, pp. 105–106). Inba then worked with these object pieces to look for common threads. Thereafter Inba, in collaboration with the other authors, extracted key issues the object pieces were addressing. All four of the object pieces revealed particular teaching practices of teachers in higher education. Further, from Inba's standpoint as an educational leadership researcher, they seemed to shed light on teaching practices as teacher leadership. Initially in their object pieces, Tami, Angela, Nomkhosi, and Asheena did not explicitly describe themselves as teacher leaders. Inba therefore played a significant role in making his coauthors aware of the scholarship on teacher leadership as practice and in considering how their teaching practices could be viewed as teacher leadership.

Next in the chapter is a discussion of how objects can be used as tools for thinking about the teaching practices of teacher leaders by drawing on the concept of object practice developed by Humphries and Smith (2014). Thereafter, the four object

pieces are presented. These object pieces are then linked to some of the practices of teacher leaders. In conclusion, the authors offer their learnings from thinking with objects.

OBJECTS AS TOOLS FOR THINKING ABOUT THE TEACHING PRACTICES OF TEACHER LEADERS

Objects can be used to stimulate thinking about the pedagogic practice of teacher leaders. Apart from their utilitarian functions, objects are useful tools to think with (Turkle, 2007). They can serve as entry points for the recalling and telling of stories (Mitchell, 2011). Hence, narrative theorists view material objects as tools that galvanise thinking "to tell stories *with* or *about* or to narrate meaning *through*" the object (Humphries & Smith, 2014, p. 478). Objects can therefore provide valuable information about lived experiences (Berger, 2016). The object itself, however, has no voice. It is the human agent, in dialogue with the object, who gives it voice. It is the thoughts and feelings that the object inspires that give it voice. It is this voice that can help us construct and deconstruct our values, beliefs, and experiences when working with objects (Humphries & Smith, 2014).

As Turkle (2007) reminded us, objects are "goods-to-think with" and "we think with the objects we love" (pp. 4–5). While we acknowledge that objects inspire our thinking they, however, do not determine the particular ideas they inspire about our practice (Turkle, 2009). The chapter makes visible how selected objects can serve as conduits for thinking about teaching practices as teacher leadership in higher education.

In conceptualising objects as tools for thinking with, the concept *object practice* is apposite (Humphries & Smith, 2014). In our daily work as higher education teachers, we become enmeshed with objects in our practice. These objects constitute our practice and our practice is also shaped by the way we use them. Object practice comprises a mingling of objects and people. When this enmeshment occurs, opportunities are created for thinking with the object in the production of stories of practice (Humphries & Smith, 2014). For instance, as shown later in the chapter, Tami's occupational object (Riggins, 1994), a microscope, is used in his practice as a teacher educator. Apart from its functional properties, the microscope prompts reflective thinking about his practice as a teacher educator. Similarly, Asheena's handmade artefact (Riggins, 1994), an upcycled lampshade, becomes not only a resource for her pedagogy, but also a tool for thinking about her pedagogical practices.

THE OBJECT PIECES

We now turn our attention to the object pieces and show how the selected objects reveal teaching practices as teacher leadership in higher education. These object pieces are written in the first person. First is Tami's object piece, which focuses on a microscope. Thereafter, we present Angela's object piece, which draws on a

small stone and then Nomkhosi's object piece, which centres on an orange-coloured cap. We conclude this section with Asheena's object piece, which concentrates on a lampshade.

Tami's Object Piece: The Self Is a Lens Through Which My Teaching Is Filtered, Examined, and Improved

The photograph below (see Figure 10.1) was taken in a science laboratory where I spent many hours doing my work as a science teacher educator. It depicts me looking into a microscope. I have selected the microscope as my object for this object piece. A microscope is a specialist piece of equipment used in scientific investigations to examine specimens that are generally not visible to the naked eye. They have different parts, which serve different functions. The quality of the detail seen under the microscope depends on the type and size of objective lens and eyepiece used, because these have different magnifications. Looked at in another way, the photograph shows a microscope slide with me as the specimen. Scientists observe specimens on a slide using a microscope and then draw images or make detailed descriptions of what they see. The drawings and descriptions of the same specimen often differ from person to person depending on their competence levels. Further, the detail that one sees on a specimen often improves when one takes a second or third look.

The microscope for me is a metaphorical tool that assists me in thinking about my pedagogical practices. It prompts my thinking about the values and beliefs that underpin my pedagogical practices. Through examining and reexamining myself in respect of my pedagogy, it is possible for me to see things from a different perspective. To me the self is a lens (microscope objectives and eyepiece) through which my teaching is filtered, examined, and improved.

Figure 10.1. Tami's pedagogical practices under the microscope

The mechanical stage (a platform in the microscope that supports the slide containing the specimen) got me thinking about Shakespeare's (1623), "All the world's a stage/And all the men and women merely players" (lines 1–2). The stage represents the different countries I have worked in as a teacher. The four countries, with their vastly different education systems and teaching–learning cultures, have had an influence on my pedagogical beliefs and practices. The Cuban context, where I trained as a science educator, exposed me to social constructivism during my formative years. Studying and teaching in my home country, Zimbabwe, a predominantly capitalist state, taught me values of industry, self-directed learning, goal setting, and competition. Swaziland was the environment where I learnt to incorporate service learning in my professional practice because their curriculum emphasises experiential learning. The South African education system assisted me to forge a more pragmatic approach to teaching.

The position of the specimen on the mechanical stage of a microscope can be shifted by deliberate manipulation of the stage adjustment knobs. The relative position of the specimen on the mechanical stage determines what one will see through the lenses. It can be the complete specimen or a fraction of it. This got me thinking about how my students and colleagues see me as a teacher. Their interpretation of my teaching practices and assessment methods has sometimes led to differences of opinion on how things should be done. Being a reflective practitioner, the adjustment of the position of the specimen on the mechanical stage also conjures thoughts of the adaptations I have had to make in my teaching in order to be more effective in the different contexts that I have taught.

The diaphragm on a microscope regulates the amount of light reaching the specimen. This determines the clarity of the image observed. The regulation of the quantity of light reaching the specimen reminds me of the extent of scaffolding that I have had to do in my teaching so that my students grasp the concepts taught. In an examination-driven curriculum it takes relatively less time to assist students to navigate to the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) because they prepare for "do or die" examinations. In contexts where continuous assessment is the norm, I find it an onerous task to get students to work independently. They seek assistance at every step in order to do well in assignments or projects and achieve a good coursework mark ahead of the final examinations. Consequently, more light is required for the students to "see something."

Noticeably, there are no other people looking into the microscope in the photograph. Just me. This is how I have come to view my role as a teacher in higher education. Unfortunately, there are no formally created collaborative spaces in the organisation for me to dialogue about my teaching and learning practices. In order for teachers to improve their practice, the sharing of ideas of good practice is important. I have, however, learnt not to sit back and accept this fate. I actively go out and seek informal groups to talk about my teaching. Very often I dialogue with colleagues in the corridor or tea room about my teaching practices—just to hear alternative views.

Angela's Object Piece: A Pedagogy of Care Informs My Practice

Is it a stone or a pebble? Well… I call it a stone (see Figure 10.2). This stone with sparkly pieces that shine in the sunlight lay on the paving, at the poolside, after breaking away from the parent rock in the wall adjacent to the pool. The stone caught the eye of my little granddaughter as she exited the swimming pool. She grasped it. Then looked at it and made a few sounds. She then turned to me and placed it in my hand. This small stone, which is about 1 centimetre by 2 centimetres in dimension, is more or less rectangular in shape. It feels extremely hard when held between the fingers, and can roll when placed in the palm of the hand.

Figure 10.2. Angela's stone or pebble

When I first gazed upon this stone, the thought that came to mind was that this stone is part of a bigger rock. It has broken off and is now an independent object. I saw the stone as being the biological sciences students at my South African university who have grown from their first module where much guidance and motivation is given for the development of essential skills and knowledge, to third-year students who design and implement research and service learning projects. As teacher educator, the journey with first- then third-year students is one during which I have to step aside as they take over for intense, student-led work. My role therefore is to engage them in learning experiences where I, after a period of time, become

redundant. I have to empower them to the extent that they can break away from the parent rock and make the transition from just being a student to being teachers in the making. Likewise, as teachers in the schools they themselves will become the parent rock to their learners.

Being involved in the professional development of science teachers—developing their content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and research skills—the solidity of the stone holds much relevance to me. The stone is a symbol of the solidity of the relationships I have with my students. Teaching, after all, is a relational activity. I don't see students as "units" to be taught or as "commodities" to be transformed as the university wants us to see them because of the corporatised, managerial ideology they have bought into. Rather, I see them as an extension of the self. Therefore, for me teaching is about being able to connect with students both personally and professionally. In order to connect with students I make it my duty to get to know who they are and where they come from in order to understand them better. This shows care. Consequently, a key value underpinning my relationship with students is care. A pedagogy of care informs my practice. If not, why are we here as teachers? Are we here to teach those whom we do not care for? Teaching is ultimately about care.

The stone, still in its original form, now has pride of place among other objects in my jewellery container, which is a big, open oyster shell. I still pick it up, feel its smooth texture, and admire the sparkly pieces embedded in the stone. When I engage in this activity, I am reminded of the basic skills of science that I cultivate in students. I make clear to the students that, as future teachers of science, the action of observing serves to inform our learning. The use of our sense organs gives greater meaning to the observation of the objects or object—be it a leaf, an insect, clouds, a fungus, a clump of soil, or a stone. And, is what we see truly what is there? Is it what everyone else sees? Can we, or do we all, then interpret it in the same way and come to the same statements about it? Should we? My practice is therefore about getting students to be different and think differently.

Nomkhosi's Object Piece: Becoming Reflective and Reflexive about My Practice

I chose this brightly coloured, orange cap (see Figure 10.3) with the inscription, "Stand together for rights: LGBTI rights are human rights." The cap is an important object to me because of the impact it has on my teaching beliefs and teaching practices. When I first received the it, my focus was on the text rather than the entire object. The more I looked at the cap and pondered about the inscription, the more it dawned on me that the entire object was a powerful and useful stimulus in my teaching and learning. From my seven years' experience of teaching preservice teachers in education studies at a South African university, I have come to realise that the universality of human rights, even within the higher education classroom is a myth. Judging from the horrid stories that we read in newspapers, watch on television, or hear about on radio with regard to the various

forms of violence meted out to the LGBTI community, LGBTI individuals don't seem to enjoy the same quality of rights as everyone else. The orange colour of the cap—which is a signifier of caution—alerts us to the discrimination endured by LGBTI individuals. Therefore, in my day-to-day pedagogy I make it my duty to raise awareness about the protection of human rights—particularly those of LGBTI individuals. My main goal is to inculcate in students who are about to join the teaching profession that, as teachers in schools, they have a moral duty to raise awareness of LGBTI rights. I am of the view that if preservice teachers buy into the idea of protecting the rights of vulnerable groups, specifically the LGBTI communities, then some of them may become activists in their communities for LGBTI rights.

Figure 10.3. Nomkhosi's LGBTI cap

The students I teach often make valuable inputs (both positive and negative) about human rights during class discussions. It is their cherished classroom contributions that have pushed me into becoming not only reflective but also reflexive about my own practice in my teaching of human rights issues. My colleagues (other lecturers

and tutors) with whom I share the teaching of the education studies module also play an essential role. As a collective, we often brainstorm approaches or strategies that we can use in engaging with the content of the module. The brainstorming sessions usually occur before and after the teaching sessions. Drawing from my interactions with both students and colleagues, I crafted an academic paper titled "Teaching Pre-Service Teachers about LGBTI Issues: Transforming the Self" (Nzimande, 2015). The paper is about my experiences of engaging with students about human rights, sexuality, and teacher professionalism. It highlights how I, as a teacher, was transformed through the process of learning, unlearning, and relearning about these issues.

Whenever I see my cap it arouses mixed emotions in me. On the one hand, there is excitement because I look forward to engaging with students in anticipation of the positive contributions they might make on the topics being discussed. But on the other hand, there is anxiety—being anxious about the contradictions that may be evoked in students as a result of the different perspectives they may have around an issue. There is nothing wrong with students having different opinions, but the anxiety is caused by not knowing whether the differences would be resolved or not. Nonetheless, as a teacher educator my responsibility is to conscientise preservice teachers about the different issues that may impact on their teacher professionalism and, as a collective, to come up with working strategies to mitigate the impact.

Asheena's Object Piece: Sustainability, Transformation and Growth

My object is an upcycled lampshade (see Figure 10.4). I personally constructed this lampshade from disposal plastic spoons and a 2-litre plastic cold drink bottle. This object serves as a teaching resource for the module, "Processing in Technology Education," which I teach to preservice technology teachers at a South African university. When I reflect on this lampshade, I realise it is not just an object that I use in my teaching. Rather, it is a (re)presentation of who I am as a teacher and my pedagogic practices. At the heart of the lampshade, is my own self-awareness of the need for sustainability, transformation, and growth. This lampshade is an object through which my vision for teaching can be understood. In telling the story of my object I will focus on its side view and aerial view—my emotional connection with the lampshade and its link to my pedagogical practice.

A closer examination of the lampshade reveals that the spoon heads are arranged like a rosette, much like the leaves on a moss plant. The rosette arrangement of the spoon heads allows for the reflection of light. This particular design feature is symbolic of my receptiveness to imbibe new ways of doing and learning as a teacher educator. The higher education terrain is dynamic. I thus see myself as a lifelong learner who constantly (re)imagines, (re)examines, and (re)thinks her pedagogical practice in order to embrace new ways of doing teaching and research.

Figure 10.4. Asheena's upcycled lampshade

An aerial view of the lampshade reveals that it looks like a flower in bloom. When I gaze at the lampshade I see the attractiveness of a blossoming flower. I see images of growth and transformation. Similarly, I imagine the growth of my preservice technology teachers as they blossom and bloom as change agents in their communities. I have visions of them teaching a socially just and contextually relevant technology curriculum. A curriculum with a strong focus on environmental sustainability, foregrounding green technologies and care for the environment and our resources—a transformative curriculum that addresses and solves contextual problems that impact their communities. Just as the spoons of the lampshade overlap each other in order to be connected to form the rosette structure, so I feel a deep connectedness with the preservice technology teachers in my classes. This connectedness sculpts my practice as it helps me to better understand my students and respond to their learning styles, the dilemmas they encounter, as well as the academic support they might need.

My object is intrinsically intertwined with who I am. In terms of my past, the lampshade brings back fond memories of my life on our farm and my interaction with my granddad. On the farm, I always accompanied my granddad on his rounds

to supervise the different sectors of our farm. On these trips he would educate me on the need to manage our natural resources and use the environment in a sustainable manner. He introduced me to indigenous knowledge systems related to farming and taught me about recycling and the need to display care for the environment. These invaluable lessons form an indelible part of me and they inform my pedagogy. The lessons have led me to pose the following questions as a teacher educator of technology:

- How do I create a more environmentally and socially responsive technology education while teaching the processing of plastics?
- How do I develop social responsibility and awareness amongst preservice technology teachers—in order to empower them to promote education for sustainable development in a socially responsible manner in their classrooms and communities?
- Is it enough to just educate preservice technology teachers about the chemistry of plastics and challenges that communities face—without their having to do anything to help address this issue?

This object is thus a constant reminder to me to be transformative about my teaching.

The flexibility of the lampshade reminds me of my flexibility as a teacher educator. I am open to embracing other research methodologies such as self-study, autoethnography, and arts-based methods such as object inquiry in my work on service learning, community engagement, and sustainable development. The light bulb of the lampshade is reflective. Reflection is an important part of a teacher's job. I am constantly examining what I teach and how I teach in order to work through tensions, anxieties, and uncertainties created by factors beyond my control.

OBJECTS REVEALING TEACHING PRACTICES INTEGRAL TO TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Engaging with the four selected objects has opened up our thinking and dialogue about teaching practices as teacher leadership in higher education. As we stated earlier, Tami, Angela, Nomkhosi, and Asheena had not initially described themselves as teacher leaders in their object pieces. In reconsidering the objects through a lens of teacher leadership as practice, as introduced to them by Inba, thinking with the objects helped them to refocus on their teaching practices in the pedagogic spaces at their university. This assisted them to reimage themselves as teacher leaders. In what follows, we identify four key aspects of thinking about teaching practices as teacher leadership in higher education as illuminated by the objects.

Teaching Practices Make Visible That Teacher Leadership Is about Vision

Good leaders communicate their vision and motivate others to buy into this vision (Brecken, 2004). Our objects have made us cognisant of our vision for teaching.

For Nomkhosi, the cap is a regular reminder of her vision in championing human rights and the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups in her pedagogy. She inspires her students to raise awareness of human rights issues and motivates them to become activists for human rights. Likewise, Asheena's object encapsulates her vision for sustainability and care for the environment. Therefore in her pedagogy she foregrounds environmental sustainability, green technologies, and care for the environment. Similarly, the stone for Angela is a reminder of her vision to inculcate the basic skills of science in her students. She therefore stresses the importance of observation and use of the senses in the teaching of science.

Teaching Practices Make Evident That Teacher Leadership Is about Connectedness to Students

Asheena's lampshade is a reminder of her connectedness to her students. It is this connectedness that prompts her to get to know her students better so that she can come to know their learning styles and the academic support they may need. Similarly, the solidity of the stone for Angela is a reminder of the strength of the relationships she shares with her students. Her relationship with her students is underpinned by the value of care. She makes it her duty to get to know her students in order to determine their learning needs. Good teacher leaders take an active interest in their students and know how to support them so that students may accomplish their academic goals (Marshall et al.; cited in Richards, 2011).

Teaching Practices Reveal That Teacher Leadership Requires Reflection on Practice

Thinking with objects prompted deep reflection on teaching practice as teacher leadership. Engaging in self-reflection and becoming self-reflective practitioners is a key marker of teacher leadership (Grant, 2012; Westbury, Hopmann, & Riquarts, 2000). Tami explains how the microscope served as a metaphorical tool that allowed him to examine and reexamine the self in terms of his pedagogy. The self served as a lens through which his teaching was examined and improved. Likewise, Asheena refers to the physical reflectivity of her lampshade and draws parallels with this to her work as a teacher. It not only allowed her to examine her pedagogy like Tami, but also assisted her to examine how she has come to hold the beliefs and values that underpin her pedagogy. Interestingly, this has led to further questioning and interrogation of her current pedagogy.

Teaching Practices Show That Teacher Leadership Is about Cultivating a Collaborative Ethos

Developing a sense of community and collaborative cultures among fellow colleagues is a teacher leadership practice that came to the fore in the object pieces

(Pillay et al., 2016; Marshall et al.; cited in Richards, 2011). Tami's observation of himself as being the only person looking through the microscope—as an indication of the academic space wherein he works being a lonesome and isolating space—does not constrain him. Rather, he exercises agency and transforms the work space into a more collaborative environment by seeking out colleagues and groups to talk about his practice. Equally, Nomkhosi in her object piece talks about the brainstorming sessions she has with colleagues teaching the education studies module alongside her. From her interactions within this community she was able to produce an academic paper on how her teacher self was transformed by teaching preservice teachers.

CONCLUSION: LEARNING FROM THINKING WITH OBJECTS

The chapter concludes with a tanka[1] poem composed by Inba to synthesise a collective conclusion. Inba requested Tami, Angela, Nomkhosi, and Asheena to write a paragraph about what they are learning from thinking with objects. From their input, Inba extracted selected phrases and words and compiled this tanka poem. Poetry can be used to compress large amounts of information (in this instance, the paragraphs submitted by Tami, Angela, Nomkhosi, and Asheena) to offer a more concise and powerful presentation of the information (Furman & Dill, 2015; Langer & Furman, 2004).

A Lens for Introspection
In our practices
Relations, oblivious
    Create awareness
        A lens for introspection
        Signalling our new insights

The first two lines of the tanka, "In our practice/Relations, oblivious," communicate that we are not always cognisant of the many relationships that underpin our day-to-day teaching practice as teacher leaders in higher education. We often tend to go about our practice, unaware of the influence we have on others and the reciprocal influence others have on us. What object inquiry can do is make us more mindful of these relationships, which the third line in the tanka, "Create awareness," signals. By becoming more conscious of these relationships we are able to reflect on the quality and impact of these relationships on teaching practice and teacher leadership. The fourth and fifth lines of the tanka, "A lens for introspection/Signalling new insights," are about the power of objects in getting us to engage in self-examination and self-reflection. Thinking with objects leads us not only to new understandings of ourselves as teacher leaders but also to new ways of looking at our teaching practice. After all, it was through object inquiry that Tami, Angela, Nomkhosi, and Asheena were able to reflect on their teaching practices and recognise their practice as teacher leadership. Thus, through working with selected objects our practice can be filtered, interpreted, and renewed.

Through thinking with objects, we can tease out information about our practice and make it transparent for further scrutiny. If we are to learn about teacher leadership from teaching practice and use these learnings to improve practice, then nuanced understandings of what teacher leaders do, how they do it, and why they do it in particular ways are key to our learning. As we see from the object pieces, object inquiry can reveal different aspects about teaching practices as teacher leadership. Thinking with objects can make us aware of these practices; it can prompt us to question the practices and it can make us reconsider how we might transform these practices. Thus object inquiry can be a critical and transformative approach to knowledge generation in teacher leadership research and practice in higher education.

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NOTE

[1] A tanka is a Japanese poem that has five lines, with a 5/7/5/7/7 syllable count in the lines (Poets.org, 2004).

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FAUZANAH FAUZAN EL MUHAMMADY, WENDY RAWLINSON
AND DAISY PILLAY

11. MOUNT MERAPI AND THE TRENCADÍS BENCH

Negotiating Personal–Professional Identities through Working with Photographs as Treasured Objects

STUDYING PHOTOGRAPHS AS OBJECTS

According to Edwards (2009), photographs have intricately connected meanings as images and as objects. As objects, photographs can be pinned up on a surface, framed, or just stuck on a wall (Edwards, 2009). They can also be touched, crumpled, ripped up, scratched on, trodden on, and marked. Considering the photographs we take or possess as objects, can make us aware of the evocative appeal and potential of photographs as they operate in their fixed and material form (Edwards, 2009). Contemplating photographs as objects also offers opportunities to explore many stories of self that are waiting to be told and experienced (Allen, 1995). For example, as teachers and researchers, the profile photograph we make public reveals a professional self, chosen from an array of many possible selves—described by Ronfeldt and Grossman (2008, p. 42) as the "selves we would like to become, the selves we could become and the selves we are afraid of becoming." White (2009, p. 861) explained that living with such multiple selves is a practice of ongoing tension, development, and alterity—and it is a creative process. Negotiating and renegotiating personal–professional identities involves individuals creating and assembling their own perceptions of, '"how to be,' 'how to act' and 'how to understand'" in relation to their personal lives, their professional work, and their place in society (Sachs, as cited in Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 178).

The mingling of image and form in photographs as objects can open a window to the past—real or imagined (Edwards, 2009). Photographs that depict memorable moments in people's day-to-day lives can become "treasured objects" (Edwards, 2009, p. 334) with the potential for arousing and making available the silenced voices and the multiple stories of self. As a precious and valued object, "a photograph so often reaches out to possess and stay the moment when the thing was there, in the here-and-now that was happening when I was there or you were with a camera" (Warner; as cited in Mitchell, 2011, p. 37). This chapter focuses on developing an understanding of how photographs as treasured objects can offer an "intermediate area of experiencing" in which to explore and understand how inner, private, personal worlds and external, professional lives come together—inflecting each other in particular ways (Winnicott,

D. Pillay et al. (Eds.), Object Medleys, 163–174.

1971, p. 2). In this chapter, Fauzanah Fauzan El Muhammady, Wendy Rawlinson, and Daisy Pillay explore the power of photographs as treasured objects for reinvigorating the beauty and richness of the personal in the professional, and for creative, multiple and flexible negotiating of personal–professional identities.

The chapter commences by introducing the authors. Fauzanah and Wendy then present their photographs as treasured objects to help them to remember and explore stories of experience and embedded meanings of self. This is followed by Fauzanah and Wendy reflecting on the photographs with a developing awareness of replenishing self with values and beliefs that are core to their moral purpose and well-being as researchers (Day & Gu, 2010). Next, the three authors, Fauzanah, Daisy, and Wendy, engage in an exchange of ideas and explanations about photographs as treasured objects and the potential openings that are available for new ways of imaging and negotiating our multiple personal–professional identities.

INTRODUCING THE CHAPTER AUTHORS

Fauzanah Fauzan El Muhammady, a Muslim woman born in Indonesia, is currently studying as an international student at a university in Canada. She works as an employee for the central government in the Directorate of Islamic Higher Education (DIHE) at the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) in Indonesia. Her main task relates to helping MoRA to supervise partnership programmes and administration processes with foreign higher education institutions across countries. Her autoethnographic research focuses on exploring her lived experiences of the implementation of government policy in improving the quality of Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. Her cherished object is a photograph of Mount Merapi, an active volcanic mountain on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia.

Wendy Rawlinson is a South African white doctoral student studying at a university in South Africa. Her self-study research focuses on exploring her pedagogical practices as a communication lecturer teaching undergraduate students who come from a range of historically black, disadvantaged schooling contexts, and who take up tertiary study at the university at which she works. Her prized object is a photograph of Gaudí's famous trencadís bench in a beautifully laid out garden park, Parc Güell, in Barcelona, Spain.

Daisy Pillay is an academic in a school of education in South Africa, and her work centres around professionals and stories of their complex personal and professional lives as fertile sites for opening up the traditional categories that constrain what it means to think and work in flexible and personally meaningful ways in uncertain and changing contexts. As a supervisor or advisor to many doctoral students, she was keen to learn with Wendy and Fauzanah about photographs as treasured objects and their potential for creative and expressive meaning making. Daisy's role in this chapter is to serve as facilitator, narrator, and author in the different narrative gestures (Butler, 2015, p. 4) that Fauzanah and Wendy take up in the process of meaning making and exchange.

Over the 8-month period that the three authors worked together, they generated different stories of the photographs as treasured objects through e-mail conversations, longer written pieces, and Skype conversations. These varied ways of meaning making opened up a deeper, more nuanced understanding of Wendy and Fauzanah's lived personal and professional identities. The authors worked iteratively to extend, add, and deepen these explorations from different perspectives and to make meaning from the richness of multiplicity and nonlinearity.

PRESENTING PHOTOGRAPHS AS TREASURED OBJECTS

Mount Merapi: Becoming One with the Mystery and Myth of My Ancestral Roots—Fauzanah Fauzan El Muhammady

My treasured object is a photograph I took of Mount Merapi, an active volcanic mountain in West Sumatra, elevated some 2,891 meters above sea level, on June 23, 2015, at 9:52 am. (Figure 11.1). I took this photograph when I made an official visit to the Islamic higher education institution, IAIN Syech Djamil Djambek in Bukittinggi, which is close to the mountain. Mount Merapi is a symbol for the Minangkabau tribe of Sumatra, Indonesia—the place of my birth and my childhood. According to the traditional historiography or *tambo* of the Minangkabau, Mount Merapi was the original territory of the Minangkabau tribe.

Figure 11.1. Mount Merapi

Choosing to work with a photographic image of a geographical marker, Mount Merapi, as a text of materiality (Mitchell, 2011), helps me to make sense of Marina Warner's (2004) argument that "photographers have a special relation to the mystery of thingness" (p. 10).

The Minangkabau tribe has a tradition, known as *marantau* [wander], of leaving their hometowns to travel to many different places, regions, and countries to seek a better life, education, and experience (Franzia, Piliang, & Saidi, 2015, p. 45). The youth are expected to develop themselves by seeking fortune as merchants or scholars, and this tradition has developed a strong sense of curiosity in the local people over generations. Mount Merapi symbolises the cultural values of curiosity and open-mindedness for knowledge that influenced my decision to pursue doctoral research in education in a foreign land. Furthermore, the Minangkabau tribe has unique Islamic traditions, including the matrilineal system that specifies that all family properties, resources, and lands are inherited through the female lineage.

I believe people tend to be influenced by their cultural identity, and that Minangkabau culture has, consciously or unconsciously, greatly influenced my personal life. Wherever we may live, the way people behave usually represents the character of our own cultures. Mount Merapi, as a symbolic representation of the Minangkabau tribe, reminds me of my cultural values and philosophies that have so significantly influenced my personal development, experiences, and educational background. The cultural influences have not only brought me to a doctoral programme level, but also have strongly encouraged me to do research in education.

The Trencadís Bench: Momentary Glimpses of a Magical, Multifaceted and Colourful World—Wendy Rawlinson

My prized object is a photograph of Gaudí's famous trencadís bench in Parc Güell, Barcelona (Figure 11.2). Antoni Gaudí, the architect and master (1852–1926), created this bench using the trencadís technique, also called *pique assiette*. The origin of trencadís dates back to the late 1800s when Gaudí saw the remains of pottery piled on a work site, and realised the fragments would be discarded. He decided to recycle them for use as decoration on architectural structures. Sometimes ceramic scraps were used, sometimes broken white china cups and plates, or tiles and bottles. The trencadís technique Gaudí used is an interesting and laborious process where he

Figure 11.2. Gaudí's trencadís bench

would select and break ceramic fragments to no more than 8 to 10 inches across, and then join them with mortar comprising lime, sand, and water. In Catalan, trencadís means *brittle* or *mosaic*, also *cracked* or *broken*.

Park Güell was built from 1900–1914 on a plot of land measuring 17.18 hectares and owned by a wealthy industrialist, Count Güell. It is positioned on El Carmel Hill in the Gracia district of Barcelona. It now forms part of the UNESCO World Heritage "Works of Antoni Gaudí." The most notable feature of Park Güell is the mythical, curving serpentine bench snaking its way around the perimeter of the main plaza; it is considered one of Gaudí's most original and famous works.

The trencadís bench, with its convex and concave shapes and undulating form, reflects Gaudí's insight into social behaviour because it presents the alternative opportunities of sitting facing other people, thereby becoming part of a group, or of facing away, enjoying the freedom to be alone in a crowd (Mackay, 1989). From one standpoint, the bench is positioned on ground level, yet from a different standpoint it is raised high above the ground as it delimits an upper plaza—creating the illusion of diverse levels.

Looking now at the photograph that I took in 1995, produced contrasting feelings in me because although I had been in a foreign country, I felt an affinity to the surroundings of the park because they represented a familiar place to me—a sense of belonging. I was transported to my childhood years where I imagined myself in the land of Enid Blyton's (1943) Faraway Tree series. The sensual feelings of nature, the mystical quality of the salamander fountain, bending arches, and gingerbread-shaped houses in Park Güell elicited a heightened sense of a magical world of full of fantasy, dreams, and visions.

The photograph allowed me to relive memories of my past, my current experience, and a reimagining of the future. In doing so I form a narrative to connect experiences and shape a notion of self (Roberts, 2011).

REFLECTING ON THE PHOTOGRAPHS WITH A DEVELOPING AWARENESS OF REPLENISHING SELF WITH VALUES AND BELIEFS

Fauzanah: Acknowledging Mount Merapi as the Spirit of Curiosity and Open-Mindedness Guiding Me as an International Doctoral Researcher

I embody a sense of curiosity as a space for imagining an intellectual life. As a member of the Minangkabau tribe, two important cultural philosophies shape my educational experiences. We learn: Alam takambang jadi guru, which means that all things in nature are good teachers. It means that all the experiences one gains from wherever one may live, strengthens the personality. For me, this helps me negotiate who I want to be, and how to be open-minded and to survive as an international student. The second philosophy is: Dima bumi dipijak, disitu langik dijunjuang, which means that the sky is held high over the ground that one stands on—illustrating that wherever people live they must respect the local culture and

customs. These two philosophies influence me as a person engaging in research, wherever I am; a researcher has to be curious and open-minded and they help me to be open-minded as well as respectful of local culture. I have no doubt that the philosophies have influenced my life as international student living and studying in foreign countries. They have taught me a sense of curiosity for seeking knowledge and experience for a better education.

Communication as a basis for developing cultural flexibility and tolerance. These philosophies have also taught me a sense of tolerance in my interaction with people from different cultures.

I am immersed in the Minangkabau culture. As an individual who grew up immersed in the Minangkabau culture, my interest in education started in my youth. I was concerned about human interaction, behaviour, and social life. I took anthropology as my subject for my bachelor's degree. In learning about human interaction, I found communication is also an important factor in human social life. This encouraged me to obtain a master's degree in the field of intercultural communication. With two education degrees, I dedicated myself to work as a central government employee in the Directorate of Islamic Higher Education (DIHE) at the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA). DIHE also created policies to assist Islamic higher education institutions (IHEIs) in improving themselves through curriculum, human resources, and infrastructure development, and to work towards becoming world-class universities through partnership programmes developed with foreign universities. This motivated me to pursue a second master's degree in a sociocultural and international development education studies programme in the United States, which strengthened my knowledge and skills in the fields of educational policy, comparative education, and programme evaluation.

Mount Merapi is the spirit in the doctoral me. Mount Merapi is a spirit in me for seeing the world and contributing to the development of IHEIs. Mount Merapi has brought me to live, as a doctoral student, at a university in Canada and to face the acculturation experiences of studying in the Western education system. The natural spirit of Mount Merapi will always strengthen my personality to face challenging experiences. Learning something new is based on the sense of curiosity, open-mindedness, and heart. For researchers, those are important assets in conducting research.

Wendy: Desire(ing) the Aesthetic, Imaginative, Nonlinear, Doctoral Researcher Self

As I sat on the comfortable trencadís bench, my body relaxed and my back seemed to mould into the rounded shape of the bench. I felt drawn to the beautiful Parc Güell when visiting Barcelona because it reminded me of an enchanted garden. The garden resembles a magical place, born out of fantasy. The trencadís bench is like no other

bench I have seen, and I understand why it is known as the longest public bench in the world.

As researcher, I chose to deepen my knowing of self and the values and intentions I hold dear through the possibilities that this trencadís bench has to offer. The approach I took to engage and open up my understanding in this creative space was to construct my own trencadís mosaic that would represent the constructing and shaping required of a real object. To this end, I gathered a large piece of board and obtained pieces of coloured tile as well as an epoxy and grouting powder that would assist in the construction of my mosaic piece.

In a momentary space, I had…

…to learn, on the job, to become aware of the colours. It was difficult to secure brightly coloured tiles but I was able to use some patterned and plain tiles. A large, cracked ceramic bowl that lay abandoned in my cupboard came in handy. I had to learn on the job. Methodically, I laid out all the tile shards arranging them according to the patterns I felt best accommodated their multifarious shapes. As I placed the delicate tiles onto the board, I was aware of the colour of each ceramic piece, and how the hues enhanced the design of the surrounding pieces. The vibrant coloured tiles formed new designs as they merged and, at times, contradicted the symmetrical designs of neighbouring tile fragments.

…to be spontaneous, have flexibility, and experience tentativeness. This process reminded me of the way in which Gaudí, and his assistant Jujol, described the process of placing tiles in situ, where one has an overall idea of the design, but the actual placing of the fragment is a spontaneous decision. This process required me to be flexible and tentative, a not knowing, whilst simultaneously prompting creativity.

…created the trencadís mosaic of my life. The created trencadís mosaic is not merely a symbol but the stuff of which my life is narrated—as real to me as my formative years, educative experiences, and teaching experiences—describing the way in which I make meaning of the situations and people with whom I interact. I experience art making as an embodied practice (Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2005). In wrestling with the materials, I struggle with my own social and cultural identities. The tension is ever there, as I participate in crafting the patterns of life. At times, I am aware of the situation and at other times, I am surprised. Sometimes certain subject positions dominate or recede into the shadows as my academic identity flows onward inside me, creating further designs and patterns.

The trencadís bench, as a marker of relationship and emotional connection (Turkle, 2009, p. 5), arouses feelings of being alive because of the vibrancy of the colours and patterns. The textural, chromatic, and changing forms produce poetic discourse rich in metaphor, symbol, myth, and ritual (Raventos-Pons, 2002). These qualities ignite in me a desire to allow the aesthetic to reemerge in my life and work. They reawaken in me a prompting to allow the dormant artistic elements of my life

to come to the fore and be represented in my engagement with teaching and learning. This creative process offers me a powerful way for reenlivening and regenerating aesthetic values—my love for the magic of worldly adventure, natural beauty, and artful existence.

ENGAGING IN EXCHANGE

Daisy facilitated an exchange by prompting Fauzanah and Wendy to respond to questions that she posed to them, including:

- How has your thinking evolved or changed, as an individual and as a researcher, through working with objects?
- What resistances or complicities does it make available and visible for you as a professional and researcher?
- How does your meaning making through object inquiry arouse or open up new ways of thinking about what it means to be a professional and a doctoral student?

This section was written using data that were generated from e-mail exchanges and a Skype meeting the three authors shared. Daisy transcribed the Skype conversations and e-mail exchanges and represented them as three thematic ensembles:

- Inspiring personal stories and inner voices.
- (Re)Connecting the personal in the professional.
- Garnering insight into personal–professional identities

Inspiring Personal Stories and Inner Voices

Fauzanah: People can tell their stories through a collection of photographs. In other words, people can use photographs as texts to voice and to tell their personal stories, their silenced voices. In producing the texts, I believe the individual is always trying to make meaning based on his or her own perspective and interpretation. However, one photograph can be interpreted from different perspectives, in different ways.

Wendy: For me, it was as if the juxtaposed fragments of the mosaic bench evoked the silent thinking (Foucault, 1984/1990) that was prevalent in my professional life and experiences. The trencadís bench and its position in the park helped me think not only about my autobiographical narrative, but also about social and historical issues that influence the classroom environment, and the power issues that shape the institutional culture within which I work.

Daisy: Working with photographs as treasured objects inspired Fauzanah and Wendy to share their personal stories and inner voices. By invoking stories of self through engaging with photographs as precious objects, opportunities may

be created for voice and agency to be exercised in renegotiating one's sense of purpose and well-being in personally and professionally meaningful and imaginative ways. Photographs as treasured objects are carriers of our personal stories and, interpreted from different perspectives, they can contribute to a process of personal and social change—a hopeful shift from self-absorption and fixedness of how to be and act as professionals, to absorption into the world: an ongoing personal–professional shift. Both Fauzanah and Wendy expressed their capacity to act and to consider freeing up the relational spaces between themselves and the social contexts in which they exist as individuals and as professionals.

(Re)Connecting the Personal in the Professional

Fauzanah: I struggled to connect the particular object as a symbol of cultural identity with my personality development. In addition, it challenged me as to how to provide the information between a sense of objectivity and subjectivity. I found that Mount Merapi had important meanings and values for my personal development and academic career. I believed the object lesson of Mount Merapi was a form of narration, which exposed a symbolic representation of the history of the Minangkabau tribe as my cultural identity.

Wendy: I was able to see the entanglement between myself and the bench, and the fold-like qualities of the bench seemed to represent the inclusive and exclusive practices I found myself participating in as a white lecturer teaching an all black student body. It matters to me because the non-living object of the trencadís bench opened up understanding of the binaries that exist in my classroom practice between myself and my students, and I began to see my hidden values and prejudices emerge and be made visible.

Daisy: Photographs as evokers of visual meanings and memory are entangled and relational. Interpreted from different perspectives, photographs as treasured objects offered personally meaningful and pleasurable ways of experiencing the inextricable links between the personal and professional. Importantly, working with photographs as treasured objects exposed less clearly articulated personal–professional values and meanings and made visible personal–professional challenges and struggles.

Garnering Insight into the Multiple Personal–Professional Identities

Fauzanah: My story about the photograph of Mount Merapi is a kind of genre that presents the connection between human personal life and its culture. According to Carolyn Ellis, "autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting

the personal to the cultural" (as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 85). People use their own experiences to garner insight into their cultural and social life.

Wendy: The tile fragments that I worked with to create my own trencadís was a reminder of the complexity of my personal and professional identities, and the multifarious subject positions that I need to take up as academic.

Daisy: Openness and negotiation with the social and cultural introduced new and unexpected moments of dialogue with the everydayness of personal–professional lives (Falzon, 1998). In these moments, Fauzanah and Wendy creatively and actively chose how to be, think, and understand with open-mindedness and complexity, their work and place in a diverse society. The use of photographs as treasured objects, as evokers of memories, and carriers of meanings can elicit understandings of personal–professional identities as being complex and multifaceted.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Reflective thinking prompted by working with photographs as treasured objects can enable a deeper understanding of the struggle between "who am I" and "how I want to be known by others" as a creative, dynamic relational tension. Cohen (2008) pointed out that it is beliefs, values, and priorities that are core to the perspectives individuals choose to take up in everyday situations and, seemingly, individuals' choice to stick to one view of what to be and do as individuals and researchers. This self-absorbed stance can constrain the richness of the fluidity and multiplicity of who they might be as individuals and researchers. Thus, opening up meanings and identities and using them as clues to validate, to explain, and make sense of self in relation to other people and contexts in which we operate (MacLure, 1993), is to live and engage in ongoing creative tension. For Wendy, engaging with a photograph as a treasured object made available stories of desire for a multicoloured, multifaceted, nonlinear representation of self, open to creative ways of thinking and being as a doctoral student and professional; for Fauzanah, it created openings for acknowledging the values of curiosity and open-mindedness for knowledge and education as a foreign, international doctoral student.

Making meaning through photographs as treasured objects can offer an alternate, creative mode for opening up the personal in the professional. Personal experiences objectified, is a potent space where the "ethical does enter in that encounter" (Butler, 2015, p. 16), prompting an affirmation of instinctive and spontaneous exposure to alterity as a condition of relationality to the social context. Working with photographs as treasured objects can ignite the imagination, eliciting more creative, multiple, and flexible constructions of the personal–professional self—opening up the "what is" for "what could be" (Mitchell & Allnutt, 2009, p. 260).

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TAMAR MESKIN, TANYA VAN DER WALT, LEE SCOTT,
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12. SHOES, SUITCASES, STONES

Creative Engagement with Ourselves as Artist–Researcher–Teachers through Object Inquiry

PROLOGUE

We begin with ourselves: artists, researchers, and teachers. We excavate our memories, seeking the landmarks of our stories of discovery. Material objects operate as talismans, stepping stones that guide us from concrete materiality into self-reflexive abstraction, windows for new ways of seeing. We navigate our educational research journeys using these objects as compasses, leading us back to ourselves as artists, teachers, and researchers. Through telling the stories of our journeys, we uncover how and why this alchemical process occurs. We weave the object pieces together, creating a complex tapestry of knowledges and questions, the warp and weft crossing and recrossing to explore the connections between our stories. This tapestry is framed through the words and dialogues of shared thinking and communication. We exhibit it here as one possible representation of creative making, innovative teaching, and critically self-reflexive research.

SETTING THE SCENE

This chapter unfolds possibilities for how objects can become material points of departure and material vessels for creative engagement with self in educational research within the domain of arts and design. The object pieces that converge in the chapter are drawn from self-reflexive research by four South African artists who are also researchers and university teachers (artist–researcher–teachers). Self-reflexivity in research entails making visible, questioning, and theorising the lived experiences and selves of the researchers (Kirk, 2005). Research methodologies that require self-reflexivity include self-study research (Samaras, 2011) and autoethnography (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Tamar Meskin and Tanya van der Walt's collaborative self-study research is located in drama and performance studies, focusing on their own practices as higher education creators, teachers, and researchers of theatre (Meskin, Singh, & Van der Walt, 2014; Meskin & Van der Walt, 2010, 2014). Lee Scott is a visual artist and teaches drawing and illustration to fashion design students. In her self-study research, she explores how objects can reflect values in

D. Pillay et al. (Eds.), Object Medleys, 175–196.

her educational practice, and how these values can and do improve her practice as artist–researcher–teacher (Scott, 2014). Chris de Beer is a jewellery designer and artist whose autoethnographic research focuses on a cultural understanding of his creative design process, aiming to facilitate the creative development of his jewellery design students (de Beer, 2016a, 2016b).

Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan (the fifth author of the chapter) is a teacher educator and researcher whose work centres on the educational implications of professionals initiating and directing their own self-reflexive learning to enhance their continuing growth. She is fascinated by learning from artists such as Tamar, Tanya, Lee, and Chris about "the actual making of artistic expressions in … different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining" educational experience (McNiff, 2008, p. 29). In her own work, she has explored poetry as a literary arts-informed medium for research and professional learning (Pithouse-Morgan, 2017).

We present the chapter as a performative, collaborative object inquiry, in which the five authors perform distinct roles in their relationships (Pelias, 2008). The four artists are the lead players, while Kathleen plays a mostly offstage role, offering poetic commentary at key moments. We have used dramaturgical analysis (Benedetti, 1985; Converse, 1995) as both method and methodology which (in)form the structure and layout of our chapter.

We analyse our journey using dramaturgy because it is relevant and cohesive, albeit unusual in an academic book chapter. Dramaturgy is essentially the analysis of plot structure. The plot structure outlined below informs most dramatic performances, where juxtaposed events communicate particular meanings. Using dramaturgy, we explore the meanings generated by juxtaposing our objects and our self-reflexive a/r/tographical[1] (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004; Leavy, 2009) writing, revealing our artistic, educational, and research practices, processes, and products. As Leavy (2009) explained, "a/r/t is a metaphor for artist–researcher–teacher. In a/r/tography these three roles are integrated" (p. 3).

Generally, dramaturgical structure includes the

- Inciting incident: the catalyst that sets the play in motion, and answers who, what, when, where, why, how;
- Point of attack: where the play begins, usually connected to the inciting incident, revealed by the events of the play;
- Exposition: providing the audience with the information necessary to understand the inciting incident and point of attack;
- Rising action: which establishes and reveals tension-building events contributing to the conflict (in)forming the dramatic action, which holds the attention of the audience. These events include
  - complications: where difficulties are clarified and problems teased out
  - discoveries: of action-inducing revelations and possibilities;
- Crisis point: which is triggered by the rising action, demanding a choice of a course of action, which manifests different possible trajectories and resolutions;

- Climax: the high point of the play, the moment at which the conflict is most intense, and the action reaches its apotheosis;
- Resolution: of the conflict, which concludes the play, revealing the extent to which, and the manner in which, the world of the play has been altered.

Cast of Players

Director: Kathleen (teacher development studies)
Artist: Lee (fine art)
Artist: Chris (jewellery design)
Artist: Tamar (theatre)
Artist: Tanya (theatre)

THE INCITING INCIDENT: HOW DID THIS CHAPTER HAPPEN?

As teachers and self-reflexive practitioner–researchers in the arts, we—Lee, Chris, Tamar and Tanya—share an understanding that to educate ourselves, and others, better, we need to interrogate our own creative selves and practices, constantly and critically. We understand that the why, what, and how of our lived experiences and our creativity as artists colours the why, what, and how of our effectiveness as teachers and researchers.

At the *"Not Just an Object": Making Meaning of and from Everyday Objects in Educational Research* symposium and exhibition in 2016,[2] we each showed our objects pictorially on posters, and then playfully improvised interactions with them eliciting meaningful visceral responses. We further explored poetry-writing techniques to unpack the value of objects as meaningful expressions of our artist–researcher–teacher practices. Our personal ideas about our objects prior to the symposium were challenged and enriched in dialogues with other people's objects, stories, and poems. Thus, we realised that the object, in and of itself, is not the point; rather, its significance lies in the empowering self-awareness harvested from creating, sharing, and relating the story of the object.

THE POINT OF ATTACK: FINDING A WAY OF TELLING

After the symposium, using prompts[3] provided by Kathleen, we wrote self-reflexive a/r/tographical arguments about the role of the objects in our educational research journeys. We shared these writings, and then met with Kathleen to interrogate how our stories were affecting us and what we were learning. We realised that our written object pieces are themselves works of creative art, which motivate three relationships—first, with our object, second, with the objects of others, and third, with each other—and simultaneously prompt artistic expression, creative teaching, and effective educational research. These discussions revealed, significantly, that our creative impulses are mercurial and idiosyncratic, and influenced by our preferred forms of artistic expression.

Here, we present the first part of our "play", consisting of three acts that together offer the exposition, providing the audience with the information necessary to understand the artists' varied engagements with their chosen objects. In order to construct this section, each artist looked at one of their coauthors' original written object pieces as well as later self-reflexive writing, and produced an edited version, using the dramaturgical structure as an organising principle. Later, the two rewritten pieces for Tanya and Tamar were edited into one piece for cohesion because their objects are shared. Subsequently, in dialogue with Kathleen and two peer reviewers, all the edited pieces were then further edited and narrowed down to form three cohesive acts.

Each act of this first part of the play is written using the first person voice to communicate the unique perspectives of the particular artists. Each of the three acts is introduced by a tanka poem[4] that was composed by Kathleen to communicate her reading of the artists' original object pieces. The object images are accompanied by texts that encapsulate the artists' core thinking about the objects.

EXPOSITION: OBJECT VARIATIONS—A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

Act I: Unpacking That Damn Suitcase (Lee Scott)

Memory Hold-All

The dusty suitcase
Unbuckled, unzipped and flapped
Memory hold-all
Carries a burden, sadness
To show my past is my now. (Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, 2016)

The stage is set as up as an art studio. Centre stage, there is an old, tatty, green suitcase, open, with various objects inside and falling out. A woman at an easel paints a picture of the suitcase and speaks.

I Feel Too Full

Too full of lives
Packed squashed I kneel on it everyday
And try to contain this hold-all of my memories
(Under wraps, beneath straps)
The pleather with its tearing eyelets and torn edges might burst one day
Then what will I do?

So, today I unpack my suitcase
I leave it open in view
I leave it open for people to wonder (why?)
I leave it open to show that my past is my now. (Lee Scott, 2016)

Figure 12.1. Still life: "Hold-All" (by Lee Scott, 2016)

The suitcase as a cultural probe, as a memory hold-all, prompts visceral responses in me. Upon reflection the suitcase evokes a number of layers of meaning, firstly, of feeling too full, and that in turn makes me realise that often I feel overwhelmed, not too sure of myself, fearful of opening up (to criticism?), of taking too much on. Secondly, that I will always have stuff to unpack; my past is my now, is what the suitcase tells me. Thirdly, although I may be hesitant to unpack my suitcase and wary of opening myself up, the suitcase is undeniably symbolic of new journeys and therefore is also emblematic of discovery.

Figure 12.2. "I haven't unpacked yet" (by Lee Scott, 2016)

The Polish poet, Wislawa Szymborska, pointed out that "you can find the entire cosmos lurking in its least remarkable objects" (as cited in Roberts, 2014, p. xix). The least remarkable object I discuss is my portrait painting (Figure 12.2) of a green pleather suitcase with the words, "I realize that I haven't bloody well unpacked yet (well, not properly …)." The suitcase is my visceral, poignant memory hold-all, prompting awareness of the interconnectivity of my personal, artistic, educational, and research personae and practices.

The 2016 symposium led me to physically reexamine the suitcase itself, which is now my primary resource for my reflections (Figure 12.1). Following Riggins' (1994) suggestion that objects can contribute actively to analysis, I find the green pleather suitcase actively influencing my analysis of it. It prompts me to create personal, artistic, educational, and scholarly meanings that demand actual changes in my practice, rather than merely discussing the idea of change.

The suitcase has an origin and a history. It was given to me, as an adult, by my mother-in-law when I was moving house. Many years earlier, when I was 14 years old, I experienced the distress of leaving the only home I had ever known. In that move, we packed our belongings in the same style of suitcase, except they were ochre. By attaching my personal connotations to it, the suitcase transcends its least remarkable object status and becomes the symbol of my personal grief, loss, and even bereavement (Kubler-Ross, 2005), and a metaphor for my loneliness in leaving, my journeying with sadness, and my travelling bearing the burden of my painful memories.

I believe that my values of creativity, playfulness, inclusion, and integrity inform and influence, holistically, the what, the why, and the how of all aspects of my artistic, educational, and research practices. Because of my own wounding social and educational experiences—which have impacted positively on my practice—I now understand and value the holistic dynamics of self-awareness and learning.

My poem about the green pleather suitcase ends with "my past is my now." Kathleen's poetic interpretation of my object piece has reenforced the symbolic magnitude of the unpacking and understanding of my teenage, heartbreaking homesickness and the impact it has on my practice. I have come to acknowledge that I am the being that I am now because of my memories of all my lived experiences (Whitehead, 2009) and my emotional, spiritual, and intellectual responses to them. These memories and responses all inform the narrative around how I am simultaneously artist–researcher–teacher.

Self-reflexively, I ask: What evidence will I discover through unpacking my suitcase? Why is the process of unpacking, specifically, valuable? How can objects reveal evidence of my values and their impact and influence on my practice as artist–researcher–teacher?

Act II: The Object Is Not a Sandal (Chris de Beer)

Point of Departure

The black-and-white strap
Crosses over the sandal

Point of departure
It led me on a journey
Where all is not as it seems. (Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, 2016)

A jeweller's workspace: many objects and numerous images of pieces of jewellery. A man holds a sandal with three black-and-white straps as he speaks.

Figure 12.3. Izimbadada, *a traditional Zulu sandal made from recycled whitewall car tyres (Zulu sandal made by Mnengwa Dlamini; photograph taken by Chris de Beer, 2001)*

The object is not the sandal: it is the black-and-white patterned strap that crosses over. It is an object that was strange to begin with and then it became the point of departure for a whole range of objects, each one elaborating on a slightly different aspect of patterned strap. I was fascinated by it because I saw a craftsman busy making it to use in the manufacture of a sandal. I realised that the strap by itself could be used for making jewellery such as bangles and necklaces.

Izimbadada (Figure 12.3) are synonymous with the dances of the Zulu migrant workers who brought the sturdy sandals, made from recycled motor car tyres, to the city during Apartheid. Maskanda and Mbaqanga musicians popularised *izimbadada*, the name being onomatopoeic for the sound the rubber soles make during walking and performing vigorous, athletic, traditional Zulu dances.

I teach jewellery design at a university of technology. While the main educational focus is learning the skills required by the jewellery-manufacturing sector, developing

a South African design idiom is also significantly emphasised. Consequently, I have explored and promoted local design influences and indigenous and traditional crafts and skills to guide student design practice. Even though I discourage stereotypical curio-type jewellery, my students tend to denigrate and disregard indigenous and traditional crafts and skills, and are attracted to making jewellery from gold and gemstones. So, latterly, I have focused on developing a rationale to influence young designers to draw on the authenticity of their personal stories and their cultural contexts to inspire and inform their designs.

While visiting the Dalton Road Traditional Market in Durban (in about 2001), I noticed a young man cutting at a long strip of black rubber, revealing a white underlay which he cut in a black-and-white geometric pattern. I instinctively recognised that he was making traditional sandals—*izimbadada*. Until then, I had not really thought about how the straps used to make the sandals were crafted. I believe I had unthinkingly ascribed the manufacture of the straps to a semi-industrial process. So when I saw the top layer of black rubber being removed with a kitchen knife, it was a shock—a very pleasant shock. I was delighted to discover that the "perfect" commercial-looking, crisply patterned straps are produced by the inventive minds, creative hearts, and skilled hands of traditional craftspeople, using discarded whitewall tyres and rudimentary equipment.

When Bongi, a Bachelor of Technology student, translated the process of cutting the black-and-white straps from a whitewall tyre into a drawing (Figure 12.4), he demonstrated that modes of (re)presentation are most effective when they are context relevant and sensitive. Bongi's drawing captures the form, line, shape, and colour of the carved black-and-white sandal strap visually in such a way that it surpasses the representation of the object and suggests the creative process of the making of the sandal strap clearly and beautifully. Bongi's drawing tells us what any verbal—written or oral—research report of the same process and product cannot.

For me, these patterned straps are significantly valuable because they demonstrate how discarded tyres are transformed into beautiful, useful objects by the mastery of traditional craftspeople. When manufacturing my own straps, I explored making a variety of black-and-white designs. My interest in pattern making per se grew, and since then I have focused on creating patterns and prints using various media and processes. I now produce simple geometrically patterned artworks and jewel-like objects by laboriously removing what is immediately visible to reveal the beautiful pristine layers below. My office walls are lined with prototypes, test pieces, half made, and unusable objects—all results of my playful investigations.

The objects I make are multiply significant, not only in themselves but also in relation to my other pieces. None stands in isolation. All are linked in an elaborate network of idiosyncratic connections that generally tie my creative work together. Access to this network is possible via any single object, in this case, the black-and-white sandal strap.

Figure 12.4. Cutting the rubber straps (drawing by Bonginkosi Tshabalala, 2004)

The black-and-white sandal strap is more than it seems. While the sandal initially appears merely exotic, closer examination reveals its familiarity and then, excitingly, a whole new range of possibilities opens up. Its exotic appearance distracts from its premier everyday function of holding the sandal on the foot, enabling many hours of walking considerable distances.

Similarly, my educational research is more than its academic appearance, and is multiply significant and elaborately connected. The premier everyday function of my educational research is to explore the who, what, why, when, and how of my own learning and its influence on me, my learners, and colleagues. Initially, a research object requires persistent curiosity to reveal its dense, multifaceted characteristics, which suggest a variety of approaches, angles, and directions of examination leading to idiosyncratic developments and outcomes. The black-and-white sandal strap is my symbolic educational research interconnector, which suggests further effective learning prompts using interpersonal, dynamic, oral–aural–visual interactions such as games, demonstrations, arguments, and telling and acting stories, inter alia.

The serendipitous discovery of the patterned rubber strips has enriched me with a number of significant discoveries of skills, techniques, materials, and visual inspirations. Discoveries of things being other than what they seem, continue to direct, (in)form, and excite me as a practising artist–researcher–teacher.

Act III: If These Stones Could Talk… (Tamar Meskin and Tanya van der Walt)

Markers of Ideas

The stones, shoes, suitcase
As material vessels
Markers of ideas
A way to tell the stories
In past, present, and future. (Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, 2016)

An empty stage covered with pieces of paper, and a large pile of stones. Two women are on stage collecting the papers against a backdrop of three different image sets. The women speak alternately, placing stones on various pieces of paper.

Figure 12.5. Stones that keep the pages safe (photograph by Tanya van der Walt, 2009)

Figure 12.6. The room of shoes at Auschwitz Museum (photograph by Tanya van der Walt, 1999)

Figure 12.7. Suitcases in the Auschwitz Museum (photograph by Tanya van der Walt, 1999)

> *What do the objects—the stones (Figure 12.5), the shoes (Figure 12.6), the suitcases (Figure 12.7)—say? They tell stories, about process and product, about inspiration and manifestation in action, about memory and about creation. They speak about moments of serendipity, moments of connection, about finding ways to tell untellable stories. They tell about friendship and shared vision, and about honouring our dead, and inspiring our young.*

The objects examined here belong to a theatre piece we made—the *Front Lines* project (Meskin & Van der Walt, 2009, 2010, 2011, see Figure 12.8). *Front Lines* chronicled the narratives of 20th- and 21st-century wars and conflicts and the consequences of those conflicts on all those involved, including combatants and civilians, journalists and historians, among others.

Figure 12.8. Images from the production of FrontLine, *featuring performers Nhlakanipho Manqele (left) and Sfiso Ndlovu (right) (photographs taken by Val Adamson, 2010)*

Our creative process was prompted by our observation that the South African Border War[5]—a war fought by most of the South African white men of our generation—has largely been erased from recorded history. The *FrontLines* project grew as we discovered many voices that needed to be heard in the letters we collected between soldiers and their lovers, parents, siblings, and friends. These letters of longing and grief, hope and fear, formed the bulk of the play text but we also included eyewitness reports, journalistic material, poetry, and personal reflections of those affected directly by conflict. These reflections included subject matter that was profoundly personal: three of our grandfathers fought in World War II, two were prisoners of war, and one had been in Auschwitz. All these writings were objects infused with layers of meaning and metaphor shaped into a theatrical script.

Unlike the other art forms described in this chapter, theatre is a dynamic art that produces no direct material product for interrogation, rendering research of any theatrical event idiosyncratically and uniquely challenging. Theatrical events exist in the personal and group memories of the interactive lived experiences of theatre artists, their audiences, and critics. While the memories and feelings generated by the theatrical event can be explored for deeper understandings and insights into our practice as artist–researcher–teachers, they are themselves difficult to research—presenting a lacuna of direct evidence. This lacuna can be partially addressed using objects; understanding that shoes are not just shoes, recognises the profound power that resides in objects in the theatrical context.

In *Front Lines*, the objects—the shoes, suitcases and stones—were multifaceted and multi purposed, serving as

- the tellers of the stories of all the participants in the theatrical event;
- both material markers of creative catalysts, and carriers of multiple interpretations of intangible and complex ideas during performance;
- material vessels for much of the work's emotional weight and power, holding the memories and feelings connected to the theatrical event;
- touchstones for the performers, facilitating empathetic connections with material that was chronologically, geographically, and emotionally largely outside of our students' lived experience;
- primary signifiers of our teaching and the learning of our student participants, both informing our educational insights;
- lenses for reflective exploration and interrogation of the making of *Front Lines,* our influence on the event, and its impact on our self-study research personae.

The objects lift the work from the general into the particular. Their physicality opens the gates of remembrance for unseen faces and unheard voices lost in the sensory cacophony of conflict. The index of items—the detritus of lost lives—refreshes and reimagines the horror, transcending the words we speak and write.

By rethinking these objects as vehicles for our educational research journey, we see that they have symbolic connotations derived from our own lived experiences of historical images and artefacts in sociocultural contexts. Objects capture the visceral, personal, entangled, emotional layers necessary to express the inexpressible; but they are not simply metaphoric theatrical devices to serve as a point of inspiration. The shoes, suitcases, and stones also occupy (im)material spaces, becoming anchor points from which to remember, to narrate, and to unpack our acts of creation.

Much of our self-reflexive process grapples with a variety of dynamic interpretative multiplicities subject to context and perspective. The interpretations of those involved in the production have an emic view, those viewing the production have an etic view, and all have an idiosyncratic view reflecting their personal lived experiences. Our resonances reflect our personal memories and family histories, the process of our researching and writing, directing and performing, our friendship and collaboration, and our individual thinking about teaching and learning and research.

In connecting the theatre-making project and our teaching process, the production and the objects, specifically, work to make the obscure familiar. In the production, the discarded shoes of unknown and unknowable ownership are active complex representations of multiple individual past lives and their reimaginings in our present, and potential future; the empty, battered, bruised, stained suitcases are redolent with memories and stories; the stones are grave markers, reifying innumerable tragedies and resonating incalculable loss.

As shown in Kathleen's poetic summation, all objects are markers of ideas, offering nodal points for reflection, inviting the student actors and, later, the audience to walk in others' shoes, generating empathetic understanding of human, social, and educational imperatives: A way to tell the stories/In past, present, and future.

Act IV: Rising Action, Crisis, and Climax—Coffee Conversations

During the writing of this chapter, we—Lee, Chris, Tamar, and Tanya—met together over coffee with Kathleen to share and audio record our object-inspired explorations and writings. Our discussions revealed our passionate (dis)agreements as a/r/t/ographers, generating new meanings and connections, learning and understanding, and awareness of how and where our object pieces and their narratives might lead us. In our conversations, we demanded better explanations of our objects from each other, resulting in us each gaining insights into our own perspectives, and enabling us to recognise and appreciate our commonalities and differences as artist–researcher–teachers.

The audio recordings of these discussions, as well as further written responses, were used as material for this fourth act of our play, in which our self-reflexive thoughts are represented in rising actions, crises, and climaxes. Tamar composed a first draft of the act, which was then revised and condensed in dialogue with the authors and two peer reviewers. Each of the four scenes that follow reveals our novel insights into how and why we use objects in our artistic, research, and teaching processes.

Scene 1: Using Objects in the Artistic Process

> *Tanya:* Our discussions reveal that we differ on why and how we make art, yet we agree that the art-making process transmogrifies objects, revealing layered and textured meanings, which are metaphoric, pivotal, and personal. As metaphors, the objects catalyse our creativity, revealing a range of contextualised meanings. Viewer perspectives of the object or work reveal idiosyncratic interpretations, all valuable and valid, nonetheless. None is worthless.
>
> *Tamar:* As pivots, the objects present changing perspectives for learning and reflection. As personal signifiers, objects infuse our work with memories of our lived experiences.

Lee: My pivotal realisation that symbolic and metaphoric meaning could be induced from an object grew out of my playfully painting a portrait of the suitcase. I saw that it is in the act of playful art making that the created object gains status. My playfully giving the suitcase the status of the subject of a portrait importantly exemplified the value of play in my creative endeavours. My painting the portrait revealed to me the holistic magnitude and significance of the suitcase—my memory hold-all—as an artistic/educational/scholarly prompt.

Chris: I realise I operate creatively and purposefully in numerous ways and on numerous levels. I explore for the sake of exploring. I find exploring helpful to see, make, and use the objects in my immediate surroundings to make conceptual connections. Playfully exploring the qualities and capacities of materials, and making artistic objects, helps me initiate conversations and engage with the world—in the present and for the future. I find that my artistic processes and products reveal the gaps, overlaps, and divergences that I have with the people around me and within myself.

Scene 2: Using Objects in the Research Process

Chris: A number of factors pertinent to the role of objects in the research process have and are emerging from my investigation into the black-and-white Zulu sandal strap, which has oscillated from explorative play to focused deadline-driven research activity. Consequently, I realise that an object becomes research worthy because it piques interest and prompts questions. I have also recognised that objects can play multiple research roles, depending on the participants involved. If I am the lone researcher, the object-informed research process might be seen purely as personal exploration or therapy; however, where a group is involved, the object can prompt conversations and catalyse action. Objects can be researched in ways that trigger and facilitate cultural insights and interactions, contributing to empathetic understanding of the other. Because I have experienced the black-and-white strap patterns from various cultural perspectives, I now understand that culture as context plays an important—if confusing and sometimes even contradictory—role in relation to the research of an object.

Tamar: As dramatic artists, we occupy a strange space within the academy because it is difficult to locate us or our work within the paradigms of conventional academic research. Perhaps it is because art invokes an infinite variety of seemingly irrational and irreconcilable characteristics in its forms of expression, processes, products, and interpretations that makes it inimical to the restrictions and demands of academic research. We find that using objects provides us with a point of departure in the research process to address the "messiness" of artistic creativity.

Tanya: The object, chameleon-like, changes according to the space it occupies: on the one hand, the artist's studio, classroom, and workshop, research seminar, and, on the other hand, the space of the relevant critical reflection perspective and lens. The objects, seen through the telescopic lens of our research, empower us to move between the world of making and the world of thinking, zooming in closely to examine nodal moments in our creative and educative practices. However disparate the process may appear, the object remains the tether between the artist self, the artwork, the collaborators, the learners, the viewers, and our reflection-engendered, prism-like perceptions of our artist–researcher–teacher journeys.

Lee: Objects are useful self-study research prompts in that they can facilitate both insider and outsider views and the relationship between them. When I use the object self-reflexively, I, as self-study researcher, find meaning inside and outside of my self, so that the insider and outsider views of my self-(un) awareness become mutually complementary. I think this happens because the object is both a hold-all of the insider tacit, embodied, and lived/living self-(un)awareness, and a conduit that can shift from the insider view of my self-(un)awareness to the outsider view of my self-(un)awareness, to (in)form my research practice in a balanced way.

Scene 3: Using Objects in the Teaching Process

Lee: I realise I have used objects extensively in my teaching practice without ever considering the objects' educational influence and research potential. Through the symposium, our conversations, reflections, and shared ideas, I have shifted from seeing only broad conceptual connections to being aware of conceptual intimacy, trajectories, and implications. By travelling the object-driven path, I have discovered anew the symbiosis of my artist–researcher–teacher practices. Working with the suitcase as metaphor has alerted me to key qualities in my teaching: empathy with feelings of exclusion, integrity to encourage students to value trustworthiness both in themselves and in others, an intuitive insight into my students' receptivity and my ability to modify my communication accordingly. When I teach, I realise that I am simultaneously seeking to (1) demonstrate a technique, skill, or principle to effect student learning and competence, (2) influence students to believe in their ability, and (3) aid students' understanding of the mutual relevance of (1) and (2) to the task at hand.

Chris: As a teacher, I need to make my students aware of the contexts within which they operate, not just in terms of the jewellery they produce but also in terms of the spaces they and their objects inhabit. I want to guide my students to find ways of anchoring their creative processes in their daily personal lives. My students often see the creative design process as magical and inscrutable,

so I want to find ways to make the design process more transparent for them so that they can experience being creative and apply their acquired skills in the design and manufacture of jewellery. I have also realised that I make different demands of myself and of my students. My own creative work happens in one of two ways: in undirected play, or when I have to meet the deadline of a brief. Yet oddly enough, I do not provide my students the same space for play nor impose the same types of deadlines for creative work. Perhaps I relax these demands assuming that it will encourage creative behaviour. So I now feel it would be useful to allow my students to engage in apparently unfocused design activity on the one hand, and to impose deadlines on some of their creative endeavours on the other.

Tamar: As teachers, we want students to function as global critical thinkers. The object(ification) of the real shoes, suitcases, and stones gave them meaning and significance beyond the literal, allowing us and our students to explore their concrete manifestation during the theatre-making action, and to create complex novel stories. Thinking of objects as springboards in the making of further objects, we can see how, through the artistic process, they are transformed and transforming, nurturing new meanings and learning, understanding and awareness.

Tanya: The object helps to unpack the creative work so that it can be recontextualised, provoking alternative understandings and insights and simultaneously revealing the intersections between the multiple roles we play in theatre and in life.

Scene 4: Climax. In this scene, as peers and friends, we express the value of the links between artist–researcher–teachers, engaging three threads—a/r/tography, communication, and evolution.

Lee: As an artist–researcher–teacher, I believe that my practices are linked, that my artistry includes my being able to teach what I practise, practise what I teach, and reflect and report on the what, who, when, where, why, and how of my practices in my research. I consider the critical conversations with friends an important contribution, prompting me to reassess what I know (or think I know) and opening me to new possibilities and directions. Consequently, I am now becoming aware of my reception of multiple sources of information—simultaneously coming, going, and influencing each other—in my creating, teaching, and researching moments. This symbiotic, holistic, tri-interdependency dynamically (in)forms itself in three or possibly four dimensions. I visualise it holographically—an-all-at-once-from-every-angle-in-a-matrix awareness of myself as artist–researcher–teacher. Self-reflexivity provides an organic connection between the artist, the researcher, and the teacher—the reflexive a/r/tographer. Reflexive a/r/tography crosses our delineated role boundaries

and explodes divisive and deceiving categories, allowing us to identify our commonalities. Possible insights, understandings, and relationships then emerge in a holograph—a prism-like view existing on all planes simultaneously, but inviting critical dialogue revealing our particularities.

Chris: Critical conversations between peers and friends allow us to explain our creative processes in detail to establish the commonalities of our creative activities, which are, surprisingly, more than I suspected. This suggests that sharing our learning experiences in future interactions could broaden our understanding of what constitutes and influences learning. I enjoyed sharing my belief that playing with materials and objects is key to artistry, its teaching and its research, and my experience of producing a wide range of creative artefacts by alternating between playful and focused activities. I would value exploring further the roles in learning, and sharing others' experiences of learning, in relation to context and perspective, playful experimentation and focus, mistakes and serendipitous surprises.

Tanya: Making art comes from our gut, our intuition, which imperatively prompts the flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) of artistic expression. When we make theatre, we experiment and play with a strong sense of what the theatrical event, and we, should say to an audience but, as artists, we must beware being overly opinion sensitive lest we edit ourselves into paralysis. The object pieces demonstrate how objects, individually, can evoke significant evolutionary change and, together, can influence an ever-broadening audience. We filter what we see and feel from the perspective and through the lens of our individual art form, so we cannot generalise about how and why we make and use art. In thinking and writing about our theatre making, teaching, and researching practices, we are aware of the slippage between our artist–researcher–teacher identities and practices. In prompting the creative process, the object transmogrifies; it is not the suitcase or stones themselves that are significant but the how and the what of the ensuing journey.

Tamar: A/r/tographical perspectives are artistic epistemologies that enable us to translate our artistic practices educationally and academically. Making, teaching, and researching art operates variously and idiosyncratically in terms of mindset, context, purpose, and audience. The object pieces demonstrate that the artist–researcher–teacher aspects of a/r/tography are interwoven, providing useful perspectives for interrogation into role delineation, the elision between them, and the possible interpretations of objects, making explicit what is implicit and offering glimpses into previously opaque artistic ways of knowing. It is key to see the a/r/tographic triad as an opportunity for challenging and insightful educational research, a powerful precept for creative artists who want to make art but also want to excavate their own practices not just as artists but also as thinkers, teachers, and researchers.

RESOLUTION

Our play has demonstrated for us the value of working with objects in our a/r/tographic practice in one possible story of many. Here, we elucidate our collective self-reflexive learning drawn from the play, in terms of how such object-driven exploration can connect to our work in educational research.

- Despite material concrete objects being constructed, used, and researched variously in different creative pursuits, we believe working with objects is applicable to all creative arts, and argue that engaging with any work of art as object offers significant and profound research possibilities.
- The object acts as a tether for the research and an anchor for the researcher's epistemological approach. Because the object is a tangible and observable artefact, it provides a reference point for the self-reflexive work that research into educational practice demands. Using the object as the starting point for the self-reflexive process gives the researcher a tool to make a bridge between their artist and teacher practices and research.
- When applied in self-reflexive research methodologies, object work can mediate the core principle of such research, where the artist–teacher is both the researcher and the researched.
- Objects enable subjective engagement with the core of creative practice. Subjectivity is often deemed a barrier in a research project because of the challenges of objectifying the human condition and experience. The tangibility of the object facilitates research connections between the subject–object, shared memories of lived experiences, art, and teaching.
- The object can catalyse the making, researching, and teaching of art by providing a lens through which to frame and explore, reflexively, the artist self, the teacher self, and the researcher self.
- As creative artists and academics, we often feel a dissonance between the different aspects of our work. Using objects offers a way to ameliorate this dissonance, making the spaces between our art, our teaching, and our research more easily navigable. The materialness of the object provides a tangible thread linking the practice to the research, where both are equally significant. When we use the object to research the creative processes that produce the object, a methodological approach for the rigorous interrogation of that process emerges.
- Unpacking the multiple planes of thinking encoded in the objects provides a uniquely flexible and elastic approach to analysis that negotiates the slippage between our identities as artist–researcher–teachers.
- Our work with object pieces reveals complex, multi-layered, entangled responses that move between self and other, past and present, creativity and self-reflexivity, doing and thinking, practice and critique. This knowledge can be understood as a holographic matrix, an image that aptly captures the nonlinear, sometimes chaotic, often deeply personal process of creativity, as well as the challenge of negotiating such creativity theoretically in a research context. Understanding this

matrix-like structure provides a frame in which to position our work. We believe that the object work offers a key with which to unlock the a/r/tographic construct of visceral and intuitive research inquiry.

EPILOGUE: REFLECTING ON THIS PRODUCTION

We all work in different fields and yet we all work with objects. The improvisational journey the objects have taken us on has enabled a vivid dialogue and multi-vocal conversation that engenders an opening up of knowledge, a release from convention, and the potential to develop a methodology for creating, researching, teaching, and learning that engages with the multi-layered human experience. In this chapter, we have brought together different methods of working, making, teaching, and researching, and have allowed them to speak to and with each other through the objects. For us, this is an exciting and accessible process, offering ways to interrogate artist–researcher–teacher practice, engage in collaborative learning, and to move past the—often daunting—difficulty of words as a starting point. Overall, the object pieces in this chapter converge in a medley that reveals resonances between art and design, memory, story, and self-reflexivity, showing how creative meaning making through and with object inquiry can enhance personal–professional learning and stimulate new possibilities for educational research understandings within and beyond the arena of arts and design.

Shoes, Suitcases, Stones

Memory vessels
Material stories
Points of departure
Crossing over and over
Past, present, future, and past. (Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, 2016)

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NOTES

[1] As described by Sullivan (2006, p. 25): "A/r/tography references the multiple roles of Artist, Researcher and Teacher, as the frame of reference through which art practice is explored as a site for inquiry. A useful way to consider these roles as research practices may be to view the Artist as someone who en-acts and embodies creative and critical inquiry; the Researcher acts in relation to

the culture of the research community; and the Teacher re-acts in ways that involve others in artistic inquiry and educational outcomes."

[2] The research symposium and exhibition took place in Durban, South Africa, on 3–5 February, 2016. The focus was on better understanding the personal and social meanings of everyday objects and the significance of this for educational research.

[3] The prompts were adapted from Samaras (2011, pp. 105–106).

[4] The tanka is a traditional Japanese poetic format that is increasingly being used in qualitative research to explore personally and socially challenging experiences (Breckenridge, 2016).

[5] Also known as the Namibian War of Independence.

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THERESA CHISANGA AND INBANATHAN NAICKER

13. A RELIGIOUS OBJECT MEDLEY

Objects as Signifiers of the Values, Beliefs, and Practices of Servant Leaders

> Servant leadership is a philosophy and set of practices that enriches the lives of individuals, builds better organizations and ultimately creates a more just and caring world.
>
> (Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership, 1999)

INTRODUCTION

I am Theresa Chisanga, an academic with specialisation in linguistics and English language studies, a researcher with a research bias in sociolinguistics, a head of department, and a former university chaplain for Catholic students at a South African university. I was born in Zambia and grew up in a rural district called Mpika. I received my primary and secondary education at Catholic mission schools in Zambia, completed my undergraduate studies in Zambia, and postgraduate studies in England. I have 37 years teaching experience in higher education having taught at the University of Zambia and University of Swaziland before moving to the university where I currently teach in South Africa. This university is a historically black, poorly resourced, university located in a rural area. The students who attend the university hail from poor backgrounds and have attended historically disadvantaged schools. Many of them have not been prepared for university life by their schools. For example, many students encounter a computer for the first time on arriving at the university. We have large numbers of students who are not university ready. To add to our woes, we do not have enough staff or the requisite facilities to adequately assist many of the students.

Since participating in an international symposium and exhibition[1] on object inquiry last year, I have become intrigued by the influence of objects in our daily lives, and the multiple meanings and understandings objects have in our personal and professional lives. When I was invited by Daisy Pillay, Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, and Inbanathan (Inba) Naicker to put together a short object piece for this book, I wrote a 3-page narrative on a picture that I acquired from a religious calendar, depicting Jesus Christ washing the feet of his disciples. Some time passed and Inba got back to me with a very interesting proposition. It related to another

D. Pillay et al. (Eds.), Object Medleys, 197–213.

piece of writing I had done approximately one and a half years earlier, which Daisy, Kathleen, and Inba had had the opportunity of reading. It was, in fact, Kathleen who sowed the seeds for that piece of writing. I vividly recall Kathleen walking into my office one morning and commenting that the objects on my wall would make a great piece for reflective writing. Kathleen then provided some advice as to how this could be done. Buoyed by her comments, I put together a draft manuscript of my thoughts on the objects. Inba reminded me of this work and remarked that my draft manuscript comprised a number of object pieces woven together as a medley. He requested that we work together and use the medley of object pieces as a basis for this book chapter. I was quite excited about this and replied in the affirmative.

Inba teaches and researches in the discipline of education leadership and management at a South African university. He is a practising Hindu belonging to the Tamil sect. He is a staunch follower of the teachings of the late Sri Sathya Sai Baba who was a renowned and respected world teacher. The key teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba are contained in the many discourses he delivered to his followers across the world. Some of the key messages he conveyed include "Love all and serve all," "Hands that serve are holier than lips that pray," "Service to man is service to God" (Sai Baba, n.d.-a), and "We should always be servants. … It is only in servitude lies leadership" (Sai Baba, n.d.-b).

Inba began working with me to put the chapter together. After several readings of my five object pieces, we noted that the narratives seemed to portray my values, beliefs, traditions, and practices in both my personal and professional lives of service to people (Prown, 1982; Turkle, 2007). Hence, we began looking at my objects as symbolic of my values, beliefs, and practices of being a servant leader. Thus, the key focus of the chapter is to explore the role of objects as signifiers of the values, beliefs, and practices of servant leaders.

The chapter commences with a brief account of our understandings of the concept of servant leadership, drawing on relevant scholarship. What follows is a presentation of the medley of five object pieces commencing with a brief rationale for the choice of these five objects. Thereafter, Inba and I collectively explicate what we learned about objects as signifiers of values, beliefs, and practices of a servant leader in education stemming from the five object pieces. We conclude the chapter by drawing together some reflections on conducting this object inquiry.

WHAT IS SERVANT LEADERSHIP?

Servant leadership, a leadership typology premised on the notion that the prime motivation for leadership should be the desire to serve, was popularised in the 1970s by Robert Greenleaf (Russell & Stone, 2002). In response to organisational leadership of the time that was prone to hierarchical structures, power over people, manipulation of people, and exploitative practices, Greenleaf proposed a more caring and humanitarian approach to leadership where leaders assume the position of servant in their relationship with people (Chathury, 2008; Russell & Stone, 2002).

The thrust of servant leadership is an innate desire or feeling that one wants "to serve first [and] then … lead as a servant" (Cerit, 2009, p. 601). Spears (1996, p. 33) explained servant leadership as follows:

> [It] puts serving others as the number one priority. Servant-leadership emphasizes increased service to others; a holistic approach to work; promoting a sense of community; and the sharing of power in decision-making.

The primary focus of the servant leader is on the follower (human element) rather than on the organisation or institution, which is seen as a secondary focus (Cerit, 2009). The servant leader acts as a steward to the follower. Servant leaders regard "followers as people who have been entrusted to them to be elevated to their better selves and to be what they are capable of becoming" (Sendjaya, 2015, p. 2). Through empowerment and development of the follower, the assumption is that the follower will raise her or his productivity and organisational goals will indirectly be realised. Relevant to the Southern African context are the connections made between servant leadership and the Southern African philosophy of *ubuntu* (Ngunjiri, 2016). The thrust of ubuntu is that in order for one to develop and grow one needs the assistance and support of others (Msila, 2008). "Spirited Ubuntu leadership" resonates much more closely with servant leadership (Ndlovu, 2013, p. 221), and is described by Ndlovu as "a blend of servant leadership, motherhood and Ubuntu values, and it is about communal service and having concern for others' growth, empowering others and having concern for social justice issues that affect the community at large" (2013, p. 223).

The practice of servant leadership is dependent on the values, beliefs, and attributes of the leader. It is about the leader's internal make up (Chathury, 2008) and "what engages, enlivens and enlightens the inner core" of the leader (Bush, 2010, p. 402). One just cannot get up one day and proclaim, I am a servant leader. Rather, it is about who the leader is (identity) and a way of being. In practice, many leaders possess beliefs and values such as care, compassion, integrity, honesty, and benevolence informed by their religious affiliations. It is often these repertoires of values and beliefs connected to their spirituality that underpin their servant leadership practices (Bush, 2010).

Servant leaders possess a range of attributes linked to service. Their attributes are directed towards the upliftment and benefit of others even when personal sacrifice is required. According to Laub (1999; cited in Cerit, 2009), the following six attributes characterise servant leadership behaviour:

- Valuing people—servant leaders put the needs of others first. They lend a listening ear to followers and believe in the good of people.
- Developing people—building capacity and empowering people is central to a servant leader's practice. In developing people, they model appropriate behaviour.
- Building community—collaboration is key to servant leadership. Servant leaders build relationships among people.

- Displaying authenticity—values such as trust, transparency, integrity, and accountability underpin a servant leader's practice.
- Providing leadership—servant leaders take the initiative and provide visions of a better future for all people.
- Sharing leadership—leadership is not seen as the sole preserve of the leader. Rather, servant leaders share leadership with others in the organisation.

Similarly, Larry Spears, CEO of the Greenleaf Centre, identified the following ten attributes of the servant leader: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership, 1999). From both sets of attributes above, there is considerable overlap as to what constitutes servant leadership behaviours. Informed by the above discussion on servant leadership, we next turn our attention to Theresa's object medley where the values, beliefs, and practices of servant leadership become evident.

THERESA'S OBJECT MEDLEY

In what follows, Theresa presents a medley of objects that adorn the wall of her office at her university campus (see Figure 13.1). The objects are pictures that serve as windows to her values, beliefs, and practices. Theresa commences by providing a rationale for the selection of this medley of objects. Thereafter, she presents her five interconnected object pieces.

Figure 13.1. The medley of objects as it appears on the wall in Theresa's office

Why This Medley of Objects?

Many people surround themselves in their homes and offices with images of things and people they love such as family members, famous people, and paintings of people and objects. Likewise, I surround myself with images of religious significance and bible stories. Over the years, these have come to mean the world to me. Since leaving home as a teenager for a Catholic girls-only boarding school, until now, the most available and trusted friend to me has been God. Not that I knew Him all that well in those days, just that He was always there for me, day and night, 24/7. No one else could be that available. I have also come to learn and strongly believe that the principles espoused in the gospels, also known as the good news, are principles that one can proudly stand on. Principles of faith, of love, and of hope: principles that value human life and human beings irrespective of creed, colour, or social standing.

These values have come in handy in my university teaching of a rather difficult subject: teaching the structure and usage of the English language to undergraduate students. Difficult because it is closer to a foreign language than a second language to my students. For me it is also not my first language and despite many years of training in the language, I claim to be no expert. This notwithstanding, I have spent many years trying to devise the best way to approach the teaching of the subject. When I sometimes see lost looks on the faces of my students, they remind me not only of where I have come from but, more importantly, of where I need to take them. I empathise with their plight, and show patience and tolerance. I spend lots of time listening and learning from my students too.

I often gaze at the medley of objects and draw inspiration from it when my day is not going well. These objects are reassuring to me because they give me peace of mind. They instil in me a sense of patience, encouragement, love, and hope. They remind me that there is someone who cares and who has lived his life by example, giving hope to the hopeless, dignity to the sick, the poor, and oppressed. Basically, restoring life where oppressive systems and powerful people were denying people life with dignity. They are my guidelines, my moral compass in difficult and trying times.

I have chosen five pictures from that object medley to focus on in this chapter. They are the pictures titled "Washing of the Feet," "Let the Children Come to Me," "Mother Teresa of Calcutta," "John Paul II Holding a Baby," and "Enjoy Mother's Day." In the following section, I explain each one of them and reflect on what they mean to me.

Object Piece 1: "Washing of the Feet"

This object is a picture depicting Jesus Christ washing the feet of his disciples (see Figure 13.2). I extracted the picture from a 2010 religious calendar published by Pauline Publications Africa, which is located in Nairobi, Kenya. Annually, the Catholic Church produces, and sells for a modest fee to its followers, a calendar

with suggested daily scripture readings printed on it. Atop each calendar month is an attractive, colourful, eye-catching religious picture with a relevant caption. In addition to the caption, there is a strong underlying message or story often reflecting the theme of the readings. The calendars are meant to encourage followers to devote time to reading the word of God on a daily basis. Every year I make it my duty to buy a copy of the calendar for myself. As chaplain of the Association of Catholic Tertiary Students (ACTS), I often have to deliver religious discourses. The calendar has helped me tremendously in accessing relevant scriptures for church events. It assists me in preparing for the weekly Saturday bible sharing sessions I have with the students in preparation for Sunday service.

Figure 13.2. Jesus washing the feet of his disciples

I have developed a habit of cutting out pictures from the religious calendar that have moved me spiritually. I take these to my office at the university and paste them on the wall. This picture was the first picture from the many calendars to adorn my office wall. Since then, my collection has grown into an impressive, colourful medley of objects on my wall (as you can see from Figure 13.1).

The picture recounts the gospel story that is often read and told during Easter in most Christian churches and homes around the world. It is the story of a great teacher of humility, of love, of care, and of servant leadership. It is about the symbolic gesture of Jesus taking a towel, wrapping it around his waist, and going

down on his knees to wash the feet of his disciples. Peter (the disciple whose feet Jesus is washing) and the other disciples are astounded that their leader would wash their feet. This act of someone known to them as the "master" and "teacher" washing their feet is unimaginable. Jesus was simply setting an example of how we should relate to our fellow beings. Being the ultimate teacher, Jesus showed them that to be a good teacher one must bring oneself down to the level of the people one serves. The titles and positions we hold in the material world amount to nothing if we are not ready to strip ourselves of them in our interactions with people. It should not matter who they are or what they look like. They are fellow human beings first and gardeners, plumbers, teachers, lawyers, women, homeless people, black people, or white people, second. We have to meet them at that point where we connect as one. We must meet them at the level of the human spirit. If this requires of us to take off our shoes or roll up our sleeves and ready ourselves for dirty work in order to connect with and serve our fellow beings, then so be it.

The story captured by this picture is a reminder to me about the possibilities of opening the self up to learning something new even though we may hold views that are not congruent with what is being transmitted. For me, the storyline captured in this object is a powerful lesson related to my job as a lecturer and teacher. It is about unconditional service to others. It is about the triumph of servant leadership. It is a reminder to me of how I should relate to my students and to people in whose eyes I am perhaps someone "big." I am thinking here of the titles that seem to go in front of us, especially in places like universities and hospitals. It is easy for one to become consumed by the thought that you are indeed better and perhaps even more powerful than others. Jesus, however, showed us a different side to position and power. He demonstrated how power should be used in service of others—how position should be used to contribute to building a better society. In the story captured by the picture, Peter (a disciple) and the others were instructed to go and do what Jesus had done for them to others—to become servants of the people. Imagine what a world this would be if we all discharged our responsibilities with that spirit.

I am always reflective about my practice. Consequently, I always ask myself the questions: What will it take for me to get my students to walk with me, and me with them? What would make them comfortable and ready to open up and begin to engage with the subject I am here to teach? What would it take for them and for me to enjoy the activity? In this regard, the picture challenges me every time I set eyes on it. I know I have to prepare my lectures thoroughly to connect with my students with confidence. I have to imagine myself in their shoes. I once was where they are now. I remember the many people who have kneeled before me and "washed my feet" when I was what society would perhaps refer to as a "nobody." My life experience has ingrained in me a spirit of ubuntu that has motivated me to be there for my students. It has encouraged me to make a special effort to walk with my students in the very rural and under resourced environment in which I teach.

Object Piece 2: "Let the Children Come to Me"

This object is a picture (see Figure 13.3) extracted from a different page of the calendar mentioned above (Object Piece 1). The picture resonates with me as a teacher of students who experience enormous challenges with the learning of English for two reasons. First, because English is not their mother tongue and second, because many of them hail from poorly resourced, dysfunctional schools[2] where the quality of education is far from ideal. Despite their under preparedness for university life, they arrive at university full of optimism and expect to be supported by us as university teachers. That scenario reminds me of the bible story, "Let the Children Come to Me," which is the crux of this picture. It shows the children being brought to Jesus by their parents so that he can touch them and bless them. Jesus' disciples, however, rebuked the parents for bothering Jesus. Jesus' response was, "Let the children come to me" (Matthew, 19: pp. 13–14, New Living Translation bible). He welcomed the children and displayed unconditional love and compassion towards them. He made time to embrace each and every child who came to him.

Figure 13.3. Jesus touching and blessing children

The majority of my students come from poor families. Many of them are first-generation university students in these family units. When they arrive at university, they harbour hopes of graduating and making a better life for themselves and their

families. They are, however, not always equipped with the basic language competence to read advanced texts and reference books, let alone sophisticated literary texts in English. Consequently, they struggle to comprehend the work entrusted to them. These students are a mirror image of me when I first went to school. It was only the understanding, commitment, love, and sacrifices of my parents and teachers that saw me finish school. My parents and teachers adopted an attitude different from the disciples. Instead of protecting themselves from the responsibility of looking after children like me, they said, "Let her come in," or "Let's give her a chance." Without that, I would not have gone far.

In this picture, the children are happy, comfortable, and at peace. It reminds me of a learning and teaching environment that is tranquil and where everybody is having fun, learning. In my pedagogy, as far as the learners are concerned, each one is always at the centre of my attention as much as I am to theirs. Together we carve a path leading to the understanding of even the most difficult concepts in English. In the past I used to be at pains to explain myself in order to "make them" understand. Nowadays, we take collective responsibility for that. I sometimes give them a topic and let them go and explore and read about it and return to share their research in the next class. They come back and report with great enthusiasm. My role is to clarify in an unobtrusive way and guide them to a point where all show understanding. I have a collection of some of the reflections of the students on this way of learning. They are mostly very positive. This is an extract from one student's written comment:

> The class was good. I never experienced a class like this one before in English. We all as students has been given an opportunity to express our views, having lots of attempts. I mean, I learnt a lot of things some of them I haven't heard them last year but today I gained and learnt a lot. I wish that all the classes may be like this one. (Personal communication, March 4, 2015)

I had always practised some of these methods with the postgraduate students. However, with the undergraduate students it was not always possible because you are always trying to complete the syllabus owing to the periodic student strikes[3] and unscheduled university closures.[4] I am now more relaxed about my pedagogy. My gaze now is on getting students to understand a little bit of something, rather than providing a whole lot of information that just goes over their heads. Once again, here, Jesus is my great teacher and role model in inculcating in me a positive attitude towards the slower students.

Object Piece 3: "Mother Teresa of Calcutta"

This picture (see Figure 13.4) with a prayer attached to it is freely available as an e-card on the internet. I printed it and stuck it on my office wall several years ago because I found it quite intriguing. The prayer alone is a destroyer of the self in its selfless wish.

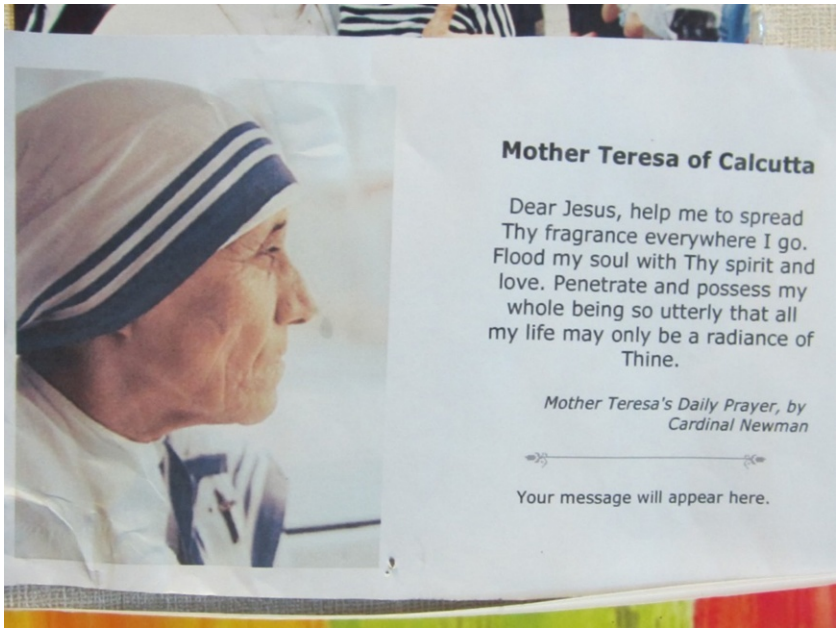

Figure 13.4. Mother Teresa and the prayer message

When one looks at the picture one notices the distant look in Mother Teresa's eyes and face, which simultaneously appears removed yet connected in an almost human-suffering way to this world. It is a look that also places her closer to the one whose values she espouses. It is one of reflection, contemplation, and prayer, asking to be strengthened, to be guided, to be given the power of Jesus to do what he was able to do despite the challenges of life around him. Her look also speaks of peace, and indicates a soul that has arrived at the secret of life. That secret has a great deal to do with little or no concern for the perishable things of this world, which many of us stress about a lot and which we allow to take away our peace. Mother Teresa gave up all material things and focussed on the love of God for the upliftment of the less fortunate. She derived her joy from that. There is also a resoluteness about her look. She is confident and determined to succeed no matter what.

In my life, there are far too many times when I feel challenged and consequently feel like giving up. This picture is a stark reminder to me of courage and to never give up no matter how tough the times. These days, I sometimes feel I am too old to try new things but when I look at this picture I see a shining example of an old and frail human being who lived to achieve the impossible. She accomplished this by simply giving herself completely to the love and care of the poor on the streets of Calcutta. I often ask myself, who am I to give up when I still have so much life within me? Indeed, who can dare give up after looking at Mother Teresa and her

work? She really inspires me to carry on. Mother Teresa is the epitome of the adage, "Nothing is impossible if you will it." She achieved much as a frail old woman, reminding me that it is never too late to learn something new, to achieve one's goals, and to serve others using whatever gift one has. For me, it is the gift of sharing my teaching experiences with others and sharing the principles of Jesus, as given in the gospel, with others.

Object Piece 4: "Pope John Paul II Holding a Baby"

This picture of Pope John Paul II (Figure 13.5) is from a publication whose origin I cannot even remember because it has been in my office since 2000. It was taken while he was on a visit to East Africa. The picture seems to strip John Paul II of his papal robes—the weighty title and the formal appearance. His face simply radiates the joy of a doting grandfather. The people around him are clearly seeing "The Pope" and are excited to be around him, hoping to reach out and touch him because he is an "important" world figure. However, he seems lost to them, and appears to be the privileged one holding someone very precious in his hands. Carrying the child seems to make him very happy. The childlike grin on his face speaks of the ultimate peace and joy that consumes him. The child, on the other hand, seems oblivious to

Figure 13.5. Pope John Paul II holding a baby

his special blessing. To him, he is just being carried by another adult, and this is just another ordinary event in his life. The child could not care less if it had been a man from the street who picked him up. The innocence of the little ones. The excitement and rejoicing at this papal gesture would have had more impact on his parents I am sure. They would have understood what this man means to them.

To me, here is an example of the meaninglessness of the titles and positions we hold. It is really the simple things in life that matter, like holding a baby in your hands. It matters more to me to have my students learn by whatever means than for me to insist they call me Professor and accept what I say unquestioningly. In my teaching, I believe it neither adds nor takes away from who I am deep inside, whether or not someone calls me Doctor, or Professor or, simply, Theresa. Titles, possessions cannot define me. I am defined by how much I add value to the lives of those around me. I would rather have my students relaxed and free to share their challenges with me than have them run away and hide when they see me coming because they are afraid of me.

Object Piece 5: "Enjoy Mother's Day"

I have chosen this object because somehow in my university life, this picture (it is actually craftwork that I refer to as a picture) makes me think of my other selves. Not Theresa the academic, but Theresa the university chaplain of the Catholic Church, a woman, a single mother, a foreigner in South Africa, and a lay person in the Church. When people ask me how it all happened for me, even I have difficulty explaining it. My life's journey has been most rewarding. Getting to know young people and experiencing them from the spiritual side and reliving my own youth through them has been remarkable.

"Enjoy Mother's Day" is an old picture (Figure 13.6) drawn and constructed by a student from Lesotho who is a member of ACTS. She used to make a variety of these pictures for Christmas, Easter, and even birthdays. She sold some of the pictures to make pocket money. This picture was presented to me as a gift from the collective ACTS on Mother's Day in 2006. It was something they had organised as a group. I am still in touch with the artist and many of those in her group. We have become a network of friends across the country and beyond. We often chat on social media and share our post-graduation developments.

To me there are many people embodied in this picture. They include the entire ACTS family at my university campus. It is representative of the different generations of this group of students over many years. ACTS for me represents another life: more or less, family life. It is built on the principles of active Christian life and espouses the values of love, sacrifice, and care—especially for the less fortunate.

This object to me symbolises the light at the end of the tunnel. The three lit candles stand for hope; all the struggles in my teaching, all the efforts in the sharing at church that culminate in the many messages I receive from these students are captured in this picture. I receive many of these in written form through social media from past

Figure 13.6. A picture drawn by a student

generations of students, telling me how I helped them survive and be where they are today. It is a symbol reminding me that there is something positive that I have done. I also receive recognition from the Church locally and internationally in the form of invitations to give keynote addresses at major church events.

The flowers surrounding the candles are almost like a presentation with the light (the candles) brightening the day. Having this delivered to me by the group on Mother's Day had a very special meaning. They knew I was far away from home and that I lived alone because my children have left home. They cared. ACTS is my family here. I support them and they support me. God's way of taking care of this otherwise lone servant. Reflecting on this object, years later, the artist of the picture had a very different take on it. She wrote:

> The three candles symbolized Prof as our mother who is walking in the light of God the Father, God the son and God the Holy Spirit. Of course, the flowers symbolize love. Love she had for us members and for society as a whole. (Personal communication, March 11, 2014)

ACTS is the main reason I have stayed in my current location for so long. I realised many years ago that although I took a job here in the English department, there was a deeper reason for my coming here. I have grown in ways I could not have imagined; I have experienced great things at a level that the naked eye cannot see. ACTS has stripped me of the ego associated with being a university lecturer, educated abroad, and who could have easily forgotten where she came from. The many faces in ACTS remind me of my roots and influence my teaching, learning, sensitivity, empathy, and the sense to seek other ways when necessary to make me a better teacher for the sake of my students.

THERESA'S OBJECTS AS SIGNIFIERS OF HER VALUES, BELIEFS, AND PRACTICES AS A SERVANT LEADER IN EDUCATION

This section presents Theresa and Inba's reflections on the objects as signifiers of the values, beliefs, and practices of Theresa as a servant leader in education. Mitchell (2011) reminded us that objects have denotative and connotative meanings. When we draw on the connotative meanings of objects, that is, the personal meanings and stories that objects evoke, we are granted entry into people's lives and their values, beliefs, and practices. Closer examination of the connotative meanings of Theresa's five object pieces reveals her values, beliefs, and practices as a servant leader.

Theresa has a strong affinity for people. As a servant leader, she values people and believes in transforming the lives of people through empowerment (Laub 1999; cited in Cerit, 2009). She is able to set aside her lofty titles and get down to the level of her students and see life through their eyes. This show of empathy allows her to comprehend how her students feel about their learning and her teaching (Powles, 2016). Through this experience, she is able to connect with her students and get to know their learning needs. In addressing their learning needs, she engages in a pedagogy that involves her students as partners in the learning process. She gets her students to take responsibility for their learning. In transforming the lives of her students, her empowerment of them is thus an inclusive process.

Three key issues about Theresa's practice are communicated by the object pieces. Firstly, there is the deep desire to serve which is a key marker of servant leadership (Powles, 2016). Theresa's desire to serve is driven by two key factors, namely, her life experiences and her religious affiliations. Her successes in life have largely been attributed to significant others such as her teachers and parents, who had a positive influence on her life. This has ingrained in her a spirit to do the same for others such as her students who are in need of assistance. Further, being a staunch Catholic and a university chaplain, her practice has been shaped by the teachings of Jesus, which her object pieces bear testimony to. Jesus himself is an epitome of servant leadership. Sendjaya (2015, p. 16) reminded us that the "principle of servant leadership has been taught and embodied by Jesus Christ and his disciples." Theresa thus models the servant leadership behaviours of Jesus in her practice. Secondly, Theresa's practice is about being selfless in her engagement with people. Her focus

is always on what she can do for others rather than what she can get for herself. Inspired by Mother Teresa, she has the intrinsic motivation to spread the seeds of her wisdom. She does this not through power and control but through displaying authenticity characterised by trust, care, love, compassion, and commitment (Cerit, 2009). Thirdly, Theresa is a self-reflective practitioner always questioning the self in terms of her pedagogy (Branson, 2007). The questioning of the self, however, is always centred on the value she is adding to her students' development because she wants to make a difference in their lives. She also reflects on student feedback on her teaching in order to improve her practice.

Reflecting on Theresa's leadership practice, she seems to enact a brand of indigenous servant leadership that embraces the Southern African philosophy of ubuntu. According to Ngunjiri (2016, p. 224), "ubuntu influences the ways that women leaders—specifically leaders for social justice—enact a spiritually empowered bold and courageous servant leadership, with the hope of building and bringing about some common good." Theresa's object pieces bear testimony to this. Her spiritual affiliations, which have in part shaped her values and beliefs, inform her leadership practice.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This chapter has shown the evocative nature of religious objects (Turkle, 2007), and how they are able to signify the values, beliefs, and practices of a servant leader. In the chapter, objects in the form of pictures served as tools for thought and expression (Samaras & Freese, 2006) to tease out values, beliefs, and practices of servant leadership. Exploration of Theresa's object medley has shown that visual images can be extremely powerful in representing and transmitting ideas and, therefore, can be invaluable in data generation in educational leadership research.

The way we do research can make a tangible contribution to understanding the personal and professional self (Mitchell, 2014). This object inquiry has shown how reflecting on her chosen pictures as objects assisted Theresa to think deeply about her day-to-day experiences, and engage critically with her positionality and work as academic, researcher, head of department, and university chaplain. Telling her story via the object pieces and reflecting on it, it has made her cognisant of, and reaffirmed, her role as a servant leader. It brought to the fore questions that she had to grapple with. For example, are we as academics and leaders prepared to go down to the level of the students and serve them selflessly so that their true potential may be realised? And what will it take for us to get our students to walk with us, and us with them? For Theresa, these are not simple issues to resolve but she grapples with them daily because of her values, beliefs, and practices as a servant leader.

Writing this chapter with Theresa has also been a learning experience for Inba, who belongs to a different religious denomination. Nonetheless, the religious principles to which Inba subscribes seem to mirror the Christian values and beliefs that underpin Theresa's practice of servant leadership. The adages that Inba refers to

with regard to his spiritual teacher, Sri Sathya Sai Baba, all seem to carry undertones of service and servant leadership. Thus, the chapter shows that irrespective of one's religious affiliation, there will be objects related to one's religious or spiritual life and practice that can be explored in terms of one's lived values, beliefs, and practices.

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NOTES

[1] A 3-day international symposium and exhibition titled, *"Not Just an Object": Making Meaning of and from Everyday Objects in Educational Research,* 3–5 February, 2016, Durban, South Africa.

[2] Dysfunctional schools are schools in South Africa where a culture of teaching and learning is virtually nonexistent.

[3] In South African higher education institutions, students sometimes engage in protest action in order to get university authorities to listen to their demands.

[4] When student protests get violent, university authorities close the university in order to prevent harm to non-striking students and damage to university property.

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Tamar Meskin is a doctoral student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, using personal history self-study methodology to investigate her directing practice as a theatre maker and drama lecturer in a university context. Since obtaining her MFA in acting from the University of California, United States, her practice has focused increasingly on directing, and self-study has provided the opportunity to interrogate the nature and function of that practice within a higher education context. She is particularly interested in the potential applicability of self-study approaches to practice-based/led research in the performing arts, and has explored this connection with her colleague and research partner, Tanya van der Walt.

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Kate Pahl is Professor of Literacies in Education at the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom. Her work is currently concerned with arts methodologies for social cohesion, with a particular focus on communities and ways of knowing. Her book, *Materializing Literacies in Communities*, was published by Bloomsbury in 2014. She is also the author, with Keri Facer, of *Understanding Collaborative Interdisciplinary Research: Beyond Impact* (Policy 2017). She is also interested in researching literacy and language practices with communities in everyday settings.

Haleh Raissadat is a doctoral student in educational studies at McGill University, Canada. She also has a BEng. (Software Engineering) and MA (Educational Technology). Witnessing stigmas around HIV and AIDS in conservative cultures, she was encouraged to pursue her doctorate in gender-based, age-appropriate, and culturally sensitive HIV and AIDS education interventions. Her research focuses on educating girls in Iran using arts-based participatory methodologies. Her doctoral topic grew out of her master's degree where she designed an online course to promote positive attitudes towards safer sex practices among young adults. She is also a math learning specialist at Concordia University, Canada.

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Shauna Rak is a doctoral student in the Faculty of Education at McGill University, Canada. Her current research explores how the ongoing legacy of the Holocaust can be approached through various pedagogical spaces by drawing on theories of multisensory learning, postmemory, and oral history. Shauna's preferred art forms are painting and assemblage, often portraying abstract expressionism and surreal images. Shauna is also a teacher of art education and has had the privilege of working in various classrooms and community art centres across Canada with children, adolescents, and adults in an effort to enrich their lives through the arts.

Zanib Rasool has worked 30 years in the voluntary/community sector, and is currently studying for a doctorate in education on the EdD programme at the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom. She is a community researcher on the Sheffield University-led collaborative project, Imagine, funded by the ESRC. She is also coeditor of the book, *Re-Imagining Contested Communities: Connecting Rotherham Through Research,* to be published in 2018. She was researcher on Threads of Time, a coproduced participatory arts project funded by AHRC's Connected Communities Festival 2016. She is Community Co-Investigator on the AHRC-funded project called, Taking Yourselves Seriously: Artistic Approaches to Social Cohesion.

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Lee Scott is an artist creative who teaches in the Department of Fashion and Textiles at the Durban University of Technology, South Africa. For her Master of Technology, she explored the symbiotic interrelationships between her practices as artist researcher and teacher. Through the unpacking of her values and their influence on her practices, she found a common denominator linked them. Play, as a value and as process, she believes, can also be a tool fundamental to self-learning. As both artist creative and educator, she is now unpacking the objects she painted as part of the practical output for her master's. These symbolic objects and their metaphorical weight are leading her down new research paths.

Asheena Singh-Pillay is a lecturer in science and technology education at the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. She promotes a socially just and relevant science and technology education (including education for sustainable development), positioning science education as one source of knowledge among alternative knowledge systems. She lectures on the processing of plastics to preservice technology teachers via an education for sustainable development lens. Her quest for new ways to conduct and (re)present research led her to join the New Scholarship project for early career academics. It was within this project that her deep interest in self-study, arts-based research, and object inquiry was initiated.

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Lisa J. Starr is an assistant professor at McGill University, Canada, in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education, and President of the Canadian Association for the Study of Women and Education. She completed her doctoral degree in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Victoria, Canada. She received a Master of Arts degree in administration and supervision from the University of Phoenix, United States, while working as a secondary teacher overseas. Her teaching career led her from Canada to Pakistan, Kuwait, Mongolia, and back to Canada. Her travels created a passion for the study of the relationship between identity and culture, particularly in relation to educational effectiveness, leadership, preparation of teachers, and gender equity. Her current research focus is the use of autoethnography and self-study as means to investigate, understand, and make meaning of the intersections inherent in 21st-century leading and learning.

Tanya van der Walt is a freelance researcher and theatre maker. Her primary research interests are in the areas of directing, acting, and drama- and theatre-in-education. She is currently pursuing doctoral research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, using self-study methodologies to investigate the co-construction of knowledge in the process of theatre making. Her undergraduate studies were conducted at the University of Natal (Durban) and she holds a master's degree in drama from Rhodes University, South Africa. Her career in theatre has included such diverse activities as stage management, lighting design, arts administration, marketing and publicity, acting, directing, writing, and teaching. She also has extensive experience in formulating and facilitating theatre-in-education projects.

Adelheid Camilla von Maltitz completed her bachelor's degree in fine arts in 2005, her master's degree in fine arts in 2009, and is currently reading for her doctorate in fine arts at the University of the Free State, South Africa. She is a lecturer in drawing and sculpture at her alma mater. Her research is concerned with the complexities of death, place, and memory at roadside memorials in South Africa. She has participated in several local and international exhibitions.

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