

PART 3

Participatory and Subject-Centered Approaches





Community-Based Participatory Video and Social Action in Rural South Africa

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INTRODUCTION

The essence of community-based participatory video can be found, we believe, in the words of a member of a rural community who, upon viewing a video created by other members of the community, commented: ‘...it is easy to understand a thing if it means you sit with him/her and talk about the matter... rather than standing in front of them.’ This equaling of power relations creates a space for dynamic interaction around topics that have often been kept silent in rural southern African communities ravaged by HIV and AIDS, where communication at various levels, as well as between generations, has often been difficult.

Video in participatory research has been used in a number of ways in social science research, usually under the umbrella of such terms as collaborative video, community video and participatory video. Marcus Banks (2001), Sarah Pink (2001) and others refer to *collaborative video* as a process where the

researcher or community worker works with a group of participants to create a video production, whereas in *participatory video* the process involves a group of participants primarily constructing their own video texts with only minimal assistance from the research team. The approaches are not entirely different from one another; even within the community project we describe here, degrees of participation and collaboration can vary.

Following the work of Mak (2006), Nair and White (2003) and Goldfarb (2002), ‘participatory’ refers not only to the ways in which community members are involved with creating the video narrative but also to the ways in which the video text itself can function as a catalyst or trigger in post-screening discussions. Thus, for example, in some of our previous video-making work with young people from Khayelitsha and Atlantis, two townships near Cape Town, where we produced the HIV and AIDS-focused video documentary, *Fire + Hope*,

it was not the technology side of the production process that served as a catalyst to critical reflection, but rather the participation of youth as informants/interviewees in the video itself, and as co-directors in determining the key themes to be addressed (Walsh and Mitchell, 2006; Mitchell et al., 2007). In a related video-making project involving many of the same participants, Walsh worked with a group of young black filmmakers from township schools whose project was to turn the camera on white youth from more privileged schools. The resulting video, *Facing the Truth*, was highly participatory in its conceptualization, though the final product also involved the editing skills of Walsh as a filmmaker (Walsh, 2007). In the production of another series of community-based videos also focusing on HIV and AIDS (see Mak et al., 2004: *Our Photos, Our Videos, Our Stories*), participants engaged in all aspects of the video-making process, including mastering the technical side of editing, using Adobe® Premier®.

At the same time, the notion of community-based participatory video also refers to the engagement with a particular community and the relationships that are built up over time and as such contribute, we believe, to social change (Shratz and Walker, 1995).

The community-based video-making we describe here comes out of 4 or 5 years of working with the same schools and local clinic and is part of a series of visual participatory activities carried out with community members. The process is based on what we have termed a No Editing Required (NER)¹ approach to the technicalities of video-making. Our decision to develop (and indeed fine tune) an NER approach for first-time filmmakers meant that it was possible for participants to see the full production process in 1 day, and actually have a 3-minute video to show for their work. And while we describe this in detail in this chapter, what we must highlight from the beginning is the way community-based video-making for us is more than simply a 'once off' activity. Rather, it is part of a more extensive process of community engagement

in working with the videos over time, and involving the social actors beyond those who made the video. Thus, we emphasize dialogue and ultimately the possibilities for social action, particularly in the context of such burning social issues as poverty and gender-based violence that are so prevalent in the rural South African context. The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, we provide a theoretical framework for community-based participatory video work. In the second section, we offer a case study of the production and use of *Izindaba Yethu (Our Stories)* within a district in a rural community in KwaZulu-Natal, a province of South Africa. In the third section, we consider some of the challenges of community-based participatory video. In the final section, we pose the question 'What difference does this make?' to consider some of the ways in which research and community video link to social action.

A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

An understanding of community processes is a critical element for framing community-based participatory video. According to Visser, community can 'refer to people in a specific geographical area and time; it can refer to a social system; to the construction of a way of life or to a sociopolitical organization' (Visser, 2007: 5–6, 7). Community is also a 'complex system of interactions between cultural, social, political, psychological and ecological elements' (Visser, 2007: 5–6, 7). We view the rural community in which our work takes place as a complex interplay of these elements. Furthermore, our work takes place within a community where addressing the complexities of HIV and AIDS is critical. Our entry-point to the rural community was facilitated by the Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA). With CAPRISA's assistance we gained access to a healthcare clinic and two senior secondary schools. Realizing that social change is a slow, complex process,

we intentionally chose to work *deeper* and not *wider* over several years with the goal of intensification of effort over time. For example, teachers and community healthcare workers working in this community noted a few years ago that, 'the main thing that we have in common is death' (Mak et al., 2004). They meant that every day they encounter painful situations – the death of patients and friends, children heading up households, absenteeism of students and teachers from school, and so on. The anecdote of a petrol station doubling as a funeral parlor demonstrates how death has become commonplace. Our use of video, along with other participatory methods such as drawing and photovoice,² has been about exploring with the community members themselves, ways of coping and taking action.

Three key areas underpin our *community-based participatory video*:

- 1 The values and goals of community psychology.
- 2 The 'externalizing' of the story.
- 3 Reflexivity through collectivity.

The values and goals of community psychology

Community psychology focuses on the interaction between the individual and her/his social context; it draws on psychological knowledge and skills to better people's well-being. In *Contextualizing Community Psychology*, Visser argues that 'personhood can be located in the collective' (2007: 4). The values of community psychology underpinned our research, while its goals informed the specific aims as an intervention particular to the context. According to Visser (2007), the most important values and goals are the promotion of not only individual but also interpersonal and communal health and well-being (Prilleltensky, 2006). This includes: caring and compassion in the sense of cultivating an emotional connectedness within the community; self-determination and participation; creating a sense of agency; respect

for diversity and human dignity; and creating opportunities for all voices to be valued and heard (Prilleltensky and Nelson, 1997); and, finally, social justice. These values are particularly important in communities 'in the age of AIDS', where infection, affectedness, stigma and poverty exacerbate difficulties and the overall quality of life. Furthermore, Visser accentuated 'a democratic style of collaboration and partnership with community members in research and intervention' (2007: 13). Collaboration and partnership are foregrounded in the use of visual participatory methodologies like community-based video where the research is not the goal in itself, but is rather aimed at 'assist[ing] the community in improving its functioning, and enhancing its quality of life and social equity' (Visser, 2007: 13). Therefore, it is a valuable means of 'understanding and addressing the psychosocial problems disrupting the lives of people' (Visser, 2007: 4). In our work, the 'psychosocial problems' referred to are those affecting the fabric of a community and its people in the context of HIV and AIDS.

'Externalizing the story'

White, a narrative therapist, wrote that 'stories don't mirror life, they shape it' (2007: n.p.). His approach relies on 'externalizing the problems' and then 'challenging fixed and pessimistic versions of events' in order to imagine 'new and more optimistic stories' to bring about change. Such narratives bring community members together around particular shared experiences, creating opportunities for reciprocal support. In some communities, it is culturally unacceptable to make use of individual counseling, and hence collective methodologies are more appropriate. In others, such as the one we describe here, community members are likely to have little access to counseling services in any case. We contend then that, in instances like this, community-based participatory video work is both culturally acceptable and necessary, as it opens up the space and opportunity

for the community to 'externalize its problems', to engage collaboratively with them, and significantly, to envisage solutions.

Reflexivity through collective work

Working with video production as a group process (from initial concept through to storyboarding, planning shots, shooting, initial screening and post-screening discussion) offers participants access to a type of socially constructed knowledge that is particularly significant to addressing themes which have often been taboo – the unspeakable. As we have argued elsewhere (Weber and Mitchell, 2007), video production offers participants an opportunity to engage actively in the 'social construction' of knowledge. The group chooses the themes, decides on the images, and 'constructs' the staging, and so on. In the case of video (vs live performance), there is a whole array of techniques that expand the possibilities for 'constructedness' – from shot angles, to dialogue, to theme music. Participants can stop the process, view and re-view the work – and indeed, they are even able to see themselves in action. Each frame is considered and reconsidered. Nothing is accidental.

Visual anthropologist Jay Ruby (2000) discussed how reflexivity, autobiography and self-awareness can all figure prominently when working with the film texts. This is important when working with young people and video, for example, on issues like gender violence – an issue where the dominant images of sexism and power inequalities need to be challenged. The types of follow-up interventions that draw on reflexivity are extensive. How, for example, could a group of young people 're-vision' their video as a text explicitly contesting traditional power dimensions – and how does video lend itself to this kind of critical awareness? How might other students (a group of girls, for example) respond differently and how could this audience component contribute to the reflexivity of the original filmmakers? How would

teachers, other adults and education officials respond to the video? (see also Mitchell et al., 2007). Like the work of Barnes et al. (1997), who used collaborative video to work with HIV-positive mothers, the participants were able to 'reproduce and understand their world as opposed to the dominant representations in the mass media' (cited in Pink, 2001: 86).

Schratz and Walker (1995: 172) argued that a critical feature of various interventions that lend themselves to social change is that they are in fact social in nature in the first place. They involve the group and cannot be managed 'individually and in isolation'. As they wrote: 'It [motivation] requires a collaborative effort and a reassessment of the nature of self in relation to social context, not a submerging of the individual within the collective, but a recognition that the person only exists in the light of significant others' (Schratz and Walker, 1995: 172). Highly participatory video production can create a strong sense of the collective response that includes all participants – producers, viewers, directors, actors and technicians. While it is possible that individual responses may sometimes be overshadowed by the activities of the collective, we found that in issues of violence, sexual abuse, and HIV and AIDS, which are social in nature and multi-layered in meaning, the collective response is vital.

IZINDABA YETHU – OUR STORIES

In this section, we describe the community-based participatory video project that began with a one-day video making workshop and continued with follow-up viewings, small group discussions and community screenings over several months. This section is presented in five parts: first, describing the video making process; second, the engagement of the participants in viewing their own short videos; third, compiling a composite edited video³ (our own creative endeavor) *Izindaba Yethu*; fourth, taking the composite video back to the participants for viewing and

analysis; and finally, taking the composite video to a broader audience for viewing and engagement within the rural community.

Stage one: video-making

The initial one-day video-making workshop came out of planning with the community: arranging place, time, and the number and nature of the participants. We were encouraged by the turnout: 19 senior secondary school students, three teachers, three community healthcare workers and several parents. After a brief introduction explaining the purpose of the day and its envisaged outcomes for them and for us, we set up groups: a boys-only group; a girls-only group; a mixed boy and girl group; a group of teachers; and a group consisting of community healthcare workers and parents. The first activity began with a simple prompt: 'What are the key issues affecting your daily lives in your community?' Each group was facilitated by a

member of the research team and the responses were written on a large sheet of paper. The issues identified included poverty, disease, HIV and AIDS, child abuse, rape, crime, murder and robbery, joblessness, gangs, school safety, youth pregnancy, substance abuse and lack of recreational facilities.

The participants in each group were asked to identify the most pressing issue through a 'voting' process (see Figure 9.1). Participants stuck a colored dot next to the three issues they thought to be the most critical in their lives. The theme to be pursued in the video, then, was based on which topic had the most votes, for the goal of the exercise was democratic engagement and decision making. It is important to note that, independently of each other, the three youth (student) groups identified rape and gender violence as the key issues, whereas the two adult groups independently identified poverty as the most pressing issue.

After identifying a focus for their video, each group created a simple storyboard consisting of 10 scenes (shots), each of which



Figure 9.1 Participants 'voting' to identify the key issue they want to address in their video. © de Lange 2010

was between 10 and 30 seconds in length. A template was provided to allow participants to construct the storyline and title, identify key issues, write a rough script for each scene, and select the actors. Creating the storyboards allowed for a deeper discussion of the chosen topic. Furthermore, production roles such as director and camera person were negotiated. Participants took on and changed roles as required.

Since none of the participants had ever used a video camera before, a brief training session on the use of the video camera was given to the whole group before they set out to do the shoot. Camera operation was demonstrated, along with simple ideas on framing, panning and zooming. In the training session we emphasized the NER approach, and especially the idea of 'no turning back' in the actual filming. Doing such work in a rural community with health concerns,

despite lacking a reliable electrical source and computers, accentuates the possibilities for digital technology to be transformative under less than ideal conditions (see Practical Guidelines).

Each group, accompanied by a facilitator, set off with its video cameras and tripods. The groups had about an hour 'on location' for shooting a 3–5-minute video (see Figure 9.2).

The titles of the short videos they made were very provocative themselves, especially considering the context of HIV and AIDS: *Rape at school: Trust no one; How raping got me HIV&AIDS; Rape; Effect of poverty in school; and It all began with poverty*. Each of the five videos produced in this workshop, along with the videos that had been produced in similar workshops in neighboring schools, were remarkably sophisticated in relation to the genres that were chosen: public service advertisements, talk show interviews and



Figure 9.2 Participants using a video camera to film the story they created to visually present their selected issue. © de Lange 2010

melodramas. And despite being short, the videos were successful in bringing the different messages across to the audiences. For example, in *Rape at school: Trust no one*, a student plays the main character – a teacher who rapes a girl after luring her to his classroom by promising extra tuition. In this video, the camera lingers on a closed door with the audience left to imagine what is happening while hearing the girl protesting and crying. It ends with the teacher leaving the classroom, turning to the girl and saying in a threatening voice: ‘*You tell ... you’re dead.*’

The groups all assembled together in one large group to view each others’ videos. This was something that we felt was very important because it allowed each group to see their production ‘on the big screen’ and it also allowed them to showcase their video to the other filmmakers in the larger group. After the screening they discussed each others’ work. This raised the level of reflection and engagement amongst the community of participants.

Stage two: participants working with their own videos

After the first workshop the small groups reviewed and re-engaged with their own video. In viewing their video again, the participants reflected on their work using the following open-ended questions:

- What did you like about the video?
- What are some of the images that stay in your mind?
- If you had a copy of the video, who would you want to show it to and why?
- How do you think it could help address gender-based violence?
- What would help you in the school and community to address the main issue in this video? (In the case of most of the videos produced by the students this was the issue of gender-based violence.)

This stage is a critical one as it means that the producers themselves have an opportunity to

consider the issues from other angles. It also stimulates them to think about the target audience and distribution. Community-based participatory video is after all not just about a one-day production process.

Stage three: creating the composite video Izindaba Yethu – Our Stories

One of the limitations of the NER and one-day video-making activity is the general rough-cut quality of the productions. As a research team, we therefore reflected on how the individual 3-minute videos could be used to continue the engagement. While we did not want to tamper with the actual video productions, which in themselves say a great deal – and indeed exist as research data – we felt that in their raw (and very short) state they might have very limited use beyond the day of production. At the same time, the issue of gender violence was so dramatically (and urgently) presented in the videos by the young people that we felt an obligation to develop a strategy or tool for taking the videos further, and so we came up with the idea of developing a composite video.

Ruby (2000), Pink (2001) and others have highlighted in discussions of ethnographic video that composite videos create their own interpretive framework. Moreover, as with the work of Holland et al. (1992) with transcript analysis, the research team itself engaged in a type of reflexivity about ‘What matters in the overall workshop program?’ Working collaboratively with the research team, a videographer compiled a 17-minute rough-cut video, *Izindaba Yethu (Our Stories)*. It was complete with a musical soundtrack, text boxes containing statistics on gender violence, footage of the workshop itself, English subtitles of each of the short videos in the composite video and even credits. Not only is it a reflexive tool for the research team but also it is an opportunity, as we discovered, to engage community members more fully in the process. Ultimately, this composite video is ideal as a reflective tool,

a teaching tool and tool for stimulating engagement beyond the workshop.

Stage four: taking Izindaba Yethu back to the participants

The rough-cut of *Izindaba Yethu* was taken back to the participating school a month or so after the video-making workshop and initial screening for viewing and discussion. After the screening, the participants were asked to reflect on the same open-ended questions, with an additional question: 'We haven't finished editing the video, what would you like changed or added?'

The participants clearly highlighted the importance and the need for their own engagement in the process. They felt that the video work opened up opportunities to engage with issues that are seldom talked about, but also to envisage how the composite video could be used as a tool to inform and encourage further debate. The following responses to the first question regarding what the participants liked about the video, demonstrates this: *'acting about what is hidden beyond the school walls', 'that it teach[es] and show[s] us what is happening to our community', 'What I like most is that it was made by us', 'We were together and sharing our ideas', 'Learners were participating actively', 'an opportunity to talk about how you feel', 'that we as learners we should not trust teachers that much'*. The above quotations confirm the agency of the participants in bringing out into the open 'what is hidden' in their schools and community and what is not talked about or addressed. However, it also affirms the possibility of meaningful participation.

Reflecting on images that linger in the mind underscores the impact that gender violence has on the community, particularly on young people and on women, as the following responses show: *'the door, what was happening behind the door', 'it's the part where the teacher rape[s] the child', 'when the learner was crying [after the rape]...*

looking so sad', 'women and female learners are vulnerable' and 'all young people'. These comments have an immediate quality in relation to the effects of gender-based violence on the victims as well as on the witnesses, and there is a sense of urgency, of doing something, because *'all young people are vulnerable'*.

Taking up the issue of extending the debate around gender-based violence in the context of HIV and AIDS to other audiences, the groups referred to the school, family, friends, church, community, the department of education and the government. The responses to the 'Why' question confirmed the urgency of addressing the issues: *'they must help', 'to stop ... abuse in this community'*. It also raised the issue of the vulnerability of the students in spaces traditionally seen as safe: *'to show them how easily a child can be raped in the school', 'to teach about abuse that is taking place in homes, schools, even in the workplace and churches'*. The participants did not only think of their own vulnerability, but of the vulnerability of youth in a collective way: *'I want them to see ...that our generation is in a situation', and 'I want them to know how dangerous [it is] to go alone ... if you are a boy or a girl'*.

Turning to the key issue of addressing gender violence, and how the composite video could help, responses of participants foregrounded the need for information and communication, as *'understanding violence because it can teach other people', 'many people they know nothing about it' and 'the community would inform police about the stories and not to take law into their hands'*. In asking what would help to address gender-based violence in schools and in the community, viewers stressed information, support, a sound value system and punishment for the criminals. Teachers felt the need for it to *'be explained in subjects, different media should be used ... to teach respect to women and men'*.

Finally, once again drawing on the participants' own understanding, when asked what they would like added to the video, the

response of one participant included a thought-provoking comment: *'How is life after rape?'* Clearly, the people in the community think deeply about these issues and have definite views on the impact that such an act of crime would have on the life of a victim.

Stage five: screenings in the community

...artists ... aim to disturb, to interrogate personal and cultural assumptions that have come to be taken for granted; to do so, they employ design elements that are appropriate for their intent. These elements (which vary according to art form) are important for their usefulness in recasting the contents of experience into forms with the potential for challenging (sometimes deeply held) beliefs and values (Barone, 2001: 26).

One of the key purposes of community video in our work is to engage the community in exploring and 'making visible' the issues about which people are silent – those issues which are 'hidden' and around which community action is required. The very process of stepping outside of everyday life to produce the videos can create feelings of uneasiness and vulnerability to some participants. We were encouraged by comments from the participants to take the video to a wider audience for viewing and to create an opportunity for engagement. Our data in this section refers to *Our Photos, Our Videos, Our Stories* (Mak et al., 2004), another composite video produced within the same community and around similar issues of gender and HIV and AIDS. The responses of community members demonstrate the richness of post-screening discussions and similar levels of engagement, as highlighted by Goldfarb (2002), Mak (2006) and Levine (2007). At the district community clinic, we brought together various community members, including a community activist, an *induna* (an advisor to one of the chiefs of the district), respected elderly women, teachers and community healthcare workers. We first explained

the origin of the video, screened it and then created an opportunity for their engagement through focus group discussions. Because it is a rural district with many members of the audience only being able to communicate in their mother tongue, isiZulu, much of the discussion occurred through the medium of isiZulu, with some code-switching to English. The discussions were recorded, transcribed and translated into English to allow wider access to the richness of the text. Here we refer to a number of key issues arising from the focus group discussions and related to the theoretical framing of community-based video work.

First, the audience highlighted their sense of being a community (Visser, 2007). They reiterated the idea that people in the community respond better when messages, in this case addressing HIV and AIDS, originate from the community, are created by the community and do not come from somebody outside of the community, as highlighted by Ford et al. (2003). The comments of the participants emphasized this aspect of community-based video work: *'The person from the location [township] has to speak to people of the location [township] and the one from the rural areas speak to those of the rural areas', 'We saw our places in the rural areas and how many things happen there', and 'I like the way that you acknowledge everybody that participated because in most cases you see [only] the project coordinators ... I think that was a wonderful idea'.*

The role of community healthcare workers, and how much they are valued, is closely linked to this sense of community, as the participants described above: *'It is a surprise because we do not take things in rural areas seriously because we do not have much knowledge. It is like being a health worker: we from the rural areas did not get them soon enough. Their movement into the rural areas is good because many women now know the purpose of clinics through the health workers because there are health workers. We don't quickly get many things and we don't know about them.'*

The audience commented that people from within the community could improve the quality of their own lives, through drawing on their individual and collective assets: *'A person gets a chance to do things that are relevant to the environment that you are in', 'because I think it's good that if a person has found a better future ... share it with others in the community so that the community may benefit. We are grateful because most of the time when people get educated they flee... they have developed our rural area because... we realize that the future is bright in our area.'* Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) concur that the strengths within a community are rich assets from which individuals can draw strength, even when the community seems under-resourced.

The participants' commitment to their community was deepened by their use of video, as a means to stimulate dialogue and action around the issue of HIV and AIDS, especially concerning the community's health and well-being (Visser, 2007). It was clear that they appreciated this aspect of the exercise: *'I think it would encourage the community, if it was to be seen by the community', 'In my opinion there should be groups that are there, that go around visiting families, teaching them about this thing', even 'the owner of the tavern ...[can] show the cassette in order for the community to listen intently about this thing that is here'.*

Another important issue that was raised relates to the difficulties of communication between and among different generations, as we see in the following responses: *'It is easy for us young people to speak when we are on our own ...', 'If they assemble together, it is good for them to hear the grownups ... why don't they allow the youth and adults to assemble with them in order for us to beat the virus that is here...', 'It is easy for an old person to understand a thing if it means you sit with him/her and talk about the matter. He/she understands better that way, rather than standing in front of them'.*

Messages of teaching and preaching are deemed less useful, whereas collaborative

video equals out power relations. It was interesting to note that the HIV and AIDS epidemic was conceptualized by the audience as not only affecting adolescents and adults, as one member of the audience saw the importance of including *'small children like those in crèche since they are also important ... I don't know, adapting to small children in order to entice them to understand better'.*

Finally, for us the importance of getting the story out (White, 2007) – to look at it and reflect upon it – is critical, as is demonstrated in the following response, *'What I like the most is that... eh... this is now being spoken about. It even appears on video and yet it was not spoken about. It was hidden. If you spoke about it you would close everything you were doing'.* Opening up the story allows for engagement and healing, and improving the well-being of the individual and community. The importance of video work resides in allowing the hidden issues to be discussed and to be viewed from different perspectives, in allowing communities to open up to the possibilities of addressing HIV and AIDS, and to shift towards taking action. One participant expressed this in the following way: *'If we hide it ... it doesn't exist, when it actually does.'*

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES

The simple guidelines in Table 9.1 could be used as pointers for planning NER video work.

CHALLENGES

As the responses of the producers (participants), as well as those of the audience show, community-based participatory video can offer the possibility for rich and textured discussions. At the same time, the strengths of community video also pose a number of challenges, as we demonstrate below.

Table 9.1 Practical guidelines for 'No Editing Required' video work

<i>What to do</i>	<i>Check</i>
Train how to use user-friendly video cameras - Setting up tripod - Attaching camera to tripod - Switching on the camera - Opening the viewer and interpreting the information on it - Using the recording, forward, rewind buttons - Zooming in and out - Panning Allow participants opportunity to practice using the equipment Explain 'No Editing Required' - Each scene/shot videotaped only once - First shot taken is the 'title of the video' - Ensure that the record button is pressed before the actors read from the script and press the stop record button only after the actor has finished his sentence - Raise awareness that actors should • be near the microphone of the camera so as to ensure audibility • face the camera when talking consider interference of surrounding noise levels (and wind) if recording outside Encourage participants to practice each scene before shooting (and to keep to the 10–30 seconds per scene) Final shot taken is that of the 'credits' at the end Allow participants 45–60 minutes to shoot their video Showing and viewing the video documentaries Data projector and screen required and set up Play video documentaries through the video camera	

Ethical issues

As with any research undertaken from within a university faculty, we applied for ethical clearance from the University Ethics Committee (UEC). Drawing on a fairly new methodology – not always understood by the UEC – required us to spell out how we intended to do the most good and the least harm. The issue of doing the least harm, as is taken up elsewhere (Moletsane et al., 2008), was complex. Despite efforts to maintain ethical protocol, the unexpected is inevitable. For example, we were concerned when one group of students staged their narrative of three boys raping a girl at school in a way which might be construed as reinforcing gender stereotyping and gender-based violence. To counter our concern, we developed a booklet to accompany the video,

and conducted workshops with the teachers and students on ways of using the composite video and booklet on gender-based violence in a sensitive way.

Visual anthropologists and ethnographers such as Banks (2001), Ruby (2000) and Pink (2001) all draw attention to some of the common issues of working with communities, such as: 'How is informed consent understood by the participants?'; 'Who owns the images?'; and 'Where/when can the videos be screened?'. Much of this work is in the context of issues that are not necessarily life-threatening. In our work, we have had to think about the safety and security of participants, particularly the students. The students, for example, who produced *Rape at school: Trust no one*, clearly had a scenario in mind how teachers abuse girls. The question was

did they run the risk of being the victims of retaliation? Incest was a topic that was quickly thrown back to the research team through the production of a video called *Vikela Abantwana* or *Protect the Children* (a story about incest) in one of the neighboring schools. How do we ensure that the themes raised in the videos do not simply remain as unexplored issues? At the same time, we also began to see that video might in some ways circumvent some of the ethical issues that arise in photovoice; because the episodes are so clearly acted or staged, issues of ethical concern are reduced. No one would mistake the resulting production as being 'real' (as in the case of a photograph). Indeed, its 'staged quality' gives it its potency.

Working within a community-based participatory framework, we are sensitive to the issue of ownership and we explored with the participants how they might use the video and with whom. We then provided them with copies of the video. We had arranged that each school would receive a data projector and laptop, thus enabling them to screen their videos as required. We did not encounter any participant who was resistant to 'acting' in the video, or who did not want to have the video shown publicly. This was possibly due to the production being based on an issue that was decided on democratically and the fact that it was relevant to their lives, with 'local' and real persons performing the production. Similarly, we considered to what extent the participants would understand informed consent. How might we engage the participants so that they clearly understood what they could do with the video, but also what we as researchers intended doing with it. In trying to address this concern, one of our postgraduate students designed an informed consent form which visually unpacked the notion of informed consent.

Technical concerns

Unlike drawing, performance, or even photovoice, which are visual tools that are relatively

inexpensive, filmmaking requires video cameras and, sometimes access to editing equipment and of course requires training in the use of editing equipment. In addressing some of the complexities, our NER approach only required the participants to have an introduction to the video camera equipment, and some idea of basic shots and storyboarding. Experienced facilitators worked with each of the small groups to assist with the planning and execution of the shoots. Technical concerns also include access to electricity – a key consideration for the screenings. Typically, we have conducted our workshops in rural schools as 'hubs' within the community. One of the schools where we worked only had electricity in the principal's office and so our screenings for the 30 or more participants took place in a small room just outside the principal's office, using the wall as the screen. A practical solution, as we have discovered from our colleagues in Rwanda,⁴ is to invest in a generator, although if the community is to take ownership of the resulting productions, there is a serious limitation if they themselves cannot screen the videos (in the absence of a projector or video player).

Another issue, potentially adding to cost, is compensation for the participants. In this instance, we invited students, teachers, parents and community healthcare workers to a Saturday workshop. Saturday is a day when most people in the rural district do not go to work, and therefore they would not lose out on their wages. However, we reimbursed them for their travel expenses (minibus taxi fares) if they had to travel to the venue, and also provided them with refreshments during the day.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THIS MAKE? COMMUNITY VIDEO AND SOCIAL ACTION

Visual anthropology provides critical debates about what constitutes ethnographic film (Rouch, 1974), critiques of indigenous media (Ginsburg, 1995) and concise methodological

applications of visual media for fieldwork (Collier and Collier, 1986). However, there is perhaps less attention paid to the ways that visual media can help to shift consciousness and behavioral practices, and how these mechanisms can be used to stem the tide of discrimination and stigma that surrounds HIV and AIDS (Levine, 2007).

Central to our work with community video is a recognition both of the significance of community and community processes (as we note in the first section), but also a consideration of the contribution of interventions like this to social action and the kinds of shifts in consciousness to which Levine (2007) alluded. We think of social action in two ways: social action within the particular rural communities and social action within academic communities. Clearly, the producers themselves saw potential audiences for their work. The community screenings had an impact on the audiences, so it is possible to see ways in which the composite video, focusing on gender violence, played a role in the follow-up work in the community. It is worth noting that the school itself has chosen to embark on further work with the research team in this area.

Furthermore, we noted that the idea of social action within academic communities is also critical. What is the responsibility of the research team regarding the mobilization of funds and its response to the day-to-day needs of the participating schools and communities? As Islam (2008) argued, if community projects (including those using community video) are to be successful, there must be recognition of the differing needs of all partners. Speaking specifically of community video, Banks observed:

...community video projects work best when the researcher has had an extensive engagement with the community prior to the video project, when she has a thorough understanding of processes of decision making within the community, and most of all when she is prepared to relinquish control (2001: 127).

Arguing compellingly for the idea of an applied visual anthropology, Sarah Pink

(2007) looks at the ways in which applied visual anthropology (which includes community video) can be regarded as social intervention 'practiced across private, public and NGO sectors, as well as in serendipitous situations, in contexts that are shaped by global, national, transnational, institutional, local and individual agencies' (Pink, 2007: 11). Social intervention is best configured as a set of relations over time and not some sort of 'in and out' type of activity.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have argued that community-based participatory video can play a critical role in raising awareness of key social issues, and at the same time engaging communities in exploring solutions. We see the potential of this work to be transformative even in settings that might be regarded as being on the 'wrong side' of the digital divide. Our own reflection as researchers, on engagement with the participants in the community around a sensitive issue such as HIV and AIDS, leaves us convinced that there is much to be gained from taking a visual participatory approach to community-based research. Our treatment of community-based video work here is both critical and celebratory. On the critical side, we have highlighted some of the ethical issues and in particular the challenges of community dynamics in community-based work, and we would hesitate to recommend that researchers take on visual participatory work around sensitive issues such as HIV and AIDS and gender-based violence without committing to a long-term engagement with the community. But on the celebratory side, it is difficult to overlook the significance of what can take place in a rural setting, or to ignore the comments of participants who have made videos for the first time (and their enthusiasm for continuing with participatory video), or the responses of local audiences who have viewed the videos, made right in their own community,

and produced by their friends, neighbors, relatives and even their own children. As one of the community participants commented: *'That's what I like about the video. It did not end here.'*

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NOTES

1 Monica Mak and Claudia Mitchell first worked with the No Editing Required (NER) Approach in the Visual Methodologies for Social Change course, McGill University, May–June, 2005.

2 Photovoice is a research strategy that uses photography as a tool for social change. It is a process that gives people the opportunity to record, reflect and critique personal and community issues in a creative way. In the Learning Together Project

(2004–2006) community healthcare workers and teachers used photovoice to explore challenges and solutions in addressing HIV and AIDS in their rural community. A collection of over 500 photographs emanated from this work.

3 The production of composite videos coming out of community-based video work has been replicated in several of our projects and with various participants, and along the way we have come to refine the composite video genre. The biggest change (from the production of *Izindaba Yethu*) has been to ensure that all of the short video productions, from any one project, are included in a single video/DVD. This helps to maximize the use of the resulting composite video as a teaching tool in various communities, as well as to ensure the equal representation of the work of all participants.

4 Here we acknowledge the work of Cineduc, a community-based organization in Rwanda which takes films to communities for the purpose of facilitating dialogue around culture and ethnicity. In order to do this, the organizers temporarily provide the communities with a generator, since so few of them have electricity.

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