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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

Exploring photo-elicitation as a research method for teachers conducting
research in their own institution: A case-study at St. Agnes' School

by

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Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Faculty of Social and Human Sciences

Southampton Education School

March 2015

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

SOUTHAMPTON EDUCATION SCHOOL

Doctor of Education

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By Bruce Waymark

Many teachers conduct research within institutions in which they work, often using semi-structured interviews with students. This presents a number of methodological problems that may lead to stymied, narrow data, or responses designed to please or fit with the student's beliefs of their teacher-researcher's expectations.

This research adopts a case-study approach to investigate the advantages of photo-elicitation as an additional method to employ with semi-structured interviews, asking students to take photographs that represent their answers to the research questions before the interview takes place. It finds that the student is freed from the power differentials between themselves and their teacher, producing data that is more varied, deeper, reliable, and truer to the student voice. It finds that this gives the students greater chance to evaluate and formulate responses to the questions prior to discussion, allowing the interview to be a more comfortable experience and a student narrative and voice to be heard otherwise unknown when only employing traditional oral research methodologies, subsequently reducing the possible power differential in the relationship between interviewer and respondent.

In order for this to take place issues of ethics need to be considered. Traditional ethical guidelines call for anonymity and confidentiality to be paramount, but this may not be possible with visual data. The notion of images and children creates issues of safeguarding creating possible barriers to conducting photo-elicitation in schools. This research also considers the extent to which young people actually desire anonymity following the rapid rise of on-line social media.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Bruce Waymark, declare that the thesis entitled 'Exploring photo-elicitation as a research method for teachers conducting research in their own institution: A case-study at St. Agnes' School' and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- None of this work has been published before submission.

Signed: Bruce Waymark

Date: 17 March 2015

Acknowledgements

Gill Clarke and Martin Dyke for their supervision and encouragement.

Anna Leatham for the interview transcription.

Darcy Young for proof reading.

All of the girls at St. Agnes'.

MFG.

Laura, Zennor and Isaac for never ending patience, support, and constant tolerance.

Chapter 1 - Research Questions and Themes

Within education, especially school years education to age 18, it is common place to see teachers conducting research. Research by teachers occurs for many reasons: professional development; academic qualification; or as part of their professional duties. It is not uncommon for the teacher conducting the research to do so in their own institution using data obtained from students that they teach personally, or are known by. Such research, and the methodology chosen for this, can create a number of potential problems.

A popular research method conducted by teachers when involving students is to interview (Kellett, 2010; Lewis & Lindsay, 2000) due to it being considered to be methodologically 'safe'. Researchers are often put off from employing innovative methodologies by worrying about not getting 'good' data. Indeed the current climate of research may actively discourage methodological innovation (Lewis & Lindsay, 2000), yet the interviewing of students by teachers may not be providing as 'good' data as wanted.

This research is centred on a single, embedded case-study. It focuses on St. Agnes' School and within that just 23 members of three of the seven year groups. As an Assistant Headteacher at St. Agnes' for three years and having worked in two large mixed comprehensive schools for 10 years prior I had witnessed teachers acting as researchers and indeed done so myself during both my professional duties and academic studies. It had become apparent to me both in the academic literature that I had read (for example, Arnot & Reay, 2007; Baumfield *et al.*, 2013; Wall, 2012; Woolner *et al.*, 2007) and anecdotally in the various schools where I had worked, that a risk existed where teachers interviewed students within their own institutions. Much of the published literature regarding researching with school children is by academic researchers and does not necessarily consider the differences in relationships where the researcher is already known by the students within the existing hierarchies of the school and the power differentials this may cause in itself. Students may view the motivations of one of their teachers differently to that of a visiting researcher, or may determine to give different responses depending upon the existing relationship that they have with the interviewer. There has long been identified a conflict between the two extremes of the theorist and practical worker, and that there should be a medium that connects the two:

Do we not lay a special linking science everywhere else between the theory and practical work? We have engineering between physics and the practical workingmen in the mills; we have a scientific medicine between the natural science and the physician.

(Dewey, 1901 : 18)

The teacher researching in their own environment can be seen as this medium.

Also, consideration is not normally given to the difficulties that teachers may have in taking up students' curriculum or non-contact time, or how students and other members of staff may view the research process. Students are not necessarily available 'on tap' for use in multiple interviews, nor may they wish to. Further, as a senior manager within the school, I am conscious that research with students should have a positive learning experience for them if their time is going to be used. I was therefore motivated by my professional role as much as my academic interest to study if there is a way of improving semi-structured interviews with school children in a way that benefits both the researcher and the students. For me a question existed of whether the interview experience could be improved for my students so that the data they produced in those interviews was more reliable or valid. The alien experience of a formal research interview for the student, the confused role for the student of the researcher being known to them as a teacher creates potential doubt in the responses given. I was eager to see if asking students to take photographs prior to the interview changed the focus and context of when the data was being produced by the student, and therefore improved the students own evaluations of their responses before the interview even began.

Although the primary focus of the research was to look at photo-elicitation as a research method for teachers, it coincided with a professional concern that the school had identified through a recent parental survey of a dip in student satisfaction following the transition from the junior year groups (National Curriculum Years 7-9), to the senior year groups (Years 10 and 11). As one of the Senior Leaders at the school, I was tasked with investigating this concern further with the students themselves. This provided an ideal opportunity for me to

act as a teacher-researcher in my professional capacity. This professional concern and issue of the students' own feelings as they moved from the junior to senior years would therefore become the focus of the enquiry within the school.

This research is primarily considering teachers who act as researchers in their own school, and attempts to evaluate the use of photo-elicitation and traditional semi-structured interviews. It does not attempt to compare the two methods in a scientific and experimental way, but a comparative approach is taken to the two processes and outcomes within the context of this case-study. This is needed in order to help understand 'how' and 'why' events might occur even if scientific generalisations are not being made by the comparison of the methods. Such non-experimental comparison is similar to Shohel (2012) who compared two sets data from the same research where in 'phase one' interviews were conducted without photographic stimulus and in 'phase two' similar interviews were conducted whilst showing images to the respondents. This research attempts to develop the use of photo-elicitation in schools and provide guidance to others attempting to use the method in their own institution.

Photo-elicitation is a research method for teacher-researchers that could be used in conjunction with traditional semi-structured interviews. Photo-elicitation uses images to prompt responses during the interview. In this research students were asked to produce images that they felt represented their answer to the questions due to be asked in the interview. They did this using a digital camera a week prior to their semi-structured interview and without a chaperone.

The images produced by the student are used as prompts in the interview and would not normally be further printed or stored. Photo-elicitation does not replace semi-structured interviews as it does not seek others to read or interpret the produced images, rather it acts as an early evaluated response, enabling the respondent time to consider and construct an answer to the question long before the interview takes place. The image provides the respondents' eye-view of the context behind their response and enables respondents, especially children, to have ownership of the data and to explain to the researcher what their image shows rather than simply trying to formulate an immediate response to a question in a sterile and unfamiliar interview situation.

In my research the respondents were asked to take the photographs. It is argued (Harrison, 1996) that by making use of visual materials that the subjects have produced, subsequent interviews can be constructed and orientated in a more personal way.

Using respondents to take photographs in order to tell their stories appears to be a potentially useful method to collect data. Despite this, comparatively few researchers appear to have employed this method. Whilst those who have tend to use the pictures to tell a respondent's story from their view point, or to analyse the respondents' pictures. Wang, Ling & Ling (1996) used research participants to produce and analyse their own images. This allowed for counter-narratives to those that the researchers were producing, allowing for the probability that what some people regard as important in their lives may be different to others.

Anything produced by the respondent will be subjective to them. Therefore, if there is an assumption that the production of images embodies subjective meanings of self and experiences, we can use these images to elicit them. The pictures produced by a respondent may reveal important dimensions of wider social and cultural values that may not be understood or examined through questionnaire or interview (Harrison, 1996).

The use of photographs with students has advantages. For young children, completing forms or expressing ideas in written questionnaires may be difficult. Asking them to record their ideas by taking photographs may be more accessible and provide better and more interesting data (Schatz & Steiner-Loffler, 1998). Banks (2003) notes that during interviews any awkwardness or difficult silences can be reduced by the presence of photographs. Photographs taken by the child may make the interview situation even more comfortable and give the child more to talk about.

It is recognised that authorising students to give their perspectives shows the students' own world view (Cook-Sather, 2002). In order for success when research is carried out within a school, teachers must have a confidence that pupils actually have something to offer (McIntyre *et al.*, 2005). It is important to recognise that this case-study is not primarily about

pupil voice within the classroom or student council. Rather it considers the students and their 'voice' insofar as it seeks their opinions and ideas, but within the limited frame of how that voice is communicated when being sought in school based research.

This case-study is centred upon the key principles behind teachers acting as researchers and the issues surrounding interviewing teenaged students. As research has shifted focus from research 'on' to 'with' children, to 'by' children (Kellett, 2010), it is increasingly common practice in schools to include 'student voice' (Cheminais, 2008). In this case study, although student voice is investigated, the main focus and aim is about considering the use of photo-elicitation when interviewing students individually. Some consideration is given to the possible impact that photo-elicitation may have on student voice, but it is the potential advantages that photo-elicitation brings to the method of interviewing that is central to this case-study.

To manage improvement schools are increasingly looking for students' perspectives. This requires schools to tune in to their experiences and views, and create a new order of experience for the children as active participants (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). Core values central to student voice include:

1. Conception of communication as dialogue
2. Recognition that power relations are unequal and problematic

(Robinson & Taylor, 2007).

Despite the increasingly recognized importance of student voice, the issues which are raised by school councils, student focus groups, or student surveys, are often formed by teachers, or others in a position of control (Coombs, 2005). This perpetuates the hierarchies in schools if students can only contribute if and when authorized by teachers to speak (Robinson & Taylor, 2007). The resultant formal interviews, group discussions, and questionnaire completing is often no more than young people providing answers to adult questions, as opposed to students raising their concerns and formulating their opinions and ideas. Wall's (2012) evaluation of the 'Learning to Learn' project shows that for a positive educational outcome to be achieved, students need to be supported to actively participate in the conversations that take place, and that these must be meaningful to the students. This supports the benefits of

the democratic sharing of ideas. However, my research is not so much about the transformational participatory benefits of student voice, rather the issue of helping students to articulate their thoughts and be heard during their participation.

Policy makers, especially those involved with the individual school, may see and think of the school in terms of lessons and learning. However, for students the experience of schooling is more holistic and includes events that take place between lessons and away from the regimes that matter to the school (Bond, 2007). There is growing recognition that successful students not only gain qualifications at school, but are responsible, confident, inventive, and enterprising. The most successful students play a part in making the school a better place. Students gain from having a role in school improvement discussions, the evaluations that they make and the need to articulate them to the school develops higher level thinking skills. Such experiences for students can improve and transform their levels of communicable understanding. It is important that those involved in the research of student views consider how to obtain the most effective information in a way that not only benefits the research/institution, but also the educational development of the students involved.

Until recently there have been relatively few attempts to involve students as active participants in school-based investigations and school improvement initiatives (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004). It can be argued that 'student voice' in many schools is no more than a paper exercise. Its agenda controlled by those in power within the school, and the views of students a cursory nod to government inspectors and policy. The overuse of surveys leads students to become uninterested in filling out yet another questionnaire, creating a set of responses that are not fully considered or taken seriously (Coombs, 2005). Interviews of students or discussions held in school 'council' meetings run by teachers may not be considered a safe environment, with students more likely to give answers that please the teacher sat in the room. The diversity of children also impacts upon the different levels of participation, voice, and choice intimated by students. Schools should think more creatively about the range of methods used to elicit student views (Cheminais, 2008). This is the focus of my research; to see if the use of photo-elicitation gathers student views in a more effective way than just using traditional semi-structured interviews.

Using students in school based research works on the principle of participatory action research, insofar as it is investigating realities in order to change them. Recommendations about what and how to change should be coming from the students, to then be used in informing policy planning. Yet this agenda is rarely controlled or effectively influenced by the voice and opinion expressed by students.

A question exists as to how authentic the voice given by students in research is. Age and power differentials between student and teacher during interview or group discussion can create unease in the answers being provided. Further, the potential difficulty exists that 'student speak' is translated by the teacher into adult words that do not always have the same meaning (Mitra, 2001). Listening and hearing are different things. In order to fully tune in to what students can tell about their experiences there needs to be recognition that there are often difficulties in directly eliciting student views (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000) and that student 'voice' is not simply the words spoken by students but includes many different ways to express feelings or views about any aspect of their school experience (Robinson & Taylor, 2007).

It is important for students to be given a conceptual vocabulary and scaffolds that allows them to articulate their views and have them heard if they are to feel that it is legitimate for them to actively contribute to the discussions (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). Teachers, too, must have the understanding and expertise to allow the student vocabulary to be accessible (MacBeath *et al.*, 2001). The use of photo-elicitation creates an environment and scaffold that allows the student to put forward their own agenda and discuss their views in an open and accessible way. Flutter & Rudduck (2004 : 72) discuss the ESRC/TLRP Project conducted at the Sarah Bonnell School. The project consulted pupils about teaching and learning using photo based evaluations of what helped the students learn whilst at home. The project concluded that using photos encouraged pupils to be reflective and provided useful prompts for discussions in the subsequent interviews. The project also reported that the students stated that they liked expressing their feelings visually.

Visual data may allow students to determine their own agenda. By allowing students to photograph areas of the school or issues that concern them, the angle is switched from the institution and its policy makers to the day to day users of the school. The use of images

alongside student voice may be used to prompt discussion in a way that allows the interpretation to come from and be explained by the student who has taken the photographs. This is not to say that student voice should only be expressed via images. Using images such as photographs requires high levels of inference. The more that a child's perspective is inferred indirectly, the greater the danger of misinterpreting or overlaying what the child is presenting (Lewis & Lindsay, 2000).

Photo-elicitation may have a role in aiding the interview process. Using visual methodologies brings an ethical dimension that does not sit easily within current research ethics' guidelines. Increasing use of digital media by schools has led to concerns of images being misused and a number of guidance publications being issued by organisations such as the NSPCC, the Information Commissioner's Office, and local county councils (see NSPCC, 2013; ICO, 2007; Avery *et al.*, 2012). This case-study aims to consider the ethics behind using visual data and how these need to be addressed to allow successful visual research to be undertaken by teachers.

From this, three key research themes arise:

1. Interviewing children and potential problems for teacher-researchers.
2. The potential role that photo-elicitation might play as a research method for teachers.
3. The ethical issues involved in using visual methods with children.

In addition, it must be understood that the potential use of visual methodologies varies enormously on the context of the research. Whilst a key theme of this research is to consider the use of photo-elicitation as a research method for teachers, it is based around the notion of student voice and the role it has when assessing school improvement plans.

Whilst student voice is now common in most UK schools, the individual context of an institution, its geopolitical location, and student body will determine the analysis of the results and its effectiveness.

The data obtained in this case-study is linked closely to the contextual background of the research itself. This is an issue to explore and raises questions such as the transference of research evaluations from one school to another, when all schools exist in unique contextual backgrounds.

This leads to a further key research theme:

4. Contextual data and its importance.

These four key research themes will now be explored in further individual detail.

Interviewing children and potential problems for teacher-researchers

Interviewing as a research method is extensively used, written about, and common place for teacher-researchers. It is not unusual to see teachers in schools using semi-structured interviews. Such interviews, where the interview schedule is suggestive but not as binding as a structured interview schedule, is attractive as it allows the interview to take a more open course and tangents to be explored. Semi-structured interviews contain an increased risk of researcher bias when compared to structured interview (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). The direction that the tangents take, even whether they are explored or not, can easily be led or controlled by the interviewer. The loose structure also allows the interviewer to push for the responses they were hoping to hear.

The success of the relative informality of the semi-structured interview depends on the relationship developed between the interviewer and respondent (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). Sadly, Hitchcock & Hughes do not consider the danger that this may cause when the interviewer is a teacher and the respondent their student. For teachers involved in research there is a conflict between their role as teacher and that of researcher (Kirby, 2001). The first is an established position of power, imposing decisions and maintaining discipline. A researcher is expected to be a detached and impartial observer, encouraging voluntary not forced participation.

For teachers conducting research in their own school a particular relationship already exists, developed in the classroom, corridors and the hierarchical context of the school.

Consideration must be given to whether this pre-existing relationship is conducive to the needs of a research interview. Whilst a traditional researcher may be able to develop particular relationships with their respondents, it is likely that this is formed in readiness and context of the research. This situation cannot be replicated in a school where they will have long developed an image, or hierarchical notion, of that relationship. Whilst this appears to make a case for not having teachers acting as researchers, for the majority of teachers conducting research, constraints on time and resources lead to most of this research being done by the teachers themselves in their own institution.

Hitchcock & Hughes (1989) consider age-stratification within interviews. The ideas of 'seniority' and 'youth' is an issue particularly significant within schools. Age-stratification and the perceived status of the parties involved in the research creates a foundation of influence upon which the characteristics of the interview lie. Interestingly, Hitchcock & Hughes only considered the role of age-stratification in instances of teachers interviewing other teachers. If there is a potential danger to interviews amongst peers, it must be magnified further when the interview is between teacher and student and the relative age differences can lead to an uncomfortable encounter (Seidman, 2006).

There is also the issue of gender. Evidence suggests that a difference in gender between the researcher and the respondent can affect results (Seidman, 2006). Male researchers interviewing female respondents can be overbearing and, added to the power dominance that a teacher may have over their students, this allows the possible subversion of gender during the interview. As teachers who conduct research are rarely able to employ or use additional interviewers, a difference in gender may be impossible to avoid when researching within schools.

Research with children still makes use of questionnaires and traditional interview methods (Kirby, 2001). This 'adult child' approach views children as competent participants in an adult centred world. It assumes that children are essentially the same as adults and that the same research tools can be used (Morrow & Richards, 1996). An issue with interviews is concern that it is inappropriate to use a methodology that is designed for adults with child

respondents. This issue arises as a child's understanding and experience of the world is likely to be different from that of adults. Further, a child is likely to communicate in a different way to adults (O'Kane, 2001). Perhaps it is more appropriate to seek other methods to communicate with children, especially the very young, rather than rely on the verbal.

A major challenge facing researchers working with children is the disparity of power and status between adults and children (O'Kane, 2001; Mayall, 2001). For teachers researching students the traditional daily structure of the school reinforces a deliberate power differential. Students may persist in their view of the teacher as an authority figure rather than a neutral researcher and be reluctant to divulge certain information, especially if it is on a topic that would not normally be discussed between a teacher and student (Powney & Watts, 1987).

Labov (1972) noted how the actions of the interviewer and the way in which the interview takes place affects how open respondents are. Staging interviews of black children, Labov noted that the children in the interviews conducted by white interviewers in a formal setting spoke less and were less open than those conducted by a black interviewer, and even less again than those conducted by a black interviewer with the respondent sat on the floor with a friend. Labov concluded that the children interviewed first were not more linguistically deprived than the others, but the situation of the interview was forcing them to close up. He argued that when children define a situation as hostile they are unable to demonstrate their real abilities. Factors such as age, skin colour, clothing, and accent of the interviewer may affect the respondent's definition of the interview, and so affect their behaviour (Labov, 1972).

Not only does an inherent power differential exist between the teacher-researcher and the student-respondent, but the asymmetrical relationship between the researcher and the child creates a contrived social situation. The child may perceive that any confidential information given to the teacher during the interview increases the power gap between them, causing pressure on the student to give false information or none at all (Powney & Watts, 1987). Conversely a danger exists that the child feels compelled to provide an answer as they are speaking with a teacher and authority figure. This may mean that they may not admit to not fully understanding the question and may attempt to answer anyway (Dockrell *et al.*, 2002).

Interviewing students in school may mean having the benefit of being in a familiar setting. However students can often be concerned that the information they reveal during the interview will be fed back to their other teachers, even if confidentiality has been assured by the researcher (Dockrell *et al.*, 2002). Such unease may be detrimental on the quality of the responses offered by the students.

The potential role that photo-elicitation might play as a research method for teachers

The fact that children's vocabulary is not as advanced, or is different to adults', should place the child in the centre of the research process rather than relying on the perspectives of adult researchers (Boyden & Ennen, 1997). Research with children should attempt to find ways in which the ideas and perceptions that children have can be expressed in their own terms without being misrepresented by the interpretations of adult researchers. Researchers working with children should attempt to reduce the power relationships between child and adult.

Researcher-led interviews can make children feel uncomfortable with the potential result of achieving poor data. Using children's images can allow representation of their own understandings and realities. In psychological research it is common for these images to be interpreted by the researcher, often without consulting with the respondent as to what their intentions were (Boyden & Ennen, 1997). It is more appropriate in educational research to use the images produced by the student as a stimulus for the respondent's own interpretations and explanations.

Photographs and pictures have always had a common social context and understanding. Bourdieu (1990) describes how photographs solemnise climatic moments which then reaffirm group unity, such as participation in group photos. It is common for people to keep photographs because they capture a particular 'moment in life' (Harrison, 2002).

Not only do the photographs that people take and keep create a visual journal of their life and cultural interactions, but they also form part of our human imagination and conversations. The viewing of photographs can prompt discussions as to the circumstances in

which they were taken and people within, and without, the picture. Photographs can stir the imagination to recall the sounds, smells, and moments surrounding the photograph, its location, and its reason for being (Pink, 2004). The data captured by photography is qualitatively different from those recorded through research methods. The space and place in which they were taken, and the visualisation of this place portrays some areas as having different levels of importance, or of being functional for a particular purpose. This visual recognition of space creates an immediate social context for the people involved and those viewing the picture that text based research cannot (Emmison & Smith, 2000).

Our cultural understanding of the pictures that we take and view allow researchers to confirm certain social practices. For the individual, self-image is often highly objective in the photograph and therefore is easily 'readable'. Bourdieu (2004) states that, "*Photography is the situation in which awareness of one's body-for-others reaches its highest acuity.*" (cited in Grenfell & Hardy, 2007 : 139). However, had Bourdieu lived to see the explosion of on-line social networking sites from around 2008 his view may be different. Now the mass sharing of photographs, and the expectation to record and see photographs, appear to have completely changed the inhibitions or expectations of the subject being photographed. Exhibition rather than inhibition now appear to be the norm in terms of 'body-for-others' in the photographs published in their hundreds on social networking sites. Nevertheless, the cultural understanding and reading of these pictures still exists.

When we view photographs the position of the people in the picture and how they are relating to each other in a particular physical space is identifiable by both researcher and reader. How a photograph is read and understood is a matter of social position rather than aesthetics (Bourdieu, 2004, cited in Grenfell & Hardy, 2007). It is possible to make a social interpretation of a photograph rather than just view the picture as a visual representation or a snap shot in time.

In the process of photo-elicitation, interviews can be guided by images, and memories and responses prompted by the pictures. Children may feel more confident in discussing what they see than being given written interview schedules and notes. The use of image itself can trigger or provoke reactions in a different way than those given by textual descriptions

(Banks, 2003; Harper, 1998; Prosser & Schwartz, 1998). For children, photographs can act as prompts that evoke responses in a more comfortable way than using formal lexical prompts.

The photograph itself does not need to be analysed. In this research it is not the image produced that is important, rather the way in which the image is used by the respondent to evaluate and articulate their ideas. Having said that, I sought permission from the producers of the images and the school to publish a small selection. These have been selected purely to illustrate some of the points made and are not intended to be analysed. It is a shame that more of the images could not be published as the images produced were unexpectedly fascinating and rich in their own right, but convention prevents these from being seen.

'Photographs can present a visual narrative without the words of the person who generated them helping to voice a narrative and without words from a researcher to help shape interpretation' (Drew & Guillemin, 2014 : 58).

Newbury discusses that there remains a dominance of the intellectual over the sensory and a concern that aesthetic matters over the 'serious business' of research and knowledge is suspect, creating an idea that images are less knowledge-bearing than words or numbers (Newbury, 2011). I agree that images can run parallel to the text and act as an invitation for a more imaginative engagement with the image and the environment that it represents. Some images serve a relatively straightforward role as illustrations or objects of analysis, but others convey a point not explicitly discussed (Newbury, 2011). Although a cautious approach to the use of images has been adopted in order to adhere to academic conventions, many of the images produced in this research created a previously unseen insight to the student-view of their school and provide a parallel interest aside from the focus of the study. Images containing people may cause harm or embarrassment to those people, either now or in the future, and have been deliberately left out from publication, even if they were discussed during the photo-elicitation interviews.

The use of images in interviews need not be restricted to prompting responses as in photo-elicitation. Photographic images are plentiful and do not have to be produced by the researcher or respondent to be read in a hermeneutic way. Images produced by others can be used during interviews or as ethnographic field work in their own right (Harrison, 2002). The photographs can be discussed in the interview by the researcher and respondent in order

to collaborate with each other's views. This can be a useful interview method, especially when using images produced by a third party, as how we 'read' photographs is different to the process of taking an image as different people will view images in different ways (Pink, 2004; Harrison, 1996). By discussing images and their interpretations the researcher may gain an understanding of why a subject has an alternative view point, but also perhaps an understanding of the cultural background of the subject that causes the differing view points.

The ethical issues involved in using visual methods with children

Data collection creates issues of empowerment of subjects, or ownership of data and findings. If using photographs, these issues are further emphasised as the place or person is now on view. Actions and situations are now recorded in a more public way. How we react to other people possessing our image is different to how we act to people writing about us. In a study of wealthy families in the USA, Schwartz had difficulty in getting participants to agree to being photographed for fear that identification of children could lead to kidnap (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998).

The ethics of research are bound together with the relationships of power between the researcher, informant, other professionals, sponsors of research, gatekeepers to areas and people in the research, and institutions. Bringing cameras and photographs in to these relationships can raise issues over who is giving permission to what can be photographed and why such decisions are made.

Permission to take photographs depends on the situation. Permission to picture public figures in their public role is usually assured, but in other circumstances personal and institutional permission is required. Consideration to 'innocent bystanders' needs to be given as having permission from an institution does not mean having personal permission to capture images. In this case-study if a child were to take photographs around the school, tens or hundreds of other pupils could potentially be in the images having not been told why the photographs were being taken or where their images will end up. In advice issued to schools, the Department for Education state that images of pupils taken for official school use be classed as personal data under the terms of the Data Protection Act (2012) and recommends that written consent is obtained for their use (Avery *et al.*, 2012; ICO, 2007). The difficulty in

achieving this has led me to destroy any images produced by the student respondents that contained recognisable people once the interviews had been conducted.

The publication of images also creates ethical dilemmas surrounding anonymity. The fact that the image of a location, institution, or individual is displayed makes anonymity hard to preserve (Pink, 2004). Even where personal identity is kept confidential, other details contained within the image can make any students pictured identifiable and vulnerable (NSPCC, 2013). If an ethical agreement is made for using recognisable images, the issue may be problematic in the future. Years later an individual may no longer wish to be recognised in a particular institution, in context with other individuals, or undertaking particular actions, and may withdraw their consent after publication has taken place (Banks, 2003). General guidance to schools suggests that once a child has left an educational setting their consent lapses and previously agreed images should not be used (Avery *et al.*, 2012). Even though my research does not seek to use the images produced for analysis, some images have been published to help contextualise points being made. However, as this research will be stored electronically by the University, none of the images published contain people.

Computer manipulation makes it easy to blur faces or other parts of images, although how much visual information is then lost for the reader must be considered. A full and detailed discussion regarding the ethical issues surrounding the use of images can be read in Chapter 3.

Contextual data and its importance

Research often focuses on uniform patterns of behaviour, or makes recommendations based on the evidence studied. This scientific approach does not always work well within the social sciences. The institution, group of respondents, or wider context of the study, is usually shaped by a variety of historical, geographical, and socio-political forces (Pawson, 2006). The historic background of a school, its size, gender and racial mix, socio-economic make up of students, parents, and staff, even its geographical location, will result in each school having its own unique culture. What occurs within the culture of one school, the causes of the phenomenon and expected future outcomes, may not occur within the culture of another. Institutional forces also play their part, how a school is run, the direction in which the school is developing its curriculum, even the impact and strength of the school's ethos. The act of

research itself and the actions of the researcher is transformative, disturbing to some degree that which it is trying to describe.

It is therefore necessary to research and evaluate educational issues with a 'what works' approach, accepting that there will be different contexts to uniformity, that 'demi-regularities' (Lawson, 1997, cited in Pawson, 2006 : 22) will exist and that conclusions and evaluations developed in one school are not necessarily going to fit with another. Outcome patterns are likely to be reliant on the context of the study and the contextual constraints imposed by the choices and actions of the stakeholders involved. It is not the role of school-based educational research to attempt to explain what works in which situations, but rather it should provide the ground rules for conclusions and policy evaluation to take place in other similar contexts. Evaluations and conclusions reached by school-based research should be taken into account elsewhere, but not relied upon to provide an over-arching answer to a particular educational issue.

Accepting data to be contextual, the realist investigation also requires an investigation into how the mechanisms of the research and situation are both contingent and conditional to the local, historical, and institutional contexts. These contextual conditions are crucial to a realist explanation being accepted and are shown in a general conceptual matrix; Outcome = Mechanism + Context (Pawson & Tilley, 2003). That is successful outcomes will only be observed if they are in relation to the appropriate ideas, opportunities and mechanisms being enacted upon the group in the appropriate social and cultural conditions or contexts. Critical realism and realistic evaluation addresses all of these, including the contexts and perceptions of those involved, their ethics and values, and the content of the research practice (Kazi, 2003).

Social reality does not consist simply of experiences and events. Its structures, powers, mechanism, and unique tendencies underpin, generate and facilitate the events taking place. Research into social realities should consider what works best, for whom, and under what particular circumstances when making its conclusions. Inherent to realism is the concept of 'embeddedness' (Kazi, 2003), referring to the embedding of all human activity within a wider range of social process. The actions observed will only truly make sense because they contain in-built assumptions by the wider group of institutions and social rules indicative to them.

What works in one time-space location may be completely opposite to what works elsewhere. Within that unique location it must also be considered that circumstances change. Analysis of results should not remain static as the mechanisms and contexts in which they are found are likely to change over time.

Pawson & Tilley (2003) consider critical realism in a series of 'rules'; generative causation, ontological depth, mechanisms, contexts, outcomes, and CMO configurations:

- **Generic Causation** – Consideration of how and why certain mechanisms have the potential to cause change. The capacity for change is only triggered in conducive circumstances and so it is important to analyse the conditions required for this. Within this case-study, for photo-elicitation to work as a method, this may only occur if the circumstances are correct to allow this to happen.
- **Ontological Depth** – There is a need to penetrate beneath the surface of the observable inputs and outputs. What we observe is subject to underlying generative forces embedded in a range of attitudinal, individual, institutional, and societal processes generated by a range of macro and micro social forces. My observations of the photo-elicitation methodological process and the validity and usefulness of the data it produces will be impacted by the hidden influences of the respondents' attitude towards the study, to me, their own individual circumstances, and the influence of the school institution upon the respondents' willingness to participate.
- **Mechanisms** – A consideration of why certain causal mechanism occur. The social mechanisms in place are about peoples' choices and the capacity they derive from group membership. Why does a traditional interview create difficulties for particular ages or groups of respondents? Why might photo-elicitation reduce some of these issues?
- **Contexts** – The need to understand the context within which mechanisms are activated is to understand 'for whom and in what circumstances'. There is a need to

consider the spatial and institutional locations of the social situations together with the norms, values, and interrelationships found in them.

- Outcomes – It is the outcomes that provide the key evidence. These should be analysed to discover if the conjectured mechanism / context theories are confirmed. The data provided by both interviews and photo-elicitation will provide the evidence of whether the data is any more valid.
- CMO (Context-Mechanism-Outcome) Configurations – Critical realism understands that different circumstances lead to different outcomes, therefore the processes of the mechanism needs to be fine tuned to adapt it to local circumstances. The processes that work in this case-study may not replicate exactly the same outcomes in other schools. Rather, they will need to be considered and adjusted in order to meet the individual contextual background each time.

My case-study is based at St. Agnes', and under a particular matrix of circumstances; historical, geographical, and social. St. Agnes' is an independent girls' school for ages 11-18. It is a former convent school that retains a Roman Catholic ethos, despite two-thirds of the children and staff having a different, or no, faith. Further, although selective, the entrance requirements are not particularly rigorous, typically accepting students who fall in the top 50% of academic ability. The school is easy to access and attracts students from a wide geographical area. The fees are at the medium to low end, and a number of bursaries allow around 560 students from a range of social backgrounds to attend. About half of the students received an independent education at primary level, and about half at maintained schools. The school had no students with statements of special educational needs or behavioural issues, and has a well established 'School Council' chaired by the Deputy Headteacher and comprising of representation from all year groups.

All of the various factors, plus more not listed, create a unique context. Added to this are the various contextual elements of the research itself; I am the sole researcher, I am one of the school's Assistant Headteachers, I only teach a small number of the students directly, I have a background of teaching in large maintained schools, and so on. Therefore, the way in which

the students respond to the research, the analysis and findings, are peculiar to the setting in which this research is undertaken. This should not make the results and recommendations any less valid, but creates a caveat that the evaluations may not be exactly the same for all schools under all circumstances. After consideration of the context of the data, it may provide a realistic evaluation for similar types of schools, and a baseline that could be used for consideration in other types of schools, locations, and contexts.

Using the general contextual matrix outlined by Pawson & Tilley (2003), this research could be shown as follows (figure 1.1):

Mechanisms	Contexts	Outputs
Semi-structured interviews. Students taking own photographs. Photo-elicitation interviews. Evaluation of processes by students. Evaluation of data by key users. Evaluation by researcher. Comparison of methods.	Institution – St. Agnes'. Catholic ethos of school. Girls', single-sex, school. Independent selective school. 11-18 school. Age of respondents. Social and emotional maturity of respondents. Geographical location. Position of researcher within the school. Ethical considerations / constraints.	Valid and reliable data. Evaluation of data. Authentic data. Useable data for the school. Useable data for ISI. Useable data for researcher. Methodological recommendations of researcher.

Figure 1.1 - General contextual matrix

The four themes of this research lead to a desire to answer two key questions:

1. Does photo-elicitation improve the data obtained by teachers interviewing students?
2. What are the key ethical considerations to consider when using photo-elicitation in schools?

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Teacher-led research

Teacher-led research can take many different methodological approaches and teacher-researchers are being increasingly innovative in how they facilitate conversations with students for research (Baumfield *et al.*, 2013). These approaches include: observation and journal writing, photographs, video, taped conversations, personal reflections, individual and group observations, scales, questionnaires, diary sheets, record sheets, and short interviews (Arnold, 2012a).

Harcus (2012) notes that teacher-led research serves an important purpose as it finds an area of action to impact on, finds out about the current situation, suggests possible changes, and evaluates the impact of that change. For this research it was the school's desire to investigate further an identified dip in student satisfaction in the senior years that provided to focus of the investigation. Successful teacher-research occurs when it is located within the teacher's own domain, giving them ownership of the research (Baumfield *et al.*, 2009), in my case the professional obligation that I had as a Senior Leader to investigate and improve student satisfaction and experience at the school. This question of a dip in student satisfaction had arisen from a parental questionnaire commissioned a few months earlier by the school. For an independent school, positive student satisfaction is paramount in student retention and it was therefore decided that the students own feelings should be investigated as the issue had been highlighted by their parents. It was clear that such an issue would be best investigated by one of the senior staff via student interviews, therefore it was an ideal opportunity for me to use photo-elicitation alongside the interviews and investigate its impact as a research method for a practitioner-enquirer. The professional motivation behind practitioner-research can create a conflict between outcomes deemed beneficial to the theory to those beneficial to the practice (see Dewey, 1901). Although this was outlined by Dewey a long time ago, it remains valid today and this conflict can be seen to manifest itself as whether the research questions are more important than the method used or the paradigm underlying the method (Punch, 2009). For the teacher acting as a researcher the impacts on the students and school may differ to the academic research demands, yet creates a link between the academic theory and professional practice.

Questions are likely to come from a unique perspective of the teacher-researcher on the classroom or school life of what makes visible the ways that students and teachers construct knowledge and curriculum together. For many teacher-researchers it is having access to their students' feedback that triggers the initial interest, often stimulating collaborative enquiry between the teacher, school, and students (Baumfield *et al.*, 2013). This is reflected in the interpretive frameworks that practitioner researchers have developed based on their work inside of schools (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; 2007). Baumfield *et al.* (2013) discuss an 'ecological validity' of teacher-research that relates to the extent to which the findings of the research fit within the context in which it is set. As a teacher-researcher working with students from my own school, this rings true for my research, my role within the school dictates that I was charged with investigating a professional concern that the students' satisfaction and experience of the school suffered a dip during the transition from lower to upper school. My professional position creates an interaction and relationship with the students in a particular way; and the findings of the research relate only to the context of that school and are commercially sensitive. These contextual issues are unique and my research therefore looks at how these affect different types of research methodology.

As the teacher-researcher's process is embedded in practice, the relationship between knower and known is significantly altered:

When teacher researchers turn their attention to something like children's drawings, they bring a historical framework based on a thousand other drawings and what these drawings meant for particular children in real school time. Hence they ask questions that other researchers may not ask, and they see patterns that others may not be able to see.

(Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993 : 58)

Cochran-Smith & Lytle also argue that as practitioner research questions often come from the teacher's or institution's own needs, such as the management at St. Agnes' wanting to investigate why student satisfaction might dip in the transition between Year 9 and 10, this means that they are different to university researchers. Their experience shows that teacher-research creates ethical issues caused by the teacher's position, with research conventions

and practices, and the broader meanings of scholarly activity (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2007). This case-study takes Saunders's (2007) approach that there are contrasts between teaching and research during practitioner research (figure 2.1):

<u>Teaching as 'activism'</u>	<u>Research as 'scepticism'</u>
Social-relational	Epistemological-scientific
Vested interest	Neutrality
Priority question: 'What use is this work?'	Priority question: 'How valid is this work?'
Concerned to identify extent of applicability	Concerned to identify type / extent of error

Figure 2.1 'Typological contrasts between teaching and research in relation to knowledge' (after Saunders, 2007 : 69)

This may lead to contrasting academic research as 'evidence', that is the knowledge produced will be generalisable and objective via an apparatus of systematic reviews, databases and portals; to practitioner research as 'pedagogy', with an expectation that the knowledge creation process will be heuristic, hermeneutic, and intersubjective via an apparatus of case-studies, networks, or collaborative enquiry. However some see practitioner-led enquiry as being involved in both research and pedagogy (Baumfield *et al.*, 2013).

The majority of research carried out by practising teachers is small scale (Arnold, 2012b), beginning with a 'hunch' or question likely to be directly connected to the practitioner (Arnold, 2012a). Practising teachers are unlikely to have the opportunity or time to conduct large scale or widespread research, and may be researching an issue particular to their school or classroom. As such, it has been suggested that small scale practitioner research cannot make generalised claims beyond the people or institution involved (Arnold, 2012b) and questions the reliability and transferability of its results beyond the teacher conducting the research (Baumfield *et al.*, 2013). However, teacher-led research may be seen as having reflective reasoning characterised by its acceptance that knowledge claims cannot be made with certainty, but rather making judgements that are the 'most reasonable' based upon their

evaluation of the available data in relation to the context in which they are generated (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2012). For this case-study I was limited to how much time my employers were prepared to commit to the study, therefore limiting its size and scope. Limitations were put in place as to how much time the students could be asked to commit, limiting the possibilities of evaluative interviews taking place once the research was completed and preventing students from interviewing one another to determine their thoughts about the different research methods.

Small scale practitioner research has particular ethical considerations. Teachers are bound by a code of professional ethics which have to be considered prior to the research starting. These professional ethical obligations may affect the nature and conduct of the research (Buchanan & Redford, 2008), particularly if the research in school involves children (Baumfield et al., 2009). Menter *et al.* (2012) noted that the dual role of the teacher researcher is ethically problematic as it may cause conflicts of interest that jeopardise the best interest of the students. It must be recognised that what may be normal teaching practice might not be ethical in research; for example a teacher may assess how students talk without telling them they are doing so, or may not allow a student to withdraw from completing a task. Neither of these would be ethically acceptable in the course of research (Baumfield et al., 2009). However, this dual role also has advantages as it presents a potential insight that might not otherwise be seen. In this case-study no covert observations were made, and as the research was not classroom based my own teaching practice and teaching relationship with the students was irrelevant.

It should not be assumed that the research purposes are neutral (Menter *et al.* 2012; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) as there may be a particular 'need' for the results in that institution. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2009 : 102) state, "*... it is a hallmark of much practitioner research that the ultimate goal is challenging inequities, raising questions about the status quo, and enhancing the learning and life chances of students.*" Menter *et al.* (2012) add to this by raising the question whether practitioner research should be clear that its primary concern is to bring about change based on particular value positions of the institutions and students. This is the case for my research where the 'need' to understand students' changes in perception from Year 9 to 11 was identified by the school. However, my academic interest

was not in the evaluations of questions posed by the school, but in the methodological processes used to reach the evaluations.

Teacher-researchers often recognise the power that the institution has and their own part within that by virtue of their position as adults working with children (Arnold, 2012a). Steps need to be taken to minimise the power differential between the teacher-researcher and the student-respondent, for example by using other students to conduct interviews in place of the teacher (Baumfield *et al.*, 2009). Mac an Ghaill (1991) discusses how the students he studied trusted him as he was their teacher and admitted making things up to researchers who they did not know. However, there is a fine line between the role of researcher and teacher. Mac an Ghaill (page 110) also writes that participants regularly visited his house, *'The experience of talking, eating, dancing, and listening to music together helped break down the potential social barriers of the teacher/researcher role.'* This situation is uncomfortable and poses ethical questions as to whether a teacher, researching or not, should invite students to their homes for social activities. Although mutual respect between teacher and student is essential, researchers do not have to be friends with children in order to gain their trust (Kellett, 2010). For this case-study I wanted to see if different research methodologies altered the power differential by making students more relaxed and open in their responses. I did not go down Mac an Ghaill's line of becoming socially active with the students in order to gain their trust.

Practitioner research relies on a number of ethical positions being met: consent, confidentiality, and transparency (Mockler, 2007). A main ethical principle should be to manage the power relationships in the context of the research and the students' position in it in order to successfully listen and act on what they say. Students should have the power to opt in or out of projects, to fully participate and be believed (Arnold, 2012a; Arnold 2012b). One way is by making a commitment to feed back research findings to student participants (Baumfield *et al.*, 2013). Baumfield *et al.* (2009 & 2013) note that even though student voice is becoming more prevalent, they rarely found feedback being given to the students. In this case-study, the participants were given the opportunity to discuss the results and findings, albeit sometime after the research had taken place. Only two took up this opportunity and in hindsight this should have been offered much sooner. However, in my position as Assistant Headteacher in the school I also had a consideration that I should not be taking up too much

time of the students. Feedback was offered, but to push students into using even more of their time for the research would not, in my opinion, be ethically or educationally sound. To do so as the Assistant Headteacher would only emphasize the power differences that may exist.

Menter *et al.* (2012) discuss how creative approaches are increasingly being used in educational research. Their views link closely with the purpose of my case-study as they believe that 'other methods' are instrumental in overcoming the challenges associated with accessing participants' views. They believe that these methods can serve as a springboard for discussion and obtaining primary data. I hoped to observe this when using photo-elicitation with students. They also state that capturing data using non-conventional methods can be challenging and fun. For whom is not made clear, however if it is for the participant, this may impact on the validity of the data they produce. In this case-study the process of photo-elicitation was enjoyed by the students, got them thinking about and evaluating their responses in detail, and acted as an excellent prompt in later interviews.

It is not uncommon to find visual methods used by teacher-researchers, or to find children producing images for research. Knight (2012) gave digital cameras to nursery children and asked them to take photographs at home in order to understand the home/school link between staff and children. Although Knight's study differed from mine by using younger children and not providing set questions for the children to focus upon, a number of conclusions were made that are relevant to this study. Knight found that when the children showed their photos to the staff it created collaborative guided learning for both teacher and child. Also, taking their own images and sharing them seemed to enable children and adults to communicate and engage with each other. This links with my attempt to see if producing their own images helps students to communicate in a more effective way during an interview than without photos.

In another example, Menter *et al.* (2012) discuss how they have used or have seen research driven photos, photographic displays, photo-elicitation, and photographic essays. Research driven photos are taken during the research and because of it. They can be treated as research evidence by themselves, or in conjunction with other non-visual data to further elicit

participants' views. This case-study asks students to take photos, not as data in themselves, but to help elicit data in conjunction with interviews.

Photographic displays have been used to present images as secondary data to interviews or questionnaires. The 'School of Ambition' programme (Menter *et al.*, 2012) considered that it is sometimes easier to show an image rather than to describe it. Photographic displays have not been used in this case-study, but some are presented to add context to the discussion or to give example of their use during the interviews.

'Photographic essays' give participants freedom to take images with minimal guidance and offer reflective commentaries. This is used as a mechanism to facilitate or start an open dialogue guided by the participants and their photos, allowing discussions to explore the participants' views and perceptions (Menter *et al.*, 2012). Menter *et al.* worked with vulnerable young college learners, whose photos of doors and gates appeared trivial, but in discussion prompted metaphors of barriers to their education. Whilst my research is not giving full freedom of expression to the participants, I hope to see if taking photos can provide an insight into the otherwise hidden view of students and their perceptions of their school during the transition from Years 9 to 10.

Menter *et al.* (2012) also used photo-elicitation with Year 6 pupils. The images of their playground proved a useful 'aide memoire' during the group discussions. They found that the images gave a personal slant to the research and encouraged the children to share their views. Further, the involvement of students when analysing the data acts to increase the usefulness of its interpretation, increasing the validity of the research (Baumfield *et al.*, 2013). This case-study was an attempt to use photo-elicitation with older students, but to interview them individually, rather than in a group.

Involving children in school research

Working myself as a teacher-researcher, I am aware that using school children in research brings about issues of power. Attempts can be made to shift power relationships, but this may change the 'voice' that the child uses in their response. What they say can vary depending on the methodology used by the researcher and the types of questioning used

(Arnot & Reay, 2007). Within the school environment a 'double power issue' exists as schools are perhaps one of the most governed environments (Kellett, 2010). Further, it is the teacher-researcher who controls the agenda, formulates the questions, designs the methods and interprets the findings (Kellett, 2010). In many ways this can be seen in this case-study where I as the teacher had set the research agenda, formulated the questions and designed the methods. This is deliberate as it attempts to see if photo-elicitation and the student interpretation of their own images helps to reduce this issue of power when teachers research in schools.

Arnot & Reay studied working-class pupils and noted that they were well aware of the dominant voices within the school, that their experience of school was essentially an experience of a classification system and their place within it. They concluded that consulting students is little different to normal school interactions as students have a skill and familiarity with the expectations of teacher/pupil communication (Arnot & Reay, 2007).

Of the four types of pupil talk identified by Arnot & Reay, Fielding identifies that two, identity and code, are particularly pertinent and problematic for teachers wishing to develop pupil consultation with more than just a small number of middle-class students (Fielding, 2007). This creates a conundrum for my research as the small numbers of students involved are all from a similar and typical middle-class background, but I accept this difficulty in researching student voice whilst posing the question can methods, such as using photo-elicitation in the interview process reveal their true voice? In her work in the USA, Cook-Sather discusses the notion that so long as teachers 're-tune' their ears to hear what the students have to say, students who are taken seriously as knowledgeable participants feel empowered to offer their true voice (Cook-Sather, 2002).

Wall & Higgins attempted to 're-tune' their understanding of student-voice by giving templates to students with thought and speech bubbles on so that the children could annotate their ideas about learning. They found that by providing such a scaffold, even children who were not used to talking about their learning could engage with the discussion (Wall & Higgins, 2006). My research attempts to see if photo-elicitation facilitates this empowerment in a different way.

A problem identified by trying to elicit a student's true voice is that schools contain few spaces where students can engage with each other and the adult community of the school. Any spaces, such as school councils, interview locations, times, etc. are firmly controlled by adults and neither reciprocal or democratic (Fielding, 2007). This is an issue for the context of this case-study and is an area where teacher-researchers may fall foul of the existing power differentials between themselves and the students, and the hierarchies of the school further put at risk the way in which the students will want to approach the research. However, I look at whether photo-elicitation helps to elevate such problems by opening a new 'space' and also whether the use of photo-elicitation allows for the students to undergo a better learning experience themselves during the research process.

Visual methods

An array of visual methodologies exist using film, photographs, found images, produced images, drawings, cartoons, etc. This review concentrates on the processes of photography and photo-elicitation. Using photographic images as an elicitation tool during interview tends to centre on images produced or found by the researcher and shown to the respondent, or to images produced by the respondents themselves.

There is an argument that within education communicating understanding and providing explanations favours the verbal, leading to a dominance of language. Investigation of learners' perspectives has also tended to rely on verbal skills and articulation (Woolner *et al.*, 2010). To counter this, visual methodologies within educational research have seen a rapid expansion recently, borrowing and developing from other disciplines' methods such as draw and write, or children taking photographs (Wall *et al.*, 2012). O'Brien *et al.* looked further at the draw and write technique and noted it is a participant-friendly method described as 'user-friendly', 'bottom-up' and 'participatory', dissolving the boundaries between researcher and researched (O'Brien *et al.*, 2012). Photo-elicitation, as used in my study, can be viewed in a similar light and as an adaption to draw and write.

Visual methods have been used to extract qualitative data, such as Woolner *et al.* who asked students to annotate photographs of an experimental classroom. The text the students

wrote around the images were then analysed qualitatively (Woolner *et al.*, 2007). Similarly I have asked students to discuss their images and made qualitative analysis of the subsequent interview transcripts. Students have been asked to create pictures, such as O'Brien *et al.*, who also considered how visual methods can create a level playing field between participants from different backgrounds. They asked participants to draw diagrams of school and professional networks prior to interview to act as a visual prompt upon which they were asked to elaborate. Having a prior task was found to allow the participants to 'settle in' to the research and its purpose (O'Brien *et al.*, 2012). My study draws from this by asking students to create photographs prior to interview.

Visual methods can also be used to create quantitative data alongside the qualitative. Woolner *et al.* used various visual methods when studying opinions about school design. Two photo-elicitation methods were used, an open ended discussion eliciting opinions and a more directed 'diamond ranking' exercise using images produced by the researchers. Alongside these a mapping activity of routes and 'likes and dislikes' was undertaken (Woolner *et al.*, 2010). They found that the photographs worked well, especially where literacy levels varied, by stimulating discussions (Woolner *et al.*, 2010, Woolner *et al.*, 2009). A question must be asked of whether by supplying images the focus of the discussions was restrained to what was on display. However, using several visual methods allowed triangulation to occur and the diamond ranking a more qualitative analysis to be employed. The mapping exercise also produced a qualitative form of data in terms of cumulative totals of areas marked as liked or disliked (Woolner *et al.*, 2010). They concluded that photo-elicitation can inform what is happening, but a range of methods is required to understand to what extent these things occur, and to suggest why (Woolner *et al.*, 2010). In this case-study the literacy level of all of the participants was very similar and only one visual method was employed. In practice, for teachers undertaking research, there is limit as to how many methods they could employ with restrictions on their own professional time and the time asked of the students.

Many visual studies have been used within mixed method approaches. Darbyshire *et al.* suggest that visual methods can generate different ideas from those taken from verbal or written interviews. They found that by helping children to express themselves in a variety of ways increases children's opportunities to have some control about how they contribute. This helps to engage and interest them in the process (Darbyshire *et al.*, 2005). It is noted

that they did not ask the children to discuss the images they had produced, meaning that any interpretation of the images were purely from an adult researcher perspective. This is in contrast to my case-study where no interpretation of the images were sought, only the direct view from the students as to why they produced the image and what it meant.

Visual methods are moving towards the centre of social science research, but the proliferation of imagery has raised the problem of lack of coherence and consistency amongst its application and practice. One aspect of this difficulty is the distinction between its use as a method and its use as data (O'Brien *et al.*, 2012). Visual techniques are now used to elicit insight in the form of testimony, this non-visual data then providing the empirical material for subsequent analysis. Alternatively visual artefacts can be used as data in their own right (O'Brien *et al.*, 2012). In this case-study, a question is raised as to the publication of the photographs taken by students. As the images are not data in their own right, nor have they been analysed as such, they perhaps should not be published. However, I have chosen to publish some to deepen and contextualize the data produced in the interview allowing the reader to gain an empathy with the students and the ideas they discussed.

Photo-elicitation is not new, being first mentioned in 1957 by the photographer and researcher John Collier examining mental health in changing communities in Canada (cited in Harper, 2002). Epstein *et al.* suggest that there are three questions to be considered when using photo-elicitation:

1. Who is going to make or select the images to be used?
2. What is the content of the images going to be?
3. Where are the images going to be used and how?

(Epstein *et al.*, 2006).

Alongside these are three other considerations. Firstly image selection, including where the image maker stands, what they include in the frame, exclude or leave out of focus. Second, image processing and whether the image is manipulated, digitally treated, or cropped, etc. Finally its editing, how it is going to be shown, what image is presented before or after, or if it is part of a montage (Thomson, 2008). For this case-study the images were created by the students and the content was of their choosing. The images were only to be used to prompt

discussion in the interview and so their selection, viewpoint, content (and also excluded 'content'), prior digital manipulation or editing, was left to the students. As the images were not produced for display, their presentation outside of the interview is not a consideration.

The use of photo-elicitation in interviews has been used in various contexts. Sampson-Cordle (cited in Harper, 2002 : 17) used various photo-elicitation sub-techniques when studying the relationship between a rural school and its community. Her methods include 'photofeedback' where the photographer analyses their own pictures with written comments; 'photo interviewing', conventional photo-elicitation; and 'photoessays', where respondents integrate several elements of analytical thinking, images, and reflection.

The classic approach to photo-elicitation is for the researcher to select the images (Lapenta, 2011). Shohel (2012) took photographs during Bangladeshi classroom observations, to be shown later to students in interview. Shohel found that the students often came up with different contexts and interpretations to what the researcher had when taking the image. This raises an epistemological question surrounding whose knowledge and interest the selected images actually represent (Lapenta, 2011). This case-study avoids this by asking the respondents, not the researcher, to select the images. Further, the researcher is not interpreting the images in any way.

At the other end of the spectrum, Vassenden & Andersson (2010) used a photograph of the Christian Bible and the Islamic Qur'an in their study of religion in Oslo. Here the images were presented by the researcher to the respondents, in both individual interviews and focus groups, as the starting point to a discussion. They reported that several interviews contained 'embarrassing' silences or very short responses. The respondents had been interviewed orally before and many said that they found it harder to answer questions in the interview containing photo-elicitation. This may be due to the 'open-space' that a photograph contains putting pressure on the respondent to try to interpret everything they see with the suspicion that the researcher is expecting a 'correct' answer.

In Vassenden & Andersson's research the images were staged photographs provided by the researcher. This may have caused the difficulties in the interviews. As the images were

staged by the researcher, this may lead to the perceived interpretation of the image from the start being influenced by the research team. Presenting images to respondents who are not familiar with the context is problematic. For a non-Muslim to be confronted by an image of the Qu'ran and Tasbeih relies on them knowing what they are. Indeed, Vassenden & Andersson note that many respondents mistakenly thought that the image was of the Judaic Torah and a Catholic rosary. It is no wonder that many struggled with the interview. Perhaps respondents producing their own images, such as in this case-study, negates this problem.

Another approach is to ask respondents to supply the images themselves, either by selecting or producing the images themselves prior to interview. This reflexive photography is first attributed to Harper in the 1980s (Lapenta, 2011 : 206) and encourages the respondents to elaborate on the content of their images. Beilen used this process to study agricultural landscapes in Australia by asking farmers to photograph what to them were significant farming landscapes. In her research she asked the families to assign categories or themes for the photographs taken, and then rank each picture in terms of its significance within each category (Beilen, 2005). Beilen concluded that this method exposed a depth and richness of information within the pictures. The respondents were clearly conscious in how they had composed each picture, deciding which angle to take the picture, or how it would tell a particular story. By allowing the respondents to discuss these points in the interviews an understanding of what they had photographed, as well as why they had photographed it, could be established. The interview is now driven by the respondents, giving them an increased voice and authority in interpreting their own lives and social contexts (Lapenta, 2011). My research is very much framed by these ideas.

In their study of mobile workers in the USA, Felstead *et al.* (2004) asked respondents to take photos of their working environments with detailed and specific instructions as to what should be pictured. The images were then used in interviews, with each picture being rigorously discussed in order to find out why they had been taken.

Giving detailed instructions to respondents may be over restrictive, or indirectly directing respondents to take pictures of 'desired' areas for the research. However, it does ensure that the images are valid and of the subject area of interest. Felstead *et al.* claimed that despite the detailed instructions being given to respondents, the images revealed aspects of

respondents' lives that they were unlikely to have spoken about in a conventional interview as they would normally have been taken for granted or unaware of their significance. This suggests that photo-elicitation provides richer data than stand alone interviews. Although how Felstead *et al.* (2004) can be sure that 'revealed' aspects would have remained hidden in a traditional interview is unclear as no 'control' group of interviews without photos is mentioned.

The level of control and direction provided by the researcher is discussed further by Varga-Atkins & O'Brien (2009). They note that the subject and purpose of the task is as equally important as the task structure. Their study involved a directed task of producing a map of school networks along with a more open-ended task of creating a diagram to represent CPD. From this they indicate that the researcher must address:

1. The intended research *purpose* (why the visual task is being used)
2. The *subject* (what the participants have to represent)
3. *Structure* (how the researcher structures the task)

They concluded that there needs to be a match between the subject complexity and the task structure. However, too much control of the process by the researcher is not always desirable as it may restrict the ability to collect rich contextual data from the participant. For this case-study I gave instructions to the respondents about what questions they needed to consider when composing their images and how many to submit, but tried to limit being over prescriptive. This proved difficult as the school imposed several restrictions such as not allowing the cameras to be taken off-site. Furthermore, my initial study highlighted that too little guidance could allow the subsequent interviews to move away from the intended research questions.

Felstead *et al.* (2004) found that images acted as a trigger to memory and narrative amongst the respondents and provided valid, useful data. This is a common conclusion amongst researchers discussing the merits of photo-elicitation (see Harper, 2002). They also identified a number of limitations. First, respondents did not always remember to take photos, or it was inconvenient for them. This was an important consideration for my study; the busy academic and social lives of teenagers could easily mean students forgot, or were unable, to

take pictures. It is also possible that in some circumstances the children would be prevented from taking pictures. These scenarios could force the student to produce 'false' images in order to satisfy the brief. It was hoped that the anonymous questionnaires given after the interviews would determine if this occurred.

A second limitation is that as the photos were usually taken by the respondents, they themselves rarely appeared in the pictures. In my opinion if the images are then used in interview this can easily be discussed with the respondent. They also note that some items, places, and people appeared to be posed. In my opinion this is not a major limitation as the meaning behind the posed image is still interesting. For this case-study the students were allowed to be in the images, or to set up deliberate poses.

Felstead *et al.* (2004) also discuss the likelihood that respondents may decide not to photograph situations that they perceive as damaging or discrediting, or not of interest to the researcher. This limitation may well be of high significance to my case-study. Teenage girls may not wish to photograph certain places, people or events that they know a male member of staff is going to see. Likewise their perception of what I would find uninteresting may well be different to my own. Such issues needed to be raised in initial discussions with the respondents and have links to issues of anonymity and perceived power differentials between adult researchers and child respondents within a school environment.

Photo-elicitation as a method has been used on many occasions with young people, not just within education. Croghan *et al.* (2008) used the method to investigate patterns of consumer goods and construction of youth identities. A number of 14-18 year olds were given single-use cameras and asked to photograph consumer items that were significant to them. These were then used in interviews to trigger discussions about consumer goods and identity.

Two factors are noted about this methodology. First that single use cameras were used, as opposed to digital. Using single-use cameras meant that the researchers developed the films when the cameras were returned to them, meaning that that the respondents had no choice over what images were printed or used in the interviews, nor were they able to edit them prior to submission. This highlights the merits of using digital cameras where multiple images

can be taken, viewed, and deleted if not 'acceptable' to the photographer. Deciding which image should be used to visualise one's own identity must surely rest with the photographer and not the researcher. It was decided that for this case-study students would use digital cameras, allowing them to take as many images as they wanted before selecting a limited number for discussion.

Croghan *et al.* gave the respondents clear instructions as to what they wanted photographed. Despite these instructions, only 18% of the 500+ images returned were 'correct' in terms of the content pictured. It was clear that the young respondents had re-appropriated the task, in effect retaining control over how their identity was presented. Although not to the same extent, in my case-study even with carefully thought out and delivered instructions, it was clear that if respondents produced their own images they were likely to be exactly that, the respondents' own interpretation of the instructions, or simply the respondents' own preference as to what they want to picture.

Croghan *et al.*'s study highlights many of the arguments for using respondent produced images in photo-elicitation. They note that the method offers participants an opportunity to show, rather than 'tell', aspects of their own identity that might otherwise be hidden. They also note that this method acts as a trigger to memory in the interview and is more likely to evoke a more emotional multi-layered response. Further, respondents' own photos are more likely to bridge the cultural gap between the researcher and the researched. Within schools this last point is likely to be advantageous, where the researcher may have little access to changing youth culture that is so fragmented amongst, as well as within, class, gender, race, location, etc. This was an important consideration for my case-study as my age, gender, and professional position is clearly different to the students being asked to give their opinions.

Croghan *et al.* note that the photos allow participants to introduce new and possibly contentious topics in ways that may not be possible in a purely verbal exchange. Whilst it is clear from Croghan *et al.*'s research that there are many advantages to respondent produced images and photo-elicitation, the degree to if contentious images produced should still be considered as acceptable is not discussed.

Slightly risky, but quintessentially teenage activities like underage drinking and illicit drug use arose rarely in the verbal interviews, but featured more frequently in the photography and subsequently discussed in the photo-elicited interviews.

(Croghan *et al.*, 2008 : 353)

Croghan *et al.* do not discuss the ethical considerations undertaken for the research. No mention is made as to whether any duty of care was considered by the researchers and if such images were given to relevant persons or authorities, or even if the respondents had been warned that such images would need to be passed on. The duty of care to young people that many teachers acting as researchers would, hopefully, adhere to without question is not discussed in this article.

Within the context of research involving children or taking place within schools, approaches to researching child based experience have become established where researchers seek to give a voice to young people by engaging them in the research process (Prosser & Burke, 2008). Visual research perhaps gives voice to children's worlds by adopting child sensitive research methods. Kaplan found in his study involving students with low levels of literacy that photo-elicitation was particularly useful (Kaplan, 2008). He cautions that a too literal interpretation of the photographs by either the student or others can be unhelpful, and that researchers should encourage participants to challenge literalism (Kaplan, 2008). I question whether this is the correct approach and may result in students feeling that their role in the research is devalued. In my case-study students were given the questions and asked to produce images. In the interviews this produced a range of images and discussions from the expected and literal, to quite abstract.

For Prosser & Burke (2008) an image based approach is a pivotal element in understanding the production, consumption, and meaning of children's culture. Children often feel more confident when creating drawings, using photographs or videos than they may do using words. Clark-Ibanez (2008) found in her study of disruptive school children that the images

they produced created story-telling responses in the interviews that were potentially less intimidating than the traditional 'question and answer' approach and is the approach that has been adopted in this case-study. Such methods can therefore be used to engage young people with the research and make them feel more comfortable with the research process, but also to provide more valid data than when concentrating on 'adult' methods of formal interview or written questionnaire.

Allen (2009) conducted research on sexuality in senior schools in New Zealand. She asked pupils to take photographs over a one week period at the school, these were then used in semi-structured interviews to discuss why the pupils had taken certain images. She found that this method was useful as it allowed the young people the chance to shape the discussion agenda themselves, identifying what issues were most important before the researcher raised any particular themes. Allen found that the use of photo-elicitation during the interview stage allowed two students who were very shy a chance to take part in the research by showing their photo-diaries. This was an important consideration for my research where my position within the school may have made some students hesitant to discuss their ideas with me in a formal one-to-one interview.

Allen discusses her difficulty in obtaining permission from schools to allow pupils to participate. One school Principal believed that allowing pupils to take photographs created 'too many risks'. It must be recognised that Allen's research into sexuality in senior schools is a topic that many school leaders may feel uncomfortable in allowing research to take place, regardless of the research methodology. This rings true for my research where difficulty obtaining permission due to the proposed use of cameras caused potential compromises to be made, even with seemingly uncontroversial questions being asked of the students.

It is common for children to not only produce images but to play a significant role in their analysis and interpretation. This can be seen in Lomax's (2012) research where 14 children generated over 600 images within their neighbourhood and participated in their analysis and interpretation. Lomax noted that the editorial decisions taken by the children when selecting images to discuss were framed by their understanding of what might work visually and how the images might be interpreted by potential viewers.

Our knowledge of the world around us is shaped by our senses, and in contemporary 'Western' societies we prioritise the visual. Further, contemporary mass culture is hyper-visual (Knowles & Sweetman, 2004), allowing the interpretation and processing of imagery to be common. The increased availability and use of mobile telephones with sophisticated camera features, and the willingness to share images on social networking sites have made the visual and its interpretation almost second nature to young adults. So much so that David (2010) notes that a critical evaluation of the internet reveals that notions of intimacy, privacy and memory are evolving in tandem with new and emerging technologies. Increased interactions between people and new technologies reveal a transformation of cultural notions, especially between the boundary of the individual and the collective, the private and the public, and memory and experience.

If the increased use of photographs as a way of making private experiences public, and the use of images to prove experiences as opposed to rely on memory, suggest that children could be more comfortable expressing their opinions, feelings, and stories in research by using visual methods as opposed to traditional oral methods.

The growing use of digital media and online imagery has prompted interesting discussion regarding the growth of the use of images by children in their own lives. As digital camera technology has developed and the ownership and use of internet enabled mobile devices has increased, teenage participation in photography has likewise increased (Durrant *et al.*, 2011). In their study, Durrant *et al.* interviewed four British teenage girls about their photographic display practices. They found they were very conscious about their image portrayed on-line and were very aware as to the importance of how their image might be interpreted by others. Although not part of Durrant *et al.*'s study, this links closely with photo-elicitation. As teenagers use photography and on-line platforms more often, their understanding of image and interpretation also increases, although they may be 'digitally naïve' in their understanding of the power and potential consequences of these images. An understanding that photographic images can be interpreted in a variety of ways makes the use of images in interviews unsurprising for teenagers. Indeed, being asked to give interpretations or discuss images may be increasingly second nature to school children.

Further, Durrant *et al.* also discuss the increased use of camera-phone images to share experiences, as opposed to being used to 'take' images for aesthetic reasons. It suggests that children are increasingly familiar with using images as a way of sharing, communicating, and discussing everyday situations. My case-study would draw on this and would consider whether the familiarity of social narrative creation via photographs could be used as a way of eliciting information in a more comfortable, and therefore more reliable way, than relying on traditional semi-structured interviews in isolation.

Drew & Guillemin (2014) studied chronic disease self-management in adolescents. Respondents were given a disposable camera and after several weeks took part in an individual interview. Drew & Guillemin highlight that the respondents were the primary creators of the photographs, yet also establish the photographs as integral to later research interviews. They noted that this creates 'meaning-making' through participant observation and image production. 'Meaning-making' is influenced from the moment respondents are asked to participate, through to types of statements written on the accompanying instruction sheets, all of which sets up the types of responses young people will provide. They conclude that the verbal explanation of the image is crucial for developing an understanding of the intentionality underpinning the participants image making. My research falls in line with this as it considers the extent to which the creation of the narrative and data occurs when the image is taken, as opposed to being created within seconds of an interview question being asked, and the advantages that this creates for the teacher-researcher.

Along similar lines to the use of photo-elicitation when researching with children is the visual narrative technique as used by Carrington *et al.* (2007) in their study of Australian secondary school students. The students were working as participatory and collaborative researchers in a piece of action research. Carrington *et al.* (2007) outline visual narrative as using photographs in an information gathering process that can inform a conscious reflection on previously taken for granted assumptions. In essence the image provides an alternative lens through which an issue can be viewed or re-assessed, contributing to the epistemological understandings of an issue.

For Carrington *et al.* (2007), students worked in small groups to produce images and add narratives to their pictures. On occasions the narrative took the form of a poem, a famous

quotation, or just the students' own words. The idea of having students work in groups creates a possible issue that a group collective consensus may occur when choosing to take certain images or add certain narratives. Such a consensus may hide individual ideas, similar to the notion of 'groupthink' when interviewing children. Although my research was not group based, it takes note of Carrington *et al's* (2007) conclusion that using visual narratives enable students to see and highlight their opinions. Students creating images may approach issues through a new lens and see aspects they would normally take for granted, perhaps leaving such issues and ideas out if they were interviewed in the traditional way.

Judging the success / value of qualitative methods in practitioner enquiry

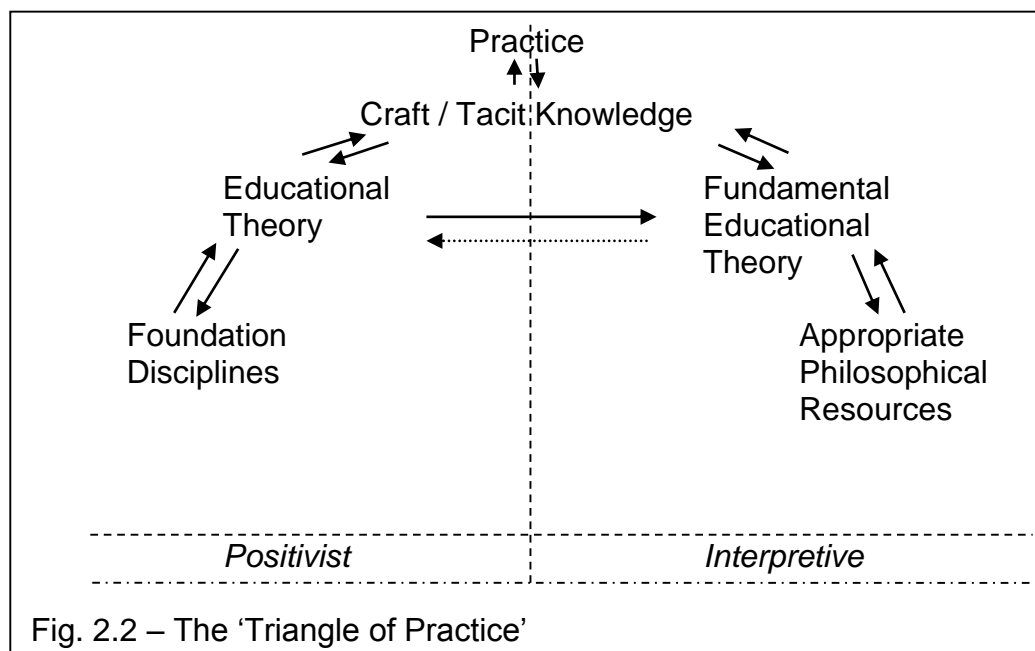
For teachers researching in schools a spectrum of approaches exist from quantitative questionnaires to 'fourth generation' (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) constructivist approaches of full student interaction and participation. This case-study only uses a small number of approaches, each on their own point of the spectrum. Stand alone semi-structured interviews involve students and seek their collaboration, but perhaps not so far as inviting students to create their own images first, handing far more of the data creation and evaluation over towards the student. At the same time, the evaluative questionnaires fall further towards a positivist side, but even so allowed for some interaction.

Mixing these methods and trying to compare them is problematic as each has its own place and is not directly comparable. This research is a solitary case-study based in its own unique contextual boundaries and seeks to determine what may work best within its own context. It does not provide positivist solutions, nor attempts to determine a constructivist consensus. Using different methods along the spectrum constrains it to providing a realistic evaluation of its own background and potential guidance to other teachers researching in the context of their institutions. My research is framed by Dewey's notion of 'warranted assertion', based on the evidence provided in this case-study it is not a universal truth that is sought, but a knowledge or understanding that may help to guide enquiry (Noddings, 2010). For Dewey, enquiry is a deliberately conducted activity where the enquiry agent in its own environment engages in removing some doubtful aspect of that situation, rather than a 'final theory' (Levi, 2010). This is what my research attempts to do.

Judging the success or value of qualitative methods in practitioner enquiry can be seen by the degree that it improves practice. A difficulty arises between determining whether the educational practice being influenced is small-scale and within one institution, such as this case-study, or a much wider influence throughout many institutions.

Difficulty arises when trying to establish where on the quantitative / qualitative spectrum this research falls. Whilst semi-structured interviews are certainly more subjective than closed-question interviews, the coding of semi-structured interviews does allow for quasi-quantitative analysis to take place.

This case-study uses questionnaires to make some notional comparisons of the opinions of participants about two different research methods which are not directly comparable. As the research is a single case-study it cannot make widespread empirical claims. As qualitative research it falls mainly in the subjective side of a triangle of practice that is represented in Figure 2.2. Consideration should be given to the extent that the subjective and objective side link and the importance of the top of the triangle in the formulation of research ideas and the potential development of its findings.



The triangle of practice shows that educational theory and fundamental educational theory lie on opposing philosophical sides, yet both lead to and from the cap-stone of the triangle, educational craft and practice. The triangle shows a link between the two philosophical sides, that educational theory leads to fundamental educational theory, and vice versa.

Practice

The role to which 'practice' plays in the triangle is important. Educational research would be of little consequence if the ideas and topics researched were not intended to have some impact upon practice. In turn many areas of research may stem from practice itself. Phillips (1987) demonstrates this using a medical example from the nineteenth century. In this Semmelweis deduced that 'childbed fever' was caused when physicians failed to wash their hands before assisting with the delivery of children. It was current practice that determined a problem and generated a possible hypothesis for testing.

Semmelweis determined that using chlorinated lime to wash the physicians' hands would reduce the number of fevers. How this hypothesis is then tested is open to debate and is at the head of the split in the triangle of practice. The question of whether a positivist study should be used to investigate the hypothesis, or the possibility that a subjective and interpretive based study would work arises from this practice led hypothesis. Likewise, my work as an assistant head teacher has had an impact on my interests and area of study. Further, my position on the senior leadership team determined the questions that were to be asked of the students participating.

Figure 2.2 demonstrates that there is link between practice and theory. Carr (1993) describes this relationship as being one of opposition, where 'theory' is concerned with universal, context-free generalisations and abstract ideas, while 'practice' is concerned with particular context-dependent issues and concrete realities. Carr (1993) also demonstrates that the two cannot be mutually exclusive, nor opposed to one another as all educational practice will, to some extent, be theory laden. In return, fundamental theories are driven by, or created from, practical educational experience.

My own research fits mid-way between the two levels of 'practice' and 'theory'.

Observations made during the course of my own practice have led, in part, to the research ideas and formation of possible early hypothesis about conducting semi-structured interviews with students. As my research is based in school it is not just concerned with abstract ideas as it also uses realities. My work, therefore, sits on the two way connection between actual practice itself and educational theories, perhaps described as 'action research' (Kemmis, 1993).

Action research is enquiry undertaken by participants involved within a social situation in order to improve their own practice, their understanding of these practices, or the situation in which these practices take place (Kemmis, 1993). Educational practice is an informed and committed action. The action is informed by 'practical theory', which in turn informs and transforms the theory which initially informed it. For educational practitioners the positioning of research between theory and practice is key. However, a problem is created by the very nature of action research as if a practitioner is studying their own praxis, a danger exists that the understandings reached are biased or subjective due to the introvert and self-interpretive nature of the researcher who is affected by, and helps create, the educational practice and educational theory that they study (Kemmis, 1993). This suggests that action research places the positivist side of the triangle out of reach.

Educational Theory

Although my research has not drawn on objective scientific philosophies the aim of positivist research is discussed before explaining where my study sits. Educational theory should be regarded as hypothetical solutions to problems in education. Hypothetical education theory should relate to systematic descriptions of a particular education system within the related political, economic, and social aspects of a society if it is to correspond to Poppers' specific initial conditions for scientific study (Holmes, 1981).

The aim of positivist research should be to subject the proposed educational theory to critical examination in order to eliminate those which will not work within the described system, or to show how educational craft will flow from the adoption of the proposed theory. For

Parsons (1937), systematic theories must be produced in social research, even in the 'common sense' knowledge of everyday life (cited in Delanty & Strydom, 2003).

For my research, this idea of educational theory causes problems as a single case-study cannot be said to be 'well established'. It has not undergone scrutiny and testing so remains as fundamental educational theory, interpretative in its views.

There is a scientific rejection that theory can be built up from an observational foundation (Phillips, 1987) as observation cannot be a 'neutral foundation'. The process of observation is influenced by the unconscious theories and hypotheses that the observer holds before the observations are made. It may then be argued that observations made by current practitioners in the classroom cannot be used to develop educational theory as they are laced with personal prejudice. This creates problems as if observation plays no central role, then it may be argued that science cannot be about the 'real world' (Phillips, 1987).

Educational curriculum as a positivist paradigm is more closely linked to previous, older curriculum based on moral codes (Melrose, 1996). Such curriculum were designed to train 'the masses' for their duties and to produce highly skilled workers. They lead to the development of a teaching craft that was comparable and had set, measurable goals and ideas. The educational theory built around this was both functional and standardised.

Contemporary English secondary education curriculum is no longer based around such moral principles. Positivist educational theory becomes increasingly hard to create as the modern English curriculum is more liberal, involving judgements about education and social values. My research is not positivist as it is concerned with personal values expressed through images and interviews. Contemporary, liberal, social values are interpretative and cannot be standardised, therefore cannot form positivist based educational theory. My research sits with Guba and Lincoln's idea of fourth generation evaluation recognising that the enquiry is bounded and framed by elements of the contextual culture and politics of its setting. My research reaches an evaluation that aims to be part of an evolution of a consensual construction, recognising that not all evaluations end on consensus. The contextual framing

of this individual case-study is a truth, but may not be the truth in all circumstances (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Further, being a practitioner involved in the situation being studied, the research might be labelled as 'action research' (Kemmis, 1993). Carr & Kemmis (1983) argue that as educational research involves interaction between practice led theory and theory led development of practice, positivist aims of determinist and technicist research cannot occur. Amongst the formal requirements for adequate and coherent educational science laid down by Carr & Kemmis include the following that, "*it must reject positivist notions of rationality, objectivity, and truth*", and "*it must employ the interpretive categories of teachers.*" (Carr & Kemmis, 1983 : 158).

Fundamental Educational Theory

Where Educational Theory is functional and objective, Fundamental Educational Theory is opinion based and interpretive. Carr & Kemmis (1995) argue that social sciences should aim at interpretation of society, rather than seeking scientific explanations. An interpretive and hermeneutic view is based on different understandings, motives, and reasoning of unique individuals (Melrose, 1996). An interpretive view of individuals cannot create an objective 'correct answer' as it searches for an understanding of individual cases rather than sweeping generalised statements or universal 'laws'. The objectivity and 'reality' that is sought through positivist science can only be applied to society insofar as the individual members of that society define it, and consequentially orient themselves towards that common defined reality (Carr & Kemmis, 1995; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). As a case-study, my research is framed by this notion.

Natural science is concerned with the observations of an external reality of events.

Interpretative science attempts to understand the actions and events that are the expression of human activity and attaches significance to the creativity within human life. The weight given to interpretations depends on our own understanding of the situation that we observe, and of the people involved during the observation (Anderson et al., 1986).

Observing people cannot be conducted using the same scientific approach that might be used with natural objects. The actions of a person are not just overt physical movements as interpretation is required of the meanings given by the person to their actions. The person's own motives, intentions, and purpose of the action must also be interpreted on an individual basis (Carr & Kemmis, 1995). For my research this is more likely to occur than traditional science based research using a positivist philosophical background. The nature of 'feelings' towards their school, and even assigning a 'value' to the usefulness of the data presented will vary from individual to individual. Feelings and attitudes are meta-physical, and unquantifiable. As each person will have different attitudes and be influenced by various complex external factors, individual interpretation is more likely to be used than to attempt to create some form of quantitative research.

Interpretative approaches have been criticised for their inability to produce wide-ranging generalizations, or for being unable to provide 'objective' standards for verifying or refuting theoretical accounts (Carr & Kemmis, 1995). However, if the purpose of action research is to determine fundamental educational theory in order to develop improved teaching craft, the need for wide-ranging generalizations may be unnecessary. My own research is conducted within the interests and parameters of my teaching practice. Subjective research to develop fundamental educational theory on a small scale is more desirable than the search for wider educational theory. So long as I am able to stand outside the researched situation by adopting a disinterested stance, any explicit concerns about over-subjectivity should be avoided.

As my research is small scale, and concerned with fundamental educational theory and teaching practice, my research is in the interpretative side of the triangle of practice. It may be that fundamental educational theory, even developed from small scale, case-study based, action research, could impact upon the scientific based positivist side of the triangle. Anderson *et al.* (1986) state that social science is concerned with the typical actions caused by the typical motives of typical people. They also discuss the notion of 'a community of life unities'. Although interpretive social sciences may look to understand events as manifestations of the lives of individuals, individuals share a collective life within their society so form a group of 'collective individuals'. Interpretative research may observe these typical

behaviours amongst individual case-study, and may lead to the opportunity to develop theories that could be studied on a larger scale using positivist methods and values.

As Figure 2.2 illustrates, the possibility exists for movement between the two sides. Neither can be exclusive in the search for 'the truth' and its influence on educational practice. Dewey and Peirce shared a common focus on the elaboration of a model of enquiry that seeks to remove doubt by identifying potential answers to a question rather than 'the truth' (Levi, 2010). My research sits with this idea as it attempts to decide on the basis of the available evidence provided by a single case-study which of the potential answers adds to the current stock of knowledge. Observations made by researchers on what they see, or on the empirical evidence provided to them cannot be entirely free from the influence of background theories or hypotheses (Phillips, 1993). Even the creation of hypotheses to be tested will be influenced by a degree of subjectivity by its creator.

Objectivity does not guarantee the results of an enquiry will have any absolute certainty. An 'objective truth' can be sought, where research has met certain procedural standards to reduce subjectivity. The procedures for a hermeneutic and interpretive enquiry can be created in a way that attempts to reduce subjectivity as far as possible.

The search for 'objective truth' is influenced in equal parts by the desire for objectivity as well as the necessity for interpretation. This indicates how my research links to Dewey's notion of warranted assertions that refer to the best of our knowledge at this particular point in time, always provisional and subject to modification as the result of subsequent enquiry (Putnam, 2010).

Chapter 3 - Ethics and Visual Research

All social research is bound by ethical guidance and considerations. Researchers are obliged to conform with legal regulations relating to research and to comply with specific ethical regulations put in place by the institution or organisation backing the research. The default stance is that the right to confidentiality and anonymity of respondents should be assured wherever possible. Visual data presents potential difficulties with this basic premise. To disguise a location, group, or individual through written text is relatively straightforward, but with visual data identification is harder to disguise effectively (Pauwels, 2011; Wiles, Prosser *et al.*, 2008). Ethical areas to consider are: the principle of confidentiality and anonymity; consent and use; and ownership of images. This becomes even more important in a school where the student-subjects may not anticipate all of the risks of being 'exposed' in published images (Pauwels, 2011).

Published ethical guidelines share the central issues of: striving to protect the rights and privacy of those being studied; research based around the principle of voluntary consent; confidentiality and anonymity; and participants being informed as to the extent of how their confidentiality and anonymity can be assured in future publication and dissemination of data (Wiles, Prosser *et al.*, 2008; Wiles, Crow *et al.*, 2008). Visual data raises questions as to whether these principles can be met in the same way as text based presentations.

Uses of the visual have shifted emphasis from purely realist recording methods of the mid-twentieth century, to incorporating contemporary approaches that engage with subjectivity, reflexivity, and the notion that the visual adds to the critical 'voice' (Pink, 2003).

Consequently, few models of acceptable ethical practice have been established, leading to little in the way of ethical consensus. Wiles, Prosser *et al.* (2008) argue that a single set of ethical principles and codes cannot be used. Each ethical challenge faced within a piece of research must be addressed in the context in which the research is being conducted. Of the various ethical codes and guidelines published, many make no specific reference to visual methods (Wiles, Prosser *et al.*, 2008), leaving an absence of accepted ethical practice for visual methods and theoretical positions on which to make sound judgements. Certainly, some ethical reference points remain unchanged, especially when working with children.

Child protection issues and the provision for the disclosure of abuse should never be questioned.

Confidentiality and anonymity

As images of the location, school, or individuals appear in pictures and can be easily recognised makes anonymity almost impossible to preserve (Pink, 2004). Even when ethical agreement is made for using recognisable images the issue may be problematic in the future. It may be that in several years an individual wishes to withdraw their consent after publication has taken place. The issue of consent and anonymity of other people pictured must also be considered, '*Confidentiality must be assured as the primary safeguard against unwanted exposure*' (Christians, 2005 : 145). One difficulty that arises with photo-elicitation is that respondents producing images may not be aware of issues such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. It may be impossible to know when images selected by the respondent have fully complied with such ethics (Lapenta, 2011).

The potential ease of identification may pose problems for visual researchers. Visual data runs the risk of falling foul of the Data Protection Act (2012). Images produced for official school use, as is the case where teachers are acting as researchers, may be covered by the Act and all persons should be advised as to why they are being taken (ICO, 2007). Only once data is completely anonymised and can no longer be ever reconstructed to identify an individual does the data no longer constitute as 'personal data' and therefore exempt from the Act (Grinyer, 2002). It is therefore vital to have consent from all persons pictured before publication of any images.

Concerns over the right to confidentiality have led to the culturally embedded assumption that anonymity is an ethical prerequisite (Grinyer, 2002). This leads to a danger that ethics committees might take an unswerving view on anonymity and confidentiality and render some visual research unmanageable. An ethics committee may specify limitations to the research, or insist on picture manipulation, such as the pixilation of faces, that results in the data becoming meaningless in its presentation (Wiles, Prosser *et al.*, 2008). In particular instances, such as medical research, anonymity is paramount, but in research of non-

controversial topics, it may not be as essential. Some argue that anonymity is not desirable, or the correct ethical thing to do (Wiles, Crow *et al.*, 2008).

Not everyone wants confidentiality, some may be proud of their actions or identity, or want recognition (Israel & Hay, 2006). This is particularly so with groups, such as those with disabilities, who argue that they are commonly ignored and it is their right to be visible (Wiles, Prosser *et al.*, 2008; O'Reilly *et al.*, 2012). Similarly, those facing terminal illness often wish to be remembered for who they are, rather than hidden behind a pseudonym. In a study of young adults with cancer, 23 of the 30 respondents requested to be known by their real names (Grinyer, 2002). Young people often express a desire not be hidden by anonymity, perhaps due to a cultural desire to be 'famous', or to the rise in culture of being regularly seen and tagged in semi-public internet social networking sites. In a non-sensitive study, such as this research, children may not desire confidentiality or anonymity.

Pink (2004), Banks (2003), and Back (2004) discuss the notion that visual data empowers participants to disseminate the images of their choice that meet their objectives and give voice to people who often feel ignored. There is a likelihood of participants wishing to be acknowledged in the published research, enabling them to retain ownership of their stories. Pseudonyms and anonymity can lead to a loss of identity (Grinyer, 2002). For some, identity and how it is seen by others is important. Pictures can be symbolic, acting as powerful representations of a person, their life, or their perception of status:

Unless we know how to recognise people, as they look and feel and experience the world, we'll never be able to help them recognise themselves or change the world (Marshall Bermann, 1990, cited in Back, 2004 : 144).

Bermann suggests that the non-anonymity of photographs make it impossible for representations to be reduced to that of a caricature. The 'public' image that visual data allows should be considered ethically sound if the respondents accept, or demand, that their right to anonymity is not exercised. Such ideas help to address the notions of power in the research process. Visual data produced by the respondent can be reflexive or empowering,

since it offers the participant editorial control over the material they choose to disclose (Holliday, 2000).

A move towards active identification for the sake of a respondent's wish for a public voice should not be taken without any reservation. Caution must be given to the possibility that children may actively wish to be identified and give their consent for images to be used, but may not be aware of the long term implications of this. Academic publications and exhibitions may be very different to public ones. The growth of digital media and on-line publication of academic research mean that once on-line it is almost impossible to ensure that it is deleted if a participant changes their mind (Wiles, Prosser *et al.*, 2008).

Consideration should be given to the capacity, coercion, and power that may influence a potential child respondent, especially by a teacher-researcher within a school. Very young children may not understand what anonymity is, whilst teenagers have a general mistrust that confidentiality will be upheld by the researcher (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2012).

In this case-study only two students asked for a pseudonym, Daksha and Anna. One of the respondents even insisted that her full name be used saying prior to her interview, *"If you're going to use my information, I want people to know who I am."* (Erica Thake). Both respondents who asked for a pseudonym were in the semi-structured interview group, and one said that she only asked because her mother insisted that she did. From the photo-elicitation group, none asked for a pseudonym and many were happy to include themselves in the images.

Using data that is not confidential is accepted in other areas of research. Oral historians gathering personal narratives routinely do not offer confidentiality or anonymity to respondents (Israel & Hay, 2006). Further, those in public office discussing their public work would be openly recognised.

In any event, there is a need to secure the confidence of the respondents. An ethical and moral prerequisite should exist that seeks to assure that the respondent, or the institution to which they belong, will not be damaged, misrepresented, or prejudiced. To achieve confidence in visual research, ethical principles must be agreed at the outset between the

researchers and the respondent (Prosser, 2000; Israel & Hay, 2006). Where there is no trust between the participant and researcher, there are few guarantees of the validity and worth of the information. Children involved should feel that they have the power to opt in or out of a project, and that their views will be believed (Arnold, 2012a). The need to develop new research methods and acceptable ethical practices for these should not compromise the notion of confidence and trust that must exist in order to achieve morally acceptable sources of data.

A potential difficulty of using visual data concerns the institution or place in which the photographs are taken. Whilst respondents may not seek to be anonymous, the institution may be easily identifiable and may not agree to be public, or associated with the images and activities portrayed by the respondents. If respondents wish to be anonymous, images of the school or local street may be easily recognised and allow identification of the respondents to occur. It is, perhaps, impossible to anonymise a location in published visual data (Wiles, Prosser *et al.*, 2008). If photographs are going to be taken within a school negotiation from the outset must be held with the head of that institution. Agreement should be sought as to what can, or cannot, be photographed and agreement must be made as to how images are to be used, in the same way that agreement from the respondents must be arranged. Discussions with the institution may set difficult parameters upon the research but the right to privacy of all stakeholders is vital (Prosser, 2000).

Using visual data essentially makes complete anonymity unachievable (Wiles, Crow *et al.*, 2008). If respondents, however, participate in the production and selection of images, some of the issues of non-anonymity may be avoided.

Consent

For visual data used for elicitation purposes and not being published or stored, issues of consent are relatively unproblematic as the image will not be seen by anyone outside of the interview. However, where a researcher wishes to include photos in any dissemination of the research data, consent and copyright must be sought (Wiles, Prosser *et al.*, 2008). Seeking permission to show data is not exclusive to visual data, however with photographs permission

is needed to both take photographs separately to reproducing the images, perhaps from all of the people and institutions identifiable (Rose, 2008).

Images produced by respondents may contain other people, deliberately or otherwise. These people may not have given consent for the image to be used, or know what it is being used for. It may be possible to seek retrospective consent from non-respondents, but this may not be the case for all everyone pictured, yet blurring or removing them alters the core context and situation of the image. As a minimum respondents need to be briefed fully about attempting to seek permissions before images are taken, and the need to explain to those about to be pictured the purpose and future uses of the image (Wiles, Prosser *et al.*, 2008).

Davies used family photographs taken from albums. She attempted to seek consent from all living people in the photos, but this was abandoned as 'too huge a task' (Wiles, Prosser *et al.*, 2008). She took the view that using images as visual prompts in a presentation (i.e. on screen and not issued as a handout or available for future viewing) is different to actual publication and therefore consent is not required. She also decided not to archive the images to avoid future concerns over consent and confidentiality. Such difficulties are not as onerous for a teacher in a school where the persons in the image can be easily identified and approached in order to seek their consent.

Conducting research with children poses ethical issues regarding consent and the full understanding of possible future implications surrounding agreement for their image to be used. Alderson (2004) outlined three types of research involving children, the first being 'unknowing objects' where the child is not asked for consent and is unaware that they are being researched. This also includes situations where it is not explained to the child why research is taking place or what will happen to the results. This would usually be considered to be out of line with current ethical guidelines.

A second type involves children being 'aware subjects' and being asked for their informed and willing consent. This falls neatly within ethical guidelines but may confuse respondents as to what they are actually agreeing to, or limit their responses. Further, it does not negate all ethical concerns regarding researching children. Participants may be keen to give consent

without being aware as to why a researcher wants to photograph certain activities. This is not 'informed' consent as the researcher may be keeping the real agenda hidden (Pink, 2004).

A third way involves 'active participants'. Here children are involved in flexible research methods, such as semi-structured interviews, or involved in the planning, directing and conducting of the research. In a school using / producing visual data may allow children to enjoy the process more than other types of research.

A question exists as to who should give permission for visual data of children to be used. Article 12 of the United Nations 'Convention on the right of the child' states that children have a right to have their opinion taken into account when adults are making decisions that affect them (UNICEF, 2011). In English Law this means that 'competent minors' aged under 16 can give their own consent. In practice, it would appear sensible to seek permission from other relevant gatekeepers, too, especially if the researcher is a teacher.

Visual data of children may open respondents to particular risks, leaving parents, institutions, and other gatekeepers open to criticism, anxiety, and self doubt. Children may reveal more about themselves than intended, or might later regret (Alderson, 2004). Contemporary societal views in the UK, and many other countries, now associate images of children with possible misuse and abuse by persons not associated with its publication or original intentions. This was a particular concern of mine and I was aware of the danger of being accused of abusing my position within the school, even with full permission from the student, parents and Headteacher. To allay this I ensured that all meetings were with all participants so that they all heard the same instructions for producing images and what would happen to those images. The photographs were taken using school equipment and the images downloaded on to school computers to leave a traceable audit trail if required. Of central importance was asking the students to select which images they wanted to submit, a distinct advantage to using digital equipment, so that I only had access to the images they were happy with, and all images were returned to the students prior to interview to further reinforce their positive consent for use. Finally, all images, other than those published in this case-study, have been destroyed and are not stored anywhere.

We live in a 'risk society' (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2012), further entrenching the demand for anonymity in research ethics under the belief that by providing anonymity and confidentiality, social and mental risk is minimised as it allows participants to express opinions without fear of stigma or retribution. This default position risks losing the value of visual based data.

Due to this the use of images should be ultra-transparent. Respondents should be given the opportunity to view and agree to all images that are used. Agreement should be sought from all gatekeepers if images are to be used where children are identifiable (Flewitt, 2005). The researcher should go through the research idea with the child and other gatekeepers inviting them to raise questions or concerns at the outset (Alderson, 2004).

Ownership of images

Generally the person who takes the photograph owns it, holds the copyright and needs to give permission for it to be reproduced (Rose, 2008). Visual data falls into four categories: researcher created; respondent created; found; and representative. Issues of ownership and copyright are relatively straightforward with researcher created images, essentially a participant who agrees to have their photograph taken has no ownership of the image. With respondent created images copyright lies with them and needs to be assigned to the researcher (Wiles, Prosser *et al.*, 2008). Photographs are considered artistic works under laws of copyright and in the case of this research would remain so for 70 years after death of the photographer (Avery *et al.*, 2012).

Who owns the image and what 'ownership' means should be discussed with respondents at the start. This must be discussed explicitly to ensure that both permission and ownership is understood (Guilleman & Drew, 2010) along with what the researcher would do if presented with images of criminality or morally questionable activities. This created a potential issue for my research that, despite my reassurances, there was a chance that respondents would hold back on producing images of minor rule breaking or other issues that their school might not approve of. This might affect the validity of the data later produced during interviews.

Use of images

The use of images as data representation can be viewed differently to written presentations. Many audiences expect an unrealistically high level of objectivity and truthfulness from images compared to text or verbal communication (Prosser, 2000; Pink, 2004). The adage, 'the camera never lies' appears widespread, even now digital manipulation of images and an understanding of photography is common place. This is another reason not to anonymise any part of the picture, as an image that has been pixilated, or partially blanked or cut, creates an appearance of doctoring, suggesting that some of the 'truth' is being hidden.

Photographs can be read in different ways, but interpretation of the image can be lead by adding a written description or title (Prosser, 2000; Pink, 2004). Whilst the intention may be to help the reader understand the image, to explain the writer's interpretation, or just for aesthetic purposes, these actions can alter the meaning and perception of the data. In this research the titles were written by the respondents.

Intentions as to the expected use of the images should be made clear at the start to both respondents and associated institutions. Both the respondent and institution should view the images before they consent to them entering the public domain (Pink, 2004). Irresponsible publication of images may harm both the individual and the institution. The public image of an independent school is commercially sensitive and the future reputation of the individual is equally as important.

Joint use of the images may even help to obtain the institution's agreement. If the rights to image use are offered to the school they may be seen as a potential marketing instrument (Pink, 2004). The use of the images would need to be clarified by all parties in order to avoid unethical use, or in a way that would not be acceptable to the researcher or respondent. In this research the images were not offered to the school.

Ethical conclusions

Although visual methodologies present conflicts with ethical considerations given to standard verbal or textual based research, it is wrong to dismiss them by using a one-size fits all ethical policy. Israel & Hay (2006) outline various ethical approaches, one being normative ethics.

This offers the moral norms which guide what a researcher should, or should not, do in particular situations. Such frameworks tend to be seen in ethical guidelines but may not account for methodologies or situations that fall outside the norm. This approach creates difficulties for visual methodologies whose issues are rarely considered in normal ethical guidelines available for reference.

A second is applied ethics, where investigations occur to consider how normative ethical theory can be applied to specific issues, or particular situations and circumstances. Traditional and generally accepted principles of confidentiality and anonymity do not work particularly well with visual data. This does not mean that the use of visual data is unethical or beyond ethical consideration. Instead, it is important to consider how traditional guidelines can be used or adapted to allow the research to go ahead in both a moral and ethically sound way.

Ethics can be developed and reconsidered to include changes to contemporary research methods or include changes in societal behaviour. The hyper-visual has become almost second nature. Digital cameras allow photographs to be taken in huge numbers and of virtually every activity. Sharing digital images on the internet via social networking sites, along with tagging to identify the people in the image, is now commonplace. People actively identify themselves in images ranging from social excess to child-birth, from embarrassing events to the scattering of ashes. Perhaps casuistry, a situation-based approach to normative ethics, should now be used and conclusions about ethical issues drawn from similar less problematic dilemmas, but applied to the complexities of the question at hand. In this way casuistry helps clarify how ethical principles apply to unfamiliar contexts (Israel & Hay, 2006).

To not consider how the visual can be used in a correct and ethical way simply because it does not fit with published guidelines is impractical. An act-deontological approach acknowledges that general rules may not be applicable in every situation, and suggests principles and rules should recognise unique circumstances by 'doing the right thing' (Israel & Hay, 2006). For research topics that would not expect controversial situations or images, a carte blanche approach to insisting on full anonymity may not be the 'right thing'. Instead, a sensible and considered approach involving open discussions with the institutions involved, the respondents, and relevant gatekeepers allows the method to progress in the best

possible way for all concerned. This agrees with those whose main argument was that ethical decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis, regulated by the context of the research rather than the principle (Kushner, 2000; Morrow & Richards, 1996).

Chapter 4 - Research Method

This research is centred on a single embedded case-study of 23 students from one school and investigates a professional concern that the students' satisfaction and enjoyment of the school suffers in Year 10 and 11. Case-studies look at a subject area from different angles and a more balanced picture is produced if considered from a variety of perspectives (Thomas, 2012).

Case-studies

Case-study research positions itself as a separate method related to but not completely part of the qualitative or quasi-experimental domains (Yin, 2012). Differences exist between case-study and experimental research, shown in Figure 4.1, which highlights why this research is a case-study and not quasi-experimental, even though, it is possible to undertake experimentation within a case-study (Thomas, 2012).

	Case-Study	Experiment	Survey
Investigates ...	one case, or a small number of cases	a relatively large number of cases	a relatively large number of cases
Study of ...	naturally occurring cases where the aim is not to control variables	cases where the aim is to control the important variables	naturally occurring cases selected to maximise the sample's representiveness
Quantification of data ...	is not a priority	is a priority	is a priority
Using ...	many methods and sources of data	one method	one method
Aiming to ...	look at relationships and processes	look at causation	look for generalisation

Figure 4.1 Comparison of the case-study with other forms of enquiry (Thomas, 2012 p. 10)

A case-study is used here as the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon set within a real-life context (Yin, 2003). By putting emphasis on the studied phenomenon in its real-world context, case-studies collect data in their natural settings (Yin, 2012) and keeps in contact with the subject of study by considering it within the researcher's own experience and intelligence (Thomas, 2012). As a teacher seeking to gain information about a real issue concerning the school, the contextual background of the students and the school, and how and when the data is produced is of importance. The results of this research serve both an

academic audience, but also the 'real world' of teachers collecting data through their day to day work. Photo-elicitation by teachers researching mid-teenaged students in their own schools does not appear to have taken place before and although it may appear that by undertaking some comparisons between two methodologies experimentation has been undertaken, this case-study is at the exploratory phase of research and may provide initial thoughts and findings for future experiments to be designed to seek explanations, or for causal inquiries to be undertaken (Yin, 2003).

Teacher-research is almost by definition a case-study. The unit of analysis is typically individual students, classrooms, or the single school (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Educational institutions are highly contextual in their background, populations, and systems. A case-study approach deliberately covers contextual conditions, believing them to be highly pertinent to the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2003).

A single case-study has been used for this research as it attempts to capture the circumstances and conditions of a commonplace situation (Yin, 2003). A multiple case-study has not been used as it would require the collaboration of several teacher-researchers to undertake the same research in their own institutions. In this case the lessons learned are hoped to be informative about the expected experience of an average institution, but at this stage are exploratory.

This research is an embedded case-study as it considers more than one sub-unit of analysis within the single case. In this research the issue of student satisfaction during the transition from the lower to upper school at St. Agnes' is the overriding case, whilst the sub-sets exist in the students who took part in the photo-elicitation and the students who did not, as shown in Figure 4.2.

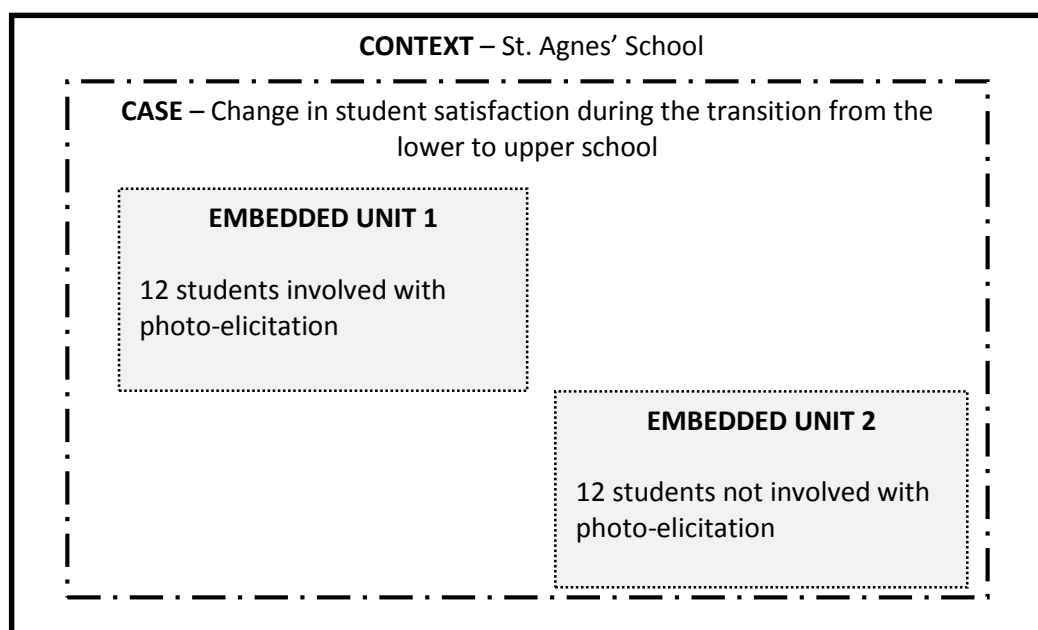


Figure 4.2 – The embedded case-study

By having more than one sub-unit of analysis, the embedded case study allows for the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods to be used in a single research case-study as different methods can be used to study each sub-set (Yin, 2003; Scholz & Tietje, 2002).

Issues can arise through the use of case-studies. Biased views may influence the direction of the findings and conclusions (Yin, 2003). For any teacher researching within their own institution prior or perceived knowledge will exist about the students and situation, or the institution may have pre-conceived opinions about the outcomes of the issue being researched. My position as Assistant Head allows me to be party to information about each student and I may be under pressure from the Headteacher to deliver a particular conclusion to the school's research question. These issues may throw some doubt on the validity of the results. However, knowing the participants can add weight to the argument that a case-study should be used in this instance. Constant vigilance is needed to avoid potential bias and therefore no attempt has been made to interpret the images created by the students in this research.

Another problem of using a case-study is that it provides little basis for scientific generalizations (Yin, 2003). A single case-study does not, however, seek to generalize.

Rather it seeks to establish a logic that might be applicable to other situations (Yin, 2012). This research does not attempt to make generalized statements about photo-elicitation as the results will be unique to the contextual background of St. Agnes'. Instead it attempts to create a series of recommendations for other teachers using photo-elicitation in their institutions and contexts. This agrees with Yin (2012) whereby researchers should show how their findings have informed the relationships among a particular set of concepts or sequence of events, and how to apply the same propositions to implicate other situations.

Teacher-researchers should be concerned not only with the data that they are collecting from students, but also how useful the data collected is in the ongoing practice of the teacher or school, and how collecting the data impacts upon the student themselves. I was particularly concerned at St. Agnes' that students I had asked to participate saw the benefit. To not do this would run the risk of professional reputation being damaged. Both parents and teaching colleagues would expect students' time to be used effectively and to their long term gain, regardless of the academic intentions behind the research. The methods used during this research are in place not only to collect data from students, but also to consider the effectiveness of the methodology and the data it provides for those using and collecting it. Therefore the views of the respondents and their assessment of the process were required.

In order to understand the methodological process being used for this research, an understanding of the key constituents of the research analysis must first be made. The method and analysis of this research may be viewed as follows (figure 4.3):

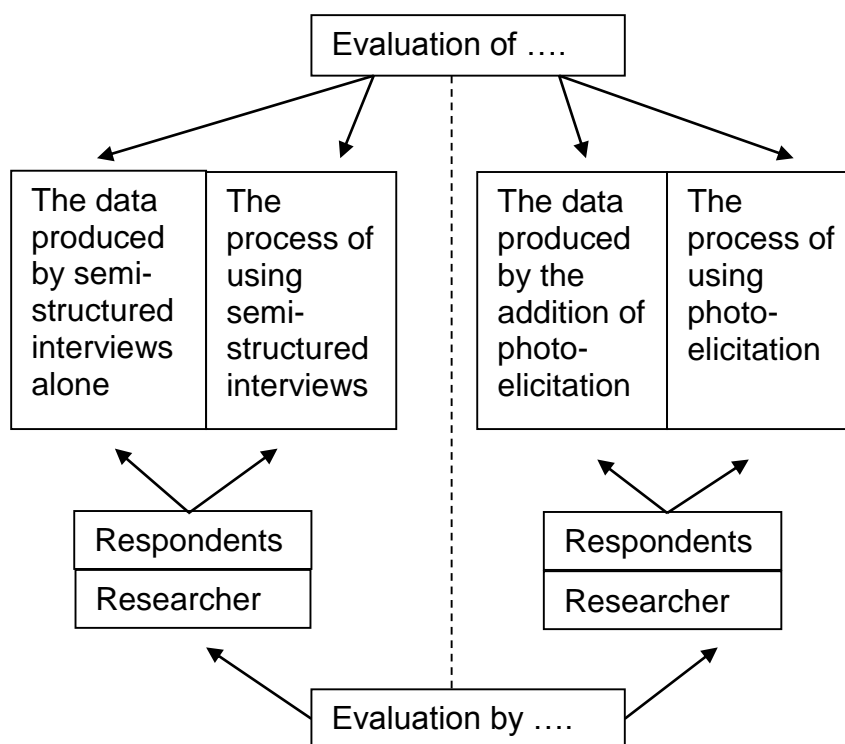


Figure 4.3 – Method and analysis matrix

Before a detailed discussion of the methods takes place, the basic process undertaken for this research is as follows:

1. The research was undertaken at one school, St. Agnes', by myself, an Assistant Headteacher at the school. Permission to conduct the research at the school was sought from the school's Headteacher (Appendix A).
2. Three students (St. Agnes' is all girls) participated in the initial study. Following this, a further 20 girls participated in the main research. All 23 were on-roll at the school and in Years 10-12 (aged 14-17). Permission was sought from both the respondents and their parents, regardless of their age (Appendix B).
3. For the initial study, one respondent was asked to participate in just a semi-structured interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. One was asked to take part only in a photo-elicitation led interview, whilst the third took part in both.

4. In the main study, half of the respondents were asked to participate in a traditional semi-structured interview. The interviews took place during a term-time lunch break on site. Each respondent was given an interview schedule prior to the interview (Appendix C). The interviews were recorded. Full transcripts were made but have not been published.

5. Following the completion of the interviews, the respondents were asked to complete an individual anonymous evaluative questionnaire (Appendix C) about the process of the interviews and the responses they gave.

6. The other ten respondents were asked to take photographs of areas and activities around the school that they thought demonstrated their opinions and feelings about the school in Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) compared with being in Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11), what they particularly valued, or felt needed improvement. Guidance as to what could or could not be included in the images were given to the students (Appendix D). Respondents were asked to submit 10 images with a title but without comments. I printed the images as submitted without editing. In order to minimise disruption to the school, participants were asked to spend no more than one working week taking the photographs. Brief instructions were given as to how the cameras worked as it is wrong to make the assumption that people are technically capable even if technology is readily available (Thompson, 2008).

7. Following the submission of their photographs, the respondents were invited to an interview during the school lunchtime, on site, to discuss their images, what they represented and why they were taken. The schedule for this interview can be seen in Appendix D.

8. An anonymous evaluative questionnaire was completed by those who had undertaken the photo-elicitation exercise and interviews, very similar to the questionnaire given to those only involved with the semi-structured interviews.

9. Throughout the research process I kept a diary. This recorded my own thoughts regarding the key research themes and questions, the extent to which the research process was meeting the aims and answering the questions. I also recorded problems that arose during the research process. During an audit of the research questions and themes, it became clear that this diary would serve as a method in its own right to collect data and feedback during the course of the research, even though highly subjective.

Research location and permissions

Like many teachers researching my research took place within my work institution. For teacher-researchers, this may be for convenience, or the difficulty in taking time off from regular duties to conduct research in other schools, or the issue they are studying is an internal one for that institution. In this instance it is largely attributable to the fact that the focus of the research was driven by my professional concern, from an internal professional perspective, to understand if and why a student satisfaction 'dip' was occurring in the latter senior years at St, Agnes'.

This study only takes place within the school that I work in. This is practical; respondents are known and easy to find, and permission for access more likely (although not assumed), but this also replicates other teachers undertaking research within their institutions. Menter *et al.* (2012) suggest that access by a teacher within their own institution does not need to be negotiated in the usual way. My experience suggests that this is not the case. Gaining permission from the Headteacher was not straightforward as they had concerns about the use of cameras in school and visual research in general involving children. Extensive negotiating and compromise was required in order to gain the permission. Outlined below is the 'gaining access journey' that I had to undertake and the hurdles that were needed to be overcome. These compromises highlight the conflict outlined earlier that the teacher-researcher has in balancing the pragmatic view of the research by the Headteacher, that is a professional usefulness of the data, with the academic view of the research method in itself.

Initial proposals and concerns

Even as part of the Senior Leadership Team I encountered a fair amount of scepticism and fear from the school's Headteacher. Initially I met with the Headteacher to discuss my proposed research. It was immediately clear that they were hesitant about allowing students to take photographs around the school. Their fears could be categorised into three areas, two of which I had anticipated, whilst the third took me by surprise:

1) Concern about children appearing in the images. This is to be expected in many ways as schools are generally fearful of child protection issues. However, even after explanation that all recognisable persons would need to give their permission, and that images would only be used within the research, the Headteacher still had reservations.

2) Concern that some images produced may show the school in a bad light, or be controversial from a marketing perspective. As an independent school, marketing and publicity are crucial to the long term health of the business and therefore such a concern is well founded and expected.

3) Worry about the reaction of the school staff to students taking photos about 'school evaluation'. They feared that staff would react badly if they believed they were being judged by the students. I had not considered this viewpoint.

Aside from these concerns there were three other areas that were proving to be an issue in gaining access at the school:

A: Initially I suggested that the basis of the research focus on general school evaluation and improvement. The Headteacher did not like this as a recent parental survey had been undertaken on this issue. They stated that if any research was to take place in the school it should be on an issue that the school had a current interest in.

B: Initially I suggested approaching members of the School Council to be participants as in St. Agnes's it is this body that traditionally provides the student voice on consultative projects.

The Headteacher was concerned that involving the School Council made my research look like it had been instigated by the school as opposed to being part of my academic studies.

C: The Headteacher expressed concerns about anonymity and was of the opinion that no people at all appear in the images. I believed it would be strange to ask students to take photos of their schooling experiences, but to bar including people.

Unsuitable solutions

Some initial solutions to the concerns raised by the Headteacher were unworkable or unsuitable.

1) Conduct the research in another school. This was not workable as one of the premises to my study is the consideration of teachers conducting research with students who know and consider them as a teacher not researcher, i.e. in their own institution. To conduct research in another school would not be possible for me, or would involve the lengthy process of finding, training, and using a teacher in another school to collect the data on my behalf.

2) Use official school photos instead of asking students to take their own. Whilst a legitimate visual methodology and one that could be used to elicit information, for this research it was key to have the students acting as the photographer so that they had control over the images they were submitting for discussion.

3) Accompany the students whilst they took photos to ensure that the images were not controversial and to ensure anyone photographed gave their full informed consent. Whilst this method has been used in other studies, this was not suitable for this research. One of my hypotheses is that data given by students to teacher-researchers during interviews is less valid as students feel under pressure to say or not say certain things due to their teacher being present. It is my belief that to work properly students need to take images themselves unrestrained by an accompanying teacher. To do so could replicate the same problems associated with the interview process.

Further negotiations and compromise

In order to address the Headteacher's concerns in a way that did not detract from the desired essence of the study, the following negotiated amendments were made.

The school had identified in a recent school evaluation survey of parents that a noticeable dip in student satisfaction in Key Stage 4 from Key Stage 3. To give the study 'weight' within the school, it was agreed that this would be the topic upon which the research methodologies would be applied and evaluated. By creating useful data for the school, the Headteacher was happy for the research to be conducted on site. It was agreed not to use members of the School Council, rather other students. This satisfied staff that the research was part of my academic studies and not part of my official duties in the school. It was agreed that there was to be a distinction between the results of the school's study and the evaluations of the academic study of the different methodologies. The research about student satisfaction were to be confidential due to their commercial sensitivity and therefore not published in this research.

To counter concerns over the control and use of images taken it was agreed that I would provide cameras to the students and that these be returned to me before the end of each school day. This would prevent images being taken home and uploaded onto the internet by the students. It also concurred with advice to schools that only official recording equipment be used in order to protect the person taking the photos (Avery *et al.*, 2012). Students were given strict guidelines as to what could and could not be included in the images. Whilst this helped to gain access, it does cause concern. Such restrictions would prevent students from having complete control over choice of image and composition. It may be that some students might have wished to represent some of their thoughts and feelings by taking images outside of school. The restrictions would prevent any interesting or unprovoked development of the method taking place. The restrictions imposed may reduce the validity of the data gathered in this case-study as it potentially limited the scope that the students had to record images. However, these restrictions had to be agreed to in order to allow the research to take place.

Being a teacher-researcher on 'home turf' has advantages; practical, financial, and time wise, but also brings with it particular drawbacks. Knowing potential respondents may make it

easier to recruit, but it may be that being known by the respondent as their teacher may place undue pressure upon them, accidentally or deliberately, to agree to participate. This risks being further inflated within this case-study due to my senior role and how I am viewed by the students. This may make a significant difference between the results gathered in this case-study and others where the teacher/researcher has a different in-school role. It was important to make it clear to students and parents that participation was not compulsory, and that they could withdraw at any point. It was important that written permission was gained from participants and school. McNiff & Whitehead (2005) state that if respondents are young children then written permission should also be sought from parents. They do not give a maximum age of a 'young child', but for this research the school's Headteacher requested that parental permission be sought from all students participating, regardless of age.

In order to overcome the concerns that staff would react badly, it was agreed that I would explain the purpose and nature of my research to all the staff at a full Staff Meeting. This concurs with Menter *et al.* (2012) that agreement is not only needed from the Headteacher, but should also be sought from colleagues, peers, ancillary staff, along with the students.

Conducting research in the school that the teacher-researcher works may lead to criticisms of researcher bias, or of the researcher having pre-conceived ideas and opinions. Such criticisms need to be addressed at the outset, however if the issue is peculiar to the school in question, or aimed at evaluating or improving practice within that institution, then the data collected and the interpretations made should be done so with consideration for the unique context in which it exists. To fully understand the various constituents that create that school's individual context, having a researcher with 'insider knowledge' may be the best way to achieve this.

Sample selection and size

Only students in Years 10-12 were targeted. Purposive sampling was used to select the potential respondents. This involves the researcher picking the sample on the basis of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristic being sought (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Menter *et al.*, 2012). One of the key research themes is the consideration of student voice

when developing school improvement plans. By using purposive sampling I was able to select students who had previously sat on, or had applied to sit on, the School Council, therefore replicating as closely as possible a typical school council but keeping within the bounds of negotiated access. Lankshear & Knobel (2006) discuss how purposive sampling provides data that is specific and directly relevant to the research concern or interest. I accept Groundwater-Smith's (2007) argument that such sampling as a teacher-researcher does raise the issue that as the students know and are familiar with me as their teacher, there may be concerns that they did not feel comfortable with me asking them questions about the school, or were manipulated or coerced in to agreeing to take part. It is, therefore, important to be transparent with the students about the purpose of the research, and involve other stakeholders, such as their parents, in the decision to participate.

A criticism of the sample is that only 23 were involved. From a population of 560 this is not statistically representative. This should not, however, be detrimental to the validity of the data. An underlying premise of sampling is that a small number of respondents can provide a true reflection if it is in a manner that genuinely represents the study population (Kumar, 2011). In this case, all 23 were drawn from a variety of years from within the school. As all students study in Years 10 and 11, and I have no control over who is on-roll, the students can be seen as an acceptable representation, within this school, of the student voice. The goal in qualitative research is to describe and interpret, rather than generalise (Lichtman, 2010). A danger exists that a small sample size could skew the results, or their representativeness or validity. However, as case-studies do not attempt to make generalised evaluations, the sampling is less important than in other kinds of research as, in effect, the case-study is the sample in itself (Thomas, 2012).

It is possible to criticize the sample for its bias towards the senior school. Again this is deliberate. The school expressed a desire to receive student opinions on different experiences of the school in Key Stage 4 compared to Key Stage 3. Whilst the views of students in Key Stage 3 are valid, they are unable to compare experiences of Key Stage 4. To gain student views of if and why an 'experience dip' occurs in Years 10 and 11, only students in the senior school who had experienced both key stages could provide valid comparative data. The aim of this research is an evaluative comparison of the method of using photo-

elicitation to more traditional interviews with children. It is the process of the method that is of key consideration.

A practical element also needs to be considered when teachers act as researchers, primarily of time. Many teacher-researchers do so in addition to normal day to day duties, and rarely have additional researchers to assist. As such it is unlikely that they will be able to conduct large numbers of interviews. A 30 minute interview can take at least two hours to transcribe (Cheek, 2011). With three hours needing to be allotted to each interview a sample of 23 should be expected to generate a minimum of 69 hours of work for the interview process alone. Further, a 30 minute interview might be considered short. Whilst this may have a negative effect on the breadth of data, consideration had to be given to the amount of time that the students could be asked to give.

The initial study

To test the logistics of the interviews and photo-elicitation processes, and evaluate the guidance given and questions asked, a small initial study was undertaken. Initially it was planned that the same respondents would undergo both techniques, be subject to a semi-structured interview and follow this by using the photo-elicitation method. Whilst the respondent could then be asked to compare their experiences and responses to both methods, a danger exists that having been asked questions in the semi-structured interview, this acts as a primer for the photo-elicitation exercise. The respondent may then try to take pictures that fitted with their initial responses in the interview in an attempt to be consistent, rather than take the images they may have actually wanted.

Not involving the same respondent in both methods makes direct comparisons of the methods difficult. Knowing whether a respondent might have given different responses, or have been more relaxed or less worried by the alternative method is impossible to know unless they have done both. With this in mind, the initial study involved just three students. One was involved in both the semi-structured interview and the photo-elicitation process, whilst the other two were only involved in one of the semi-structured interview, or photo-elicitation processes. This allowed both approaches to be considered, to see if the semi-structured interview did have an impact on the subsequent photo-elicitation process, or if by

only using a respondent in one half of the study, valid comparisons could be made between the two methods.

Semi-structured interviews

A fair amount of research by teachers is probably based on interviews (Perakyla & Ruusuvouri, 2011; Baumfield *et al.*, 2009). Through interviews a researcher can reach areas of reality that might otherwise remain inaccessible, such as people's subjective experiences and attitudes.

The semi-structured interviews took place during the school day on site. This minimised disruption for the student, and allowed them to talk in a familiar 'comfortable' environment. I was particularly aware of the psychological or emotional challenge that might be posed to the students by taking them out of their daily routine (Cook-Sather, 2002). Keeping the interviews to thirty minutes, and conducting them at lunchtime to avoid removing students from lessons hopefully minimised this, but it is impossible for interviews not to be a change in their normal routine.

Danger exists that a teacher interviewing students from their school allows researcher bias to occur and reinforces the imbalanced power relationship that exists between student and teacher. Advocates of unstructured interviews claim that this approach can actually minimise researcher bias by encouraging open discussion and disrupts the 'normal' power relations (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). However, perhaps such 'open' discussion merely hides the unequal power relationship and the data achieved is not as reliable as it may appear. Within this case-study, I was particularly mindful about potential bias and power due to my position as Assistant Headteacher.

Consideration must be given to existing teaching relationship between interviewer and respondent as students may be used to types of questioning a particular teacher favours in normal class. This may impact the answers they give in interview. At its extreme, Baumfield *et al.* state:

Teaching is probably the one profession where we routinely ask questions we know the answers to, therefore children become highly accomplished at guessing what the teacher is thinking.

(Baumfield *et al.*, 2009 : 55)

Whilst this quote indicates that teacher/student interviews may have validity issues, this is not always true. I question to what extent this occurs for able or older students who may be used to classes where they are encouraged to think more openly and 'guess what I'm thinking' questions are rare.

A concern with interviewing children is that they say what they perceive the interviewer wants to hear, or at the other end of the spectrum, try to be shocking (Lichtman, 2010). To minimise this, students were given written and verbal reassurances about the purpose of the interview, what the responses would be used for, who would have access to them, and the levels of confidentiality and anonymity that could be achieved if requested. Students were given copies of the interview schedule in advance to reduce any surprise. The question remains of how comfortable a student can be when interviewed by someone they regard primarily as a senior member of staff more commonly associated with discussions about discipline. This question is hopefully answered by the anonymous questionnaires completed by the students after the interviews.

Following the interviews, respondents were given copies of the transcriptions to verify their responses had been transcribed correctly. Interview transcripts were analysed by coding the text into categories and sub-categories in order to make some comparison of the results gained from students who undertook just the traditional interviews and the students who were interviewed after the photo-elicitation.

Qualitative analysis can take different forms and be conducted using various methods. It is 'messy' when compared to quantitative research as the data collected may not be obviously comparable, or difficult to interpret. When using semi-structured interviews as a primary source of data, the nature of semi-structured interviews allows results from one informant to appear very different to another. Even the questions asked of the informants may differ

interview to interview. This is an issue in this research where comparisons have been made between interviews conducted using two different approaches.

Production of images

Using photographs in school research may not produce data that is any more unbiased or objective than other methods, but perhaps can show characteristic attributes of people and events, demonstrating relationships that may be subtle or easily overlooked (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998). Images may reveal information that is hard to grasp through the use of language alone, particularly when attempting to gain information from children.

It must be assumed that successful interviews are built around normal conversational skills (Latham, 2004). However, a problem associated with interviewing children is whether 'normal' conversation can take place between an adult teacher and a child in an interview situation. This research used and investigated the effectiveness of photo-elicitation by asking students to take photographs with a view to elicit their opinions and experiences. These were then used to stimulate 'normal conversation' in semi-structured interviews.

Photo-elicitation can be used when the power differential between the researcher and respondent is significant. A respondent taking their own photos ensures that the topics relevant to them remain central to the research agenda as respondents are the experts in their own lives (Clark-Ibanez, 2007, cited in Prosser, 2011 : 484).

The images produced may help to reduce the problems associated with interviewing children, but may contain other advantages for the interview process. Images can help tell the story and synthesize the knowledge within it in a highly efficient way. Weber (2008) describes how images contain an 'orality', a narrative quality with the ability to provoke or reconstruct conversations, allowing the interview to develop further. For the researcher, images can enable one to adopt someone else's view, or be part of their experience for a moment. Within the research design itself images can facilitate reflexivity to take place, revealing as much about the person who produced the image as it may do about the people or objects featured (Weber, 2008).

Photo-elicitation differs from other visual methods as it works with images that have been made as part of the research project, as opposed to images 'found' that were made at a different time for different reasons. Although photos are commonly used to create images, other methods may be used such as maps, diagrams, or drawings. Images created for the research can achieve something that relying only on speech and writing cannot. They allow audiences to become witness to the life being studied in a highly transparent way (Rose, 2008). Photo-elicitation can connect the voice of the respondent to a particular place (Beilen, 2005).

Rose (2008 : 241) suggests there are five steps to be taken when using photo-elicitation :

1. Initial interview(s) held with the respondents focussing on the questions that photographs are going to contribute to.
2. Interviewees given a camera and guidance about what sort of photographs to take and how many.
3. Once the images are made and printed, interviewees may be asked to write something before they meet the researcher again. Blinn & Harrist (1991) asked respondents for a title and description for each photograph, along with a description of the thoughts and feelings each picture evoked in them. They suggest that this reflection is helpful in making the next stage of the research more fruitful.
4. Interview(s) take place discussing each photograph in detail.
5. Interview material and photographs are then interpreted using conventional techniques.

Whilst these steps allow the respondents to reflect and interpret with the researcher the images they produce, I believe that caution must be exercised in the first two steps. A question exists as to how much direction and instruction should be given to respondents as to what to take photos of and what the researcher is trying to 'answer'. Photo-elicitation is not a method that is 'researcher proof', a danger exists that the researcher can have too many pre-conceptions in the focus, process, or direction of the images (Prosser, 2011). Too little interference from the researcher may remove risk of researcher led bias, but will risk pictures being produced that are of little use or value. Being over-prescriptive may gain the desired

data, but risks losing the freedom of expression from the respondent involved in active participation (Knight, 2012). Further is the question of confidentiality; to not have strict direction and instruction may create problems with persons being photographed that have not given their consent, similarly places and areas being included that the researcher does not have permission to use. For this research, the issue of ethics and consent is a key area, and therefore careful consideration was given as to what parameters the respondents were asked to take photographs under. Whilst this may lose some freedom of expression, the methodology needs to be controlled so as to allow future recommendations and developments to take place.

The steps outlined above have largely been followed for this research. For the production of the images, interviews were not held as described in Stage 1. However, the 12 students who went through the photo-elicitation process were met with to discuss the aims of the photographs, along with the parameters in place regarding times or situations that photographs could or could not be taken, and the consent / confidentiality of other persons appearing in the images. It is difficult to know if the instructions were understood by all of the students or if some were unwilling to ask questions about the instructions at the time.

Respondents were asked that they took responsibility to seek verbal consent from people that they wanted to appear in a picture, and that those persons were informed as to what the photographs were for and why they were being taken. Other persons that fell accidentally into the background of the image were not considered the focus of the image and therefore would not need explicit consent. Relying on students to seek consent does create concern. It is impossible to know whether they understood the importance or notion of consent, or whether they did ask anyone whose image they were taking. If not, this could raise questions regarding the legitimacy and validity of the images.

The students were given identical digital cameras with a blank memory card and shown how to use them. Digital photography has the advantage of being 'unending', multiple images can be produced and discarded without cost and use of resources. To avoid an unusable amount of images being produced, respondents were asked to submit a maximum of 10 in any digital format. These might be simply the ten left on the memory card, however, digital photography allows for easy editing or manipulation and so respondents might submit their

images via e-mail, or in whatever electronic format they wanted. No instructions were given about this issue; the value of an image edited by its producer is just as great as one that is not. The images were not edited or manipulated in any way by the researcher once received. Similarly any images published in this research remain completely unedited and in the condition they were when submitted, even if blurred, or too dark, etc.

Once the images were received they were printed by the researcher, one copy kept for the interview and a second copy returned to the respondent for approval of use. Following the idea presented in Stage 3 by Rose (2008) and by Blinn & Harrist (1991), respondents were asked to bring a written title for each image to the interview. All of the images were 'approved' by the students, raising the question whether this is because of their choice, or they did not feel they could tell their teacher not to do something.

It is recognised that it is possible that the students mis-understood the photo-elicitation briefing. Nor is it possible to determine how much time and thought was put into the taking of the images.

Photo-elicitation interviews

Although my research is not ethnographic, it considers the relationship and difficulties between adult researchers and child respondents. Harper (1998) believes that 'new ethnography' expects a redefinition of the relationship between researcher and subject, suggesting that collaboration is more important than a one-way flow of information from subject to researcher. Photo-elicitation can create a model for collaboration where images allow respondents to be involved in the interpretation of the image/data. Further, Burke (2005) claims that using children to take their photographs engages them and produces more worthwhile data as a result.

An advantage of using photographs to aid interviews is that it can replace physical participant observation where this would be time consuming or unacceptably invasive (Latham, 2004). In my research, to follow teenage girls around would not produce valid data. There is little chance that the girls would act 'normally' as my presence would be completely and socially abnormal to their usual lives. In addition there would be places and circumstances where my

presence would be inappropriate and unacceptable. Of course, certain images or places may not have been photographed if the student deemed them inappropriate or embarrassing for a male teacher to see. This may reduce the validity of the images produced for this case-study.

Photographs taken by respondents can also provide a context of where and to who else the events were taking place. Background to the issue being discussed can easily be forgotten if a respondent just writes down or speaks about events or places.

Visual methods can help 'engage the sociological imagination' (Allen, 2009 : 550) and for younger respondents allows them to prioritise their perspectives. In this way participants dictate what stories are told, or remain silent. Respondents photographing what they believe is important to them gives potential for young people to tell their stories in a way that they have 'framed' (Allen, 2009). This works in distinct contrast to adult designed methods that rely exclusively on written text, such as questionnaires.

Visual methodologies allow opportunity for greater participant control. Respondents decide what, who, and where is to be pictured and what is not, and at the outset of the interview how the pictures are to be discussed. This allows their priorities to be the focus of the discussion (Allen, 2009; Prosser & Burke, 2008). By asking respondents to select pictures, and to consider a title before the interview, this can be used as the first step in the analytical process as it helps to determine why a particular interpretation is deemed significant by the respondent (Beilin, 2005).

Photo-elicitation may help re-define the relationship between subject and researcher (Harper, 1998). A common problem that teachers have when interviewing their students is the perceived differences in power. Young children may not want to talk openly to someone they see as authoritative, students may see the interviewer as their teacher not a researcher. Discussing pictures taken by the students may help to negate these issues and act as an 'icebreaker', building useful relationships between the researcher and child in an interview (Prosser & Burke, 2008).

Visual research methods have disadvantages that must be considered. Knowles & Sweetman (2004) highlight the common criticism that most visual material contains large amounts of ambiguity when compared to texts. Although it is accepted that it is possible to create a particular effect or interpretation by using a certain image, angle, or lighting, so the argument can also be levelled at traditional written texts where a particular quote can be lifted to support a desired point. For this research, should the students have decided to create a particular effect with their pictures it would only serve to add interest to their interpretation of what they were depicting.

Disadvantages exist when asking respondents to take pictures. There is danger that viewers will only see what is within the frame (Beilin, 2005). This disadvantage can be negated if it is possible to determine why decisions were made as to what to include and exclude from the photographs. The question exists whether the photos should be published and with what level of commentary. Too much commentary may enforce the researcher's views and opinions, preventing the reader from making their own. Without commentary viewers may be left baffled by the images rather than convinced by them (Rose, 2008). For this research it is the student's interpretation of their images that produces the student voice data, not the image itself, and so the publication of images is not necessary. However, some have been published to illustrate the text and conclusions being raised, not for the purpose of analysis.

Viewing images can create problems. Harper (1998) outlines the post modern critique of image based research insofar as the meaning of the picture can change depending on its different viewing contexts. When the researcher decides to take pictures they do so by initially viewing the scene and taking the photograph through their own cultural lens. This may be different to how people being photographed may see the image, or how readers may understand the context of the published picture. By asking respondents to take pictures, the researcher must understand the lens through which the respondent saw the original image and their interpretation.

Photo-elicitation interviews serve as an open format for the respondent to talk about their images, what they show, and why they took them. The interviewer may probe and ask follow up questions, but in order to move away from the disadvantages associated with traditional interviews, these discussions serve as a vehicle for the respondent's explanations more than

the interviewers' questions as they are based around what the respondent has already decided to photograph, submit, and title.

Similar to the semi-structured interviews conducted earlier in the research, all of the photo-elicitation interviews took place during the school day and on-site. Likewise, the discussions were recorded, transcribed, and shown to the respondents for approval before the final analysis took place. Even though the interviews were mainly questions such as, "Tell me what this shows", or, "How does this picture answer the question ..?" a danger still exists that the teacher-researcher could cause or divert the line of questioning.

Interview coding

The process of analysing the transcripts centres on the coding of data. Coding is not the analysis itself, rather it is part of the analytical process where concepts are generated from the data. It is the codes that bring fragments of data from one concept together. The analytical work is in the establishment and thinking about these links (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

Coding and categorizing of data creates retrieval and organising devices, allowing the researcher to spot quickly and then cluster all the segments that relate to the particular question, hypothesis, concept, or theme (Miles & Huberman, 1984). This clustering of data then sets the scene for analysis creating a systematic overview of the data.

Using codes to link data and sets of concepts is a heuristic device relying on the interpretations of the researcher as the research develops. For this research eight codes were established prior to coding based around the research questions and attitudes being discussed and the year group being referred to:

L79 – Liked about Years 7-9

L1011 – Liked about Year 10-11

D79 – Disliked about Years 7-9

D1011 – Disliked about Years 10-11

CN – A negative change between Y9-10

CP – A positive change between Y9-10

NoChange – Indicating that Y9 and 10 were the same

Improve – Things that the school could do to improve Y10-11

Keeping the number of codes small allows the data to be simplified into manageable portions. Coding also allows the indexing and retrieval of the data in a quasi-quantitative way (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). I accept by limiting the codes to eight and deciding upon them before the process began the validity of the data may be questioned if these codes ignored ideas that were subsequently discussed.

The process, therefore, of creating codes was given careful consideration. Miles & Huberman (1984) believe that a 'start list' of codes should be produced prior to fieldwork. This allows the decay of some codes during later analysis that prove to be not used or of little later relevance. Other codes may change over time, and new codes added. This was the case in my research where the code 'NoChange' became redundant. Mason (2002) also advocates initial thought being given to coding and categories before data collection. For Mason, the early consideration of codes should be in response to the question 'where do categories come from?'

Coding should not be viewed as just a way of reducing data to a series of categories. It can be used to expand and reconceptualise data, opening it up to more diverse analytical possibilities (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Tesch (1990, cited in Coffey & Atkinson, 1996 : 30) describes decontextualisation as the separating of data extracts from their original context, whilst retaining their meaning. These extracts of decontextualised text can then be recontextualised into new contexts.

Ezzy (2002) describes coding as the process of disassembling and reassembling the data. Fragments taken from the initial coding can be rearranged and re-explored. As coding continues and different themes emerge, axial coding can take place whereby sub-coding

within each larger group allows the researcher to move beyond their pre-existing theories to new interpretations and understandings present in the data.

Before coding begins the researcher must be clear as to their ontological position. They must be clear about what kind of phenomena the categories represent, for example sections of text, different behaviours, actions, or attitudes, etc. The researcher should be clear about their epistemological position, whether the categories they use are literal, interpretive, or reflexive (Mason, 2002). In this case the categories represented the different attitudes being explored by the interview questions and, as far as possible, a literal translation of the transcript.

Once initial coding had taken place, further sub-coding was done based around the categories formed in the initial stage. The sub-categories were determined during the reading of the transcripts as they became apparent. At the end of the process some tidying up was required where sub-categories were showing as separate lines of data but were clearly the same, such as 'Free Periods' and 'Study Periods'. There is a criticism that these sub-categories are subjective and ones that form in later interviews may have been missed in earlier transcripts.

In this research the interviews were coded using InqScribe software. The same process was undertaken for interviews using photo-elicitation as InqScribe allows other media to be used alongside the interview audio. Using the respondents' images during the transcription allowed for simultaneous viewing, reading and listening. Bassett explains that this allows the mixed media to be bounded together in one conceptual space so that cognition is not interrupted (Bassett, 2011). Whilst Bassett determines that this allows creative approaches to be used when analyzing visual data, it was not my intention to attempt analysis of the images. However, being able to view them during transcription helped to contextualize the verbal information from the interview.

Respondent evaluation of semi-structured interviews

Interviewing children can be criticised for placing the respondent in a situation of unequal power, an uncomfortable situation that may lead to responses being muted, what the respondent feels the interviewer wants to hear, or over exaggerated. In addition students

may not feel comfortable discussing certain issues, people, or events with a perceived authority figure, especially if they fear information will be held against them in the future. To understand how the students felt during the interview, and gain an insight into the validity of the responses given, it is essential to ask the respondents themselves. It would be perverse to interview students about their previous interview, so their evaluation of the interview process was sought via anonymous questionnaire.

The school was keen that the students should only be involved for as short a time as possible, in order to minimise disruption to their studies. A questionnaire survey was therefore considered most appropriate and least time consuming compared, for instance, to students interviewing each other regarding their experiences.

Questionnaires are useful to study attitudes, values, beliefs and past behaviours (Menter *et al.*, 2012). How truthful the students' responses are to the questionnaire and the validity of their results relies on the motivation, honesty and memory of the students completing them. It is impossible to know how wholeheartedly or confidently the respondent provides answers as questionnaires do not give respondents the opportunity to ask for clarification (Menter *et al.*, 2012). To reduce this risk, questionnaires were completed within a week of the interviews and were anonymous. It is impossible to tell how truthful the answers were, but all respondents were offered the opportunity to see my findings after the research was completed (only two took up this opportunity).

Delay in completing the research and offering students the opportunity to view the findings highlights an ethical difficulty faced by teacher-researchers. Transparency, along with consent and confidentiality, are key ethical positions in teacher research (Mockler, 2007). Yet my professional obligations to only share the results with the Senior Leadership Team until released by the Headteacher creates an ethical conflict; to conform to my employer's demands or as a researcher to be fully and immediately transparent .

Each student was asked to complete a paper questionnaire (see Appendix C) in my absence, sealed in envelopes by the students and placed into a box to ensure anonymity. The

questionnaire provides evaluative data that can be compared indirectly to the similar respondent evaluation following the photo-elicitation process.

Respondent evaluation of photo-elicitation

Similar to the semi-structured interviews, once the photo-elicitation interviews were complete, each student was asked to complete an anonymous paper questionnaire (Appendix D). Again, it is impossible to know how truthful the answers on the questionnaire were, but time restrictions would have made the evaluation of the interviews impossible to conduct in any other way.

Commonalities and distinctions between photo-elicitation driven and semi-structured interviews

The major commonalities and distinctions between the semi-structured interviews conducted with and without photo-elicitation are outlined in Figure 4.4:

Commonalities	Distinctions
The interviewer	When questions first presented to student
Site and situation of the interview	Images
Recording process	Use of reference points
Desired questions	
Transcription process	

Figure 4.4 - Commonalities and distinctions between photo-elicitation driven and semi-structured interviews

All the interviews were conducted by the same interviewer in order to maintain consistency amongst style, questions, and also of difficulties, i.e. my position as Assistant Head, gender etc. The interviews were conducted in the same room using the same recording process. All the interviews were transcribed by the same person, again to create consistency. Where possible, for any factor that could be controlled, attempts were made to standardise the process.

Some factors cannot be controlled; the individual student's prior feelings towards being interviewed in school by myself, any prior involvement with the student in lessons, around the school, or disciplinary issues etc. Using just one interviewer at least ensured that such feelings and conceptions would be representative amongst the students involved.

The interviews were designed to be, as far as possible, semi-structured. Some interview snippets published in this research as examples of the interview process appear to show the interviewer leading with the questions. This is either due to professional incompetence of a school teacher conducting interviews without sufficient training or experience, or where students were finding it difficult to respond to the more open questions and were being 'pushed' or guided (rightly or wrongly) by the interviewer.

Attempts were made to ensure that the only distinctions between the two types of interview were controlled: giving the photo-elicitation group the questions a week prior to interview as opposed to just one day for the non-photo-elicitation group; using visual prompts to the interview; using open questions such as, "What does this show?", or referring follow up questions directly to the image being presented. Such distinctions are due only to the photo-elicitation rather than the interview process itself.

Reflexive approaches

Visual methodologies exist within two theories, 'scientific-realist' and 'reflexive' (Pink, 2004). Scientific-realist approaches see the visual image as supportive to the research project. Using images in this approach seeks to prove the value of the visual element to a scientific sociology dominated by the written word. A reflexive approach recognises the subjectivity of the researcher to the production and representation of the studied knowledge.

A reflexive approach assumes that subjectivity should be engaged with as a central aspect of ethnographic knowledge, interpretation, and representation. This is opposed to seeking to remove subjectivity in a scientific approach. Pink (2004) outlines how reality itself is subjective and is known only as it is experienced by individuals. It is not only the subjectivity of the researcher that affects their understanding of reality, but also the relationship between the subjectiveness of the researcher and the informants that produces a negotiated version of reality. Subjectivity is an inevitable part of the research process as researchers bring with them their own emotions, intuitions, experiences, meanings, values, commitments, pre-suppositions, prejudices and personal agendas, along with their position

as researchers and their spontaneous or unconscious reactions to subjects and events in the field (Maso, 2003).

In order that research involves a search for something, the research question must be 'true', i.e. the expression of a real and living doubt. If it is a question the researcher is keen to know the answer to, only then will the researcher have the passion and emotional investment required. Reflexivity implies that the researcher makes visible the motivations and attitudes which they have imported to the research. 'Scientific' research would typically criticise subjective factors as bias or interference, but the personal dimension to research is both enriching and informative. The unique context of the research and its location are influenced greatly by a teacher researching within their institution. The teacher-researcher's motivation for choosing the topic and the expectations as to what the research might yield will be influenced by the personal experience of that person (Gough, 2003).

My own view of the school in which I work as a male senior teacher, along with my opinions of what needs improving and what is of benefit to the students is a reality. However it is likely to be a different reality to that of the students. Researchers should maintain an awareness of their own identity, gender, age, race, class, etc. and how it situates them in the ethnographic context. To understand what students believe is important in their lives, and how they see the value of their education, a reflexive approach by using visual images should help both parties reach a common negotiated understanding and 'reality' of the images produced along with the discussions about them. The data analysis that seeks to understand this reality can equally be informed by the researcher's own experience, as well as that of the respondents.

Reflexive research seeks to be co-constituted, so that it is a joint product of the participants, researcher, and their relationship (Finlay, 2003). A particular type of relationship will always exist between a teacher and their students, and needs to be recognised within the research. The relationship between teachers and students acts as part of the unique context of the research, and meanings are negotiated within those social contexts. The contextual background behind the research will be unique, therefore it is not necessary to attempt to abolish the researcher's presence in the research. Subjectivity in research should be seen as an opportunity instead of a problem.

Finlay (2003) identifies six opportunities and challenges within the reflexive approach, three of which are seen in this research. First is that the research should examine the impact, position, perspective, and presence of the research. Where teachers act as researchers, their position as a teacher within that institution will impact upon the students. This research asked how the negative impacts that this position and presence can have can be reduced.

The second seeks to promote a richer insight through the examination of personal responses and interpersonal dynamics. Again, the teacher will, through their normal role, have particular relationships with the students. The third opportunity and challenge is that the research process, methods and outcomes, should be evaluated. This research attempted to see if the method of photo-elicitation is an alternative to traditional interviews within schools by considering how the respondents evaluated its process.

For the research to be a co-constituted account it should involve the respondents in a reflexive dialogue during the data analysis or evaluation (Finlay, 2003). This research would explore if allowing respondents to create images, and the open discussion of these, allows for a more reflexive dialogue than semi-structured interviews. Students creating images, and then explaining what they show and why they took them may facilitate participant reflexivity, a situation where there is a concerted effort to reduce the power differentials between researcher and respondent (Gough, 2003).

Both methods being evaluated in this research involve an interview. During these discussions the interviewer cannot be seen as passive, they do not simply pose questions in order to elicit responses. The interviewer's questions evoke specific types of responses and produce particular types of situations for both the interviewer and respondent. The interviewer approaches the respondents' speech as a social actor, carrying with it cultural assumptions about how talk develops and what counts as appropriate rules for conversation, drawing upon culturally available discourses about the nature of the external reality and society (Georgaca, 2003).

It may not be possible for a teacher researching with their students to ever completely avoid the power differentials between them, this research considers the effectiveness of two methods, traditional interviews and photo-elicitation, in producing valid, reliable, and useful data. The teacher-researcher must, therefore, include an acknowledgement of their own subjective impact upon the data.

Chapter 5 – Initial Study

An initial study was undertaken to test the logistics of the research and to determine if the respondents should be involved in both parts of the research, or just with either the semi-structured interviews, or the photo-elicitation. For the initial study, three students, all in Year 12, participated. GeorgiaE took part in both the semi-structured interviews and the photo-elicitation, whilst Emily took part in just the semi-structured interviews, and Bobbie in just the photo-elicitation. All completed an evaluative questionnaire after either type of research method.

Initially all three met to discuss the research and how it would be conducted. During this, one said, “Can I do the interviews, not the photos?” She thought that she would have to appear in the photos herself, and was not comfortable with this. This was addressed in the main study by giving more detail and information to the respondents about the photographs.

Initial semi-structured interviews

The devised questions appeared appropriate and covered most ground, however one question that was added to these interviews that was not on the original schedule was how they felt the school had treated them as students in Years 10 and 11 compared to the lower school. As both students were in Year 12 and had taken an active decision to remain at the school after Year 11, I asked them why they had decided to stay, and why others may have left.

The general format of the semi-structured interviews worked, and only minor changes were made to the information sheets given to respondents for the main study.

Initial photo-elicitation

Both students were met together to discuss taking the photos and to be given digital cameras. Each was given a list of questions upon which to base their pictures, such as ‘What did you enjoy about Years 7 to 9?’, but little other guidance. Minimal guidance was given, short of the restrictions imposed by the school, in order to remove as much researcher

influence as possible, and to allow the respondents as much free choice as possible as to what to record.

The photos that were produced for the later discussions were interesting, but in many ways unexpected. Several images submitted were difficult to use during discussions in a way that provided meaningful answers to those set out in the schedule. Bobbie had interpreted the instructions more as memories, making it hard to determine if they represented what she liked or disliked about the school, or if they were simply good or bad memories.

By attempting not to influence the respondents' choices, too little direction about what sort of photographs were expected was given to the participants. The trade off between respondent freedom and researcher influence over the images had gone too far one way. The images and discussions were interesting, but did not necessarily answer the questions as the respondents had interpreted the task in a way that suited their particular views or needs.

As a result of the initial photo-elicitation, the directions and schedules given to respondents in the main study were changed to be more directive, asking for a specific number of photos to be produced in relation to each question being asked. This allowed the interview schedule to be changed slightly so that the leading question moved from, "Tell me what this photo shows", to "How does this photo show <question>?"

The initial photo-elicitation gave an early indication of the different data that would be produced using this method compared to semi-structured interviews. Although the images were somewhat unexpected, there were distinct similarities between the images, locations, and narratives of the photos submitted by the two respondents. GeorgiaE spoke after her interview about how she preferred the photo-elicitation to the semi-structured interview as it was her photos being discussed, so she knew in advance what she wanted to say about each image.

One issue from the initial study involved whether to use one method to interview respondents, or to include them in both the traditional semi-structured interviews and the photo-elicitation process as GeorgiaE had. Whilst this allowed direct comparison to be made

between her experiences of both methods, it was apparent that the semi-structured interview had acted like a 'dry-run' for the photo-elicitation. GeorgiaE's responses during the photo-elicitation interview felt to her and that they had been rehearsed during the semi-structured interview. It could be argued that this shows photo-elicitation adds to data gained at earlier interviews, and this may well be the case. However, in order to attempt to make limited comparisons of the two methods, it was decided that for the main study participants would only take part in either a semi-structured interview or the photo-elicitation.

Chapter 6 – Findings and discussion

Following the initial study a further 20 students participated in the study, creating 23 respondents in total. The students were in years 10 to 12 and their ethnicity and backgrounds are broadly representative of the school's demographics for those four years.

This chapter investigates the results obtained from the traditional semi-structured interviews, the photo-elicitation and resultant interviews, and the questionnaires returned by the respondents regarding their experience of the research process. The report written for the school is not included as findings for this research. Menter *et al.* (2012) raise the issue of teacher research needing to consider the professional problem the research is addressing, how this was determined, and who owns the problem. In this research the problem of a dip in student satisfaction between Year 9 and 10 was identified by a parental survey conducted by the school. The findings and suggested changes are commercially sensitive and owned by the school. The aim of this research is not the problem identified by the school, but the effectiveness of photo-elicitation as a method to conduct the research. An ethical dilemma occurs of whether it is appropriate to make public examples from practitioner enquiry that may reflect negatively on the institution (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2007). As such, the findings concentrate upon the comparison of semi-structured interviews to photo-elicitation as a research methodology for teachers within their own school.

The findings are presented in five sections:

1. An evaluation of the two research methods.
2. The type of data and evaluations produced by the students.
3. The relationship between the researcher and respondent.
4. The extent to which the pedagogy of teaching is present.
5. A review of the ethical considerations.

An evaluation of the two research methods

Interview coding

After the interviews for both the semi-structured element of the research and the photo-elicitation, the interview transcripts were coded based around which question was being discussed. Data provided for each of these codes was then split into a variety of themes, as shown in the excerpt of data coding, Figure 6.1 below:

Interview	Code	Transcript	Theme
LauraPa	D1011	[00:13:31.09]: I don't like the fact that a lot of people in our year do a lot of stuff which they get away with and 'cause I got suspended it looks really bad 'cause if someone put it on paper it would look really bad next to someone else everyone in the school knows except from the teachers it's 50 gazillion times worse than me, that really bugs me	Behaviour
Erica Thake	D1011	[00:25:21.27]: However, more and more of the ties with Don Bosco's are being broken and I don't think that's right, even though they've accepted girls into their sixth form... The fact that we don't have any socials with Don Bosco's College, and that's something that I think as an all girls' school, the school do need to put forward social events with boys because it is important to socialise with boys.	Boys
GeorgiaE	D1011	[00:12:46.20]: and then the Languages, like the writing and the speaking exams, everyone got really stressed then	Exams
Georgina	D1011	[00:08:30.22]: the homework probably, we do get a lot of homework 'cause in the lower school sometimes they'll be like oh you've got no homework tonight but we always get homework in year 10	Homework
Daksha	D1011	[00:11:48.27]: I don't really like houses. I think they are a bit pointless, really, 'cause you don't do much.	Houses

Figure 6.1 – Excerpt of coding from Semi-Structured Interviews

The twelve semi-structured interviews produced data that was coded into 50 themes. Sixteen of the 50 themes centred on the academic life of the school and its students. When compared to the themes that arose during the photo-elicitation conversations, noticeable differences can be seen. Firstly, the photo-elicitation produced data that was coded into 77 themes (figure 6.2), the second being the range of discussions taking place. Whilst points raised by the students in the semi-structured interviews centred upon academic issues, many different ideas were introduced during the photo-elicitation. Alongside academic issues and

the general school life, far more day to day issues were spoken about that did not feature in the semi-structured interviews: vending machines, toilets ('quads'), length of the school day, water fountains, social areas, etc. Whilst some of these issues appear minor in comparison to academic subjects, exam pressure, etc. they shed a far different perspective on the issues that are of concern to the students, their experience of the school and daily life within it. This supports the notion that schools should be thinking more carefully about 'what' they listen to students about (Robinson & Taylor, 2007).

Photo-Elicitation	Coun t	Semi-Structured	Coun t
All Girls	2	All Girls	7
Charity Week	1	Charity Week	1
Choices	6	Choices	11
Controlled Assessments	1	Controlled Assessments	1
Exams	5	Exams	3
Extra-Curric	1	Extra-Curric	4
Friends	2	Friends	2
Fun	5	Fun	3
General	2	General	1
Homework	4	Homework	1
Hot Desserts	1	Hot Desserts	1
Lessons	9	Lessons	6
Lockers	1	Lockers	2
Lunch	1	Lunch	1
New Form Groups	7	New Form Groups	8
Pastoral care	1	Pastoral Care	1
Pressure	10	Pressure	22
Respect	2	Respect	1
Social	4	Social	11
Sport	4	Sport	9
Study Periods	4	Study Periods	4
Subjects	2	Subjects	6
Teachers	4	Teachers	3
Treatment	20	Treatment	22
Trips	12	Trips	16
Workload	16	Workload	3
Young Ent	1	Young Ent	1
Youngest	4	Youngest	4
A Level range	1	Academic Support	2
Activities	1	Behaviour	5
Art	2	Belonging	1
Assembly	4	Blazers	1
Atmosphere	1	Boys	2

Themes in the shaded areas appeared in both the interviews with and without photo-elicitation

Aunties/Nieces	2	E&A Grades	1
Break	2	Enjoyment	1
Chaplaincy	2	Familiarity	1
Chores	2	Houses	1
Cold	1	Languages	3
Common Room	2	Leavers	1
Community	4	Mentoring	3
Fitting in	2	Oldest	2
Food tech	1	Rules	1
Freedom	1	Settle in	1
Friendly	2	Size	1
GCSE	1	Staff	1
Grounds	2	Stress	3
History	1	Tests	1
Independence	1	Uniform	4
Laptops	1	Uniqueness	1
Length of Day	1		
Mufti Days	1		
Music	1		
Netball	1		
New Buildings	7		
Organisation	2		
Peers	1		
Privileges	5		
Quad	3		
Rebellious	1		
Relationship	1		
Revision	1		
School Events	1		
Sledging	1		
Small Classes	1		
Space	3		
Spanish	1		
Swimming	1		
Team Work	1		
Toilets	3		
Trust	1		
Tutors	1		
Variety	2		
Vending Machines	1		
Water Fountains	2		
Work Experience	1		
Y11 Areas	1		

Figure 6.2 – Themes coded from interviews

In both cases there is significant mention of being able to choose subjects to study at GCSE, how students in years 10 and 11 are treated differently by the school compared to the younger years, and school trips. Whilst both refer to the pressure and stress of the increased amount of work in the older years, students who participated in the semi-structured interviews concentrated their thoughts on the pressure they were under, whilst those who used photo-elicitation were far more detailed, demonstrating how the increased workload had brought about the extra pressure.

Many themes were brought up on several occasions by respondents during photo-elicitation, but were not mentioned by those in the semi-structured interviews. New facilities or refurbishments are photographed several times during photo-elicitation as positive changes. Yet these significant capital expenditures go unnoticed by those in semi-structured interviews. Privileges given to the upper school, such as year 11 only areas, or uniform rights are described only in the photo-elicitation, as are areas of the school, such as 'quads', a significant feature during the photo-elicitation, but never mentioned in the semi-structured interviews.

The process of photo-elicitation appears to encourage broader thoughts and ideas than those shared in an interview only situation. Semi-structured interviews concentrated around predictable student issues, such as exams and lessons, but photo-elicitation encouraged far wider and more diverse topics to be considered. Perhaps this is due to the time given to students undertaking photo-elicitation to consider their responses, a week as opposed to 24 hours prior to the interview. Perhaps the absence of the teacher-researcher from the actual photographic production encourages freer or more 'truthful' data. Without the teacher-researcher being present during the taking of the photo, the power of the teacher over the student is removed.

Reliability of the data

A concern for teachers interviewing children is the reliability of the data presented by the respondents. Respondents seeing the researcher as their teacher can lead to responses that may be untruthful, perhaps due to embarrassment of imparting certain information to their

teacher, or fear that the information may not be confidential. The reliability of the data can also be questioned if respondents feel they have to give certain answers to 'please' their teacher, or to conform to an expected stereotype.

After the interviews the anonymous questionnaire asked respondents to consider the data they had presented and its truthfulness. The level at which the data might be considered reliable can therefore be determined by the responses given. It is accepted that the responses to the questionnaire itself cannot be guaranteed as completely truthful, but by being anonymous it is more likely to be the case.

Of the 12 questionnaires given to respondents who took part in the semi-structured interviews, 11 were returned. Of the 12 given to those who took part in the photo-elicitation process, all were returned. Questions that relate to the reliability of the data are presented here; questions 3, 4, and 5 from the semi-structured interview questionnaire; and 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9 from the photo-elicitation questionnaire.

Question 3 on both questionnaires asked respondents to consider how honest their responses had been to the interview questions, or in the images they had submitted in response to the same questions. For those who took part in the photo-elicitation, question 7 asked about how honest their verbal responses had been in the discussions about the images. Although the questions asked and the possible answers offered in the two questionnaires differ slightly, they cover the same areas and can be compared (figure 6.3).

Semi-Structured Interviews		Photo-Elicitation			
Q3: Think about the answers you gave to some of my questions. Were they:		Q3: Of the pictures that you took and submitted, do any of the following statements apply:		Q7: Think about the answers you gave to some of my questions. Were they:	
All completely open and honest.	64%	I was happy to take photographs of exactly what I wanted, they represented my true thoughts and feelings.	79%	All completely open and honest.	75%
Mostly open and honest, although on occasions I changed some details.	36%	There were some pictures that I decided not to take, or submit in the end, as I decided that I did not want you to see them.	14%	Mostly open and honest, although on occasions I changed some details.	25%
Sometimes honest, sometimes not, depending on the question or topic.	Nil	There were some pictures that I wanted to take, but could not because of the restrictions imposed on me at the start.	Nil	Sometimes honest, sometimes not, depending on the question or topic.	Nil
I mostly made up my answers, although on occasions I was open and honest.	Nil	Some of pictures I submitted were there to 'please' you as I thought they were the sort that you were expecting.	7%	I mostly made up my answers, although on occasions I was open and honest.	Nil
Almost always made up, I did not want to be open and honest with my answers.	Nil	The pictures that I took were mostly of anything just to complete the task. They did not really represent my true thoughts and feelings.	Nil	Almost always made up, I did not want to be open and honest with my answers.	Nil

Figure 6.3 – Questionnaire responses regarding reliability

Figure 6.3, is striking in two ways. Of those that took part in the photo-elicitation, nearly 80% reported that the photographs they had taken were exactly what they wanted to show and a truthful representation of the thoughts and feelings they had in answer to the questions given to them. This is higher than those only participating in the semi-structured interviews stating that their interview answers were open and honest (64%). Caution must be exercised, with only 12 participants taking part in each research method, the difference between the two percentages is marginal.

In the interviews discussing the photographs, a higher percentage state that what they spoke about was open and honest compared to the semi-structured interview. This may be due to

the data being initially produced by the respondent in the form of the photograph. As the photographs appear to have been produced in an open and honest way, the initial 'fear' of truthfulness has already been overcome, allowing the response in the interview to be a simple description of the data, rather than the production of the data itself. This agrees with Cook-Sather as having the pictures produced over the course of a week enabled the students to produce the data more within their normal routine than in the unfamiliar context of the interview. There is, therefore, less of an emotional challenge to do this than producing data for the first time in interview (Cook-Sather, 2002).

Of note is the absence of respondents in either the semi-structured interviews or the photo-elicitation who stated that most or all of their answers had been changed. A small percentage in each said that they had changed some details (36% in the semi-structured interviews and 14% from the photo-elicitation). This suggests that in both cases the data presented by the respondents is reliable and can be trusted to be an accurate reflection of the thoughts and feelings of the students. This contradicts the arguments that semi-structured interviews conducted by teachers of their students produces data of questionable reliability. In the case of this research it may be due to the fact that the nature of the questions were non-controversial. Had the questions been of a more personal nature, or on more sensitive issues, it would have been interesting to see if this remained the case.

A small number of respondents (14%) who took photographs admitted to not submitting some of their images as they did not want me to see them. It is impossible to know what these images were of, but may be of similar reasons as to why some respondents in the semi-structured interviews admitted to changing some of the details of their responses (34%). They may have revealed personal or private information, or presented data about actions or issues that the students did not want their teacher to know about. In order to try to understand why the respondents had decided to be truthful or not with their responses a follow up question was asked (question 4 for those in the semi-structured interviews, questions 4 and 8 for those in the photo-elicitation process).

For those who undertook the photo-elicitation process, they were asked to consider a series of statements to try to explain their answers to the previous question about reliability. Respondents were allowed to tick as many as they liked (figure 6.4).

Q4: Do any of the following statements help explain which photos you decided to submit?	
I knew that the pictures I was taking were confidential and therefore was happy to take any images that I wanted.	83%
I understood that you were asking me to take these photos as a researcher, and not as my teacher, so I was happy to take the images that I wanted.	83%
Even though you are my teacher, I was not worried about you seeing the images that I took.	50%
I took certain images as I would like the school to know my opinions.	33%
I was a little worried that some of my pictures would not remain confidential, and so did not take some of the images that I wanted.	Nil
Some of the images that I wanted to take would have been a little embarrassing for me (or my friends) to share with any adult, and so I changed some of the details or did not take them.	Nil
You are a teacher at my school, there was no way that I was going to let you see the images that I really wanted to take.	Nil
I changed some of the details, or did not submit some images, as I was worried about the future consequences they would have for me.	Nil
Some of my images were deliberately more controversial than they needed to be.	Nil

Figure 6.4 – Results of the photo-elicitation questionnaire explaining reliability of photographs

From the responses the vast majority of students involved in the photo-elicitation process presented images without any concern that a teacher would be viewing them, and could therefore recognise the distinction between researcher and teacher. None admitted to avoiding ‘embarrassing’ pictures, or feared any future come back on the pictures they had presented. This may be due to two reasons; that the questions being asked were non-controversial; or that the photographs were taken without the teacher-researcher being present. This ‘space’ between researcher and respondent during the data production may allow issues of perceived power differences or embarrassment to be significantly reduced.

Respondents were invited to write additional comments as to why they had taken images in a truthful or otherwise fashion. The most interesting reads, *“I wanted the photographs to be good quality, otherwise the task given could be described as rushed”*. This suggests that being asked to produce visual data, and being given the space and time to do so, had prompted students to attach more seriousness to the task. They did not want their images to be of poor quality and had therefore spent time, care and effort in the production. By wanting to produce good quality images the reliability of the data that they contain must surely increase. This may not be possible in an interview situation where respondents do not have as much time to consider and construct a response, or are unable to put as much thought into exactly what they are going to say.

For those who took part in the semi-structured interviews, similar follow up questions (question 4) were asked to understand if their data had been produced in a reliable format. These questions were also asked of those in the photo-elicitation process to consider what they had said during the discussion of their images (question 8). This is shown in figure 6.5:

Q4 / 8: Do any of the following statements help explain your answer to 3 / 7?	Semi-Structured	Photo-Elicitation
I knew that our discussion was confidential and therefore was happy to answer openly and honestly.	64%	83%
I understood that you were asking me these questions as a researcher, and not as my teacher, so I was happy to answer openly and honestly.	73%	83%
Even though you are my teacher, I was not worried about you hearing my open and honest comments.	73%	50%
I was open and honest as I would like the school to listen to my opinions.	55%	50%
I changed my answers to fit the sort of comments I thought you were expecting me to give.	Nil	8%
I was a little worried that some of my opinions would not remain confidential, and so I changed some of the details.	9%	Nil
Some of my truthful answers would have been a little embarrassing for me (or my friends) to share with any adult, and so I changed some of the details.	9%	Nil
You are a teacher at my school, there was no way that I was going to tell you the truth about everything.	Nil	Nil
I changed some of the details as I was worried about the future consequences my truthful answers would have for me.	18%	Nil
I exaggerated some of my answers to sound better or more controversial.	Nil	Nil

Figure 6.5 – Questionnaire results explaining reliability of interview responses

It is noticeable that the majority of students who participated in the semi-structured interviews were not worried that it was one of their teachers conducting the interviews and research, and understood their responses to be confidential. However, a small number did fear the future consequences of truthful responses, or felt embarrassed in the interview situation to talk openly.

In comparison, those that were discussing their photographs did so with even less fear of the interviewer being a teacher. None admitted to changing any details of the description of their photos in order to avoid embarrassment or to protect themselves or friends. This is likely to have happened as the data production had occurred during the photography as opposed to during the interview.

In the questionnaires, the respondents were asked to consider how their experience of the research process may have differed under different circumstances, such as who was interviewing or how the interviews and discussions took place, and if they thought this would have made their experience better or worse. They were also invited to make comments on their answers. The results from the questionnaire given to those involved in the semi-structured interviews are shown in Figure 6.6.

For semi-structured interviews the age and gender of the researcher made little difference to the student, indeed several students refer to feeling more comfortable discussing issues with a teacher they are familiar with. Of interest are the responses to whether being in a group interview, or having a researcher instead of a teacher ask the question would have made a difference. In both, the majority of respondents answered that it would have made the interview worse, overwhelmingly so in the case of having an adult unconnected to the school conducting the interview.

With regard to group interviews, 64% of respondents answered that this would have made the interview worse stating they would have been less honest, or would have contributed less to the discussion. Having peers hear their answers can add significantly to peer pressure and being heard to say the 'right' answer, or not saying anything to avoid being judged. Having a private interview appears to increase the reliability of the data provided.

Interestingly 82% of the respondents thought that having the interview with someone unknown to them would have made the interview worse. Comments that an unknown researcher would not be trusted, or would have made the student shy or nervous suggest that the issues of unreliability of data produced when a teacher acts as a researcher are not as profound as sometimes thought. One respondent even wrote that they, "*Wouldn't want them judging the school*" suggesting they would be more likely to change answers in order to protect the image of their school. This agrees with Mac an Ghail (1991) who found that students often trusted the researcher more if it was one of their teachers. It is accepted that the subject matter of these interviews was not controversial and that some topics may be less easy to discuss with a teacher.

	Better	Worse	The Same
You had been interviewed by a teacher who is <i>not</i> a member of the Senior Leadership	9% <i>They would not know as much about everything</i>	36% <i>Wouldn't be as comfortable</i> <i>I know Mr. Waymark and trust and like him</i> <i>I feel more comfortable with a teacher I know</i> <i>Wouldn't feel as serious</i>	55% <i>Still connected to the school</i> <i>Still a teacher</i> <i>Either way it's confidential</i>
You had been interviewed by an older teacher	Nil	18% <i>I would have felt they didn't understand as much (2)</i>	82% <i>Age doesn't really matter (5)</i> <i>Would be more open</i> <i>I feel comfortable with someone older</i>
You had been interviewed by a younger teacher	18% <i>Perhaps a younger person may have been more relatable</i> <i>Maybe a bit more easy to talk to</i>	27% <i>They would try and 'relate' to me</i> <i>I feel comfortable with someone older</i> <i>I wouldn't respect them as much</i>	55% <i>Age doesn't really matter (3)</i>
You had been interviewed by a female teacher	9% <i>Find it easier to connect with them</i>	9% <i>Women seem more judgmental</i>	82% <i>Gender doesn't make a difference (7)</i>
You had been interviewed by me, but within a group of students	27% <i>Have more support with your views</i> <i>Less serious situation (2)</i> <i>More opinions</i>	64% <i>Would have been less honest (4)</i> <i>Would have felt peer pressure</i> <i>I would have said less (2)</i> <i>Would have been harder to answer</i> <i>It would have felt less confidential</i>	9% <i>Would have still wanted to put my point across</i>
You had been interviewed by an adult you did not know, unconnected with the school	18% <i>Feel like there wouldn't be any consequences at all</i>	82% <i>Wouldn't be as comfortable (2)</i> <i>I would not trust them</i> <i>Wouldn't want them judging the school</i> <i>I would have been shy</i> <i>I would have been more nervous</i> <i>Unfamiliarity would have made me more reserved</i> <i>They may not know what you mean when talking about St.A's</i>	Nil

Figure 6.6 – Considering feelings of semi-structured interviews conducted under different circumstances.

Students who undertook the photo-elicitation process answered the same questions. The results can be seen in Figure 6.7.

The results are similar to those from the semi-structured interviews. There is overwhelming feeling that discussing the images with a person from outside of the school would have made the process worse for similar reasons given by the semi-structured interview group, i.e. not being comfortable, or not trusting the researcher. A quarter of the respondents stated that they would not want to have discussed their images with someone from outside of the school as, *“They wouldn’t know what you were talking about, may have to take longer to explain and describe”*. This suggests students felt at ease taking and discussing their photos because they knew I would recognise particular places or situations, and have a greater understanding of the context in which they were taken.

In both cases, the data provided by the respondents can be viewed as reliable. There is some scope to say that reliability of the data provided by photo-elicitation is greater than that by semi-structured interview, or at least is aided by the photo-elicitation process. In this research, due to the nature of the questions being asked, the concerns of problems caused by a teacher acting as a researcher are largely not present. However, by giving the students time to consider and take the photographs, along with the data being produced without the teacher-researcher being present, has helped increase the reliability of the data further than that produced only during a traditional semi-structured interview.

	Better	Worse	The Same
The images had been seen and discussed by a teacher who is <i>not</i> a member of the Senior Leadership	Nil	25% <i>Wouldn't know them as well</i> <i>I don't think some of my opinions would've been taken into account</i> <i>The pictures would not have remained confidential, may have changed the photos submitted</i>	75% <i>I'm comfortable with any teacher (5)</i> <i>Authority does not change my thoughts</i> <i>It would make no difference</i>
The images had been seen and discussed by an older teacher	Nil	25% <i>My photos were probably understood better by a younger teacher (2)</i> <i>May have felt less able to be completely open and honest</i>	75% <i>Age has no control on thought</i> <i>Still asking the same questions</i> <i>The photos represented how I feel about the school</i> <i>Has no affect on interview (3)</i>
The images had been seen and discussed by a younger teacher	8% <i>Someone younger would have been more open to my ideas</i>	8% <i>Explanations to photos would have changed</i>	84% <i>Age has no control on thought</i> <i>Still asking the same questions</i> <i>Has no affect on interview (3)</i>
The images had been seen and discussed by a female teacher	Nil	Nil	100% <i>Makes no difference (8)</i> <i>I had nothing private to say</i>
The images had been seen and discussed with me, but with a group of students	33% <i>More thoughts and ideas would have helped</i> <i>More ideas and reasons for photos as students could discuss together</i>	42% <i>Couldn't be as open</i> <i>Would be embarrassed (2)</i> <i>People around my age group would judge my choices</i> <i>Some opinions were private</i>	25% <i>I had nothing to look bad</i>
The images had been seen and discussed by an adult you did not know, unconnected with the school	Nil	83% <i>They wouldn't know what you were talking about, may have to take longer to explain and describe (3)</i> <i>As I didn't know them I would've been more nervous (3)</i> <i>Would be awkward</i> <i>Wouldn't have been comfortable (2)</i> <i>I'm not willing to open up to a random person</i> <i>I prefer someone I know and trust</i>	17%

Figure 6.7 – Considering feelings of photo-elicitation discussions conducted under different circumstances

The type of data and evaluations produced by the students

Breadth of data

From the semi-structured interviews, of the 50 themes identified in the coding of the transcripts, 36% could be categorised as being about the school's academic life. From the coding of the photo-elicitation discussions, the students covered a much broader range of themes (75), but of these only 30% were about academic issues. The photo-elicitation discussions give a broader insight into the everyday life and concerns of the students, rather than just the expected discussions of exams, lessons, teachers, and pressure.

An example of this can be seen in the discussions with Izzy about the photographs that she produced as shown in figure 6.8:

	Code	Transcript	Theme
Izzy	L79	I liked cooking and stuff because I'm not really taught that at home so I think it was good that the school gave you an opportunity to know how to cook and stuff and I think that was really good	Variety
Izzy	L79	I've always thought they've been really supportive even now but especially year 7 like settling in and then year 8	Pastoral Care
Izzy	D79	I hated not being able to wear my blazer, especially in year 9. I always used to wear it and get told off for wearing it into assemblies but I think it is cold without blazers. I didn't really mind not having one in year 7 but I think when you get to year 9 you're like oh I wanna' wear my blazer	Cold
Izzy	L1011	There's only three files there because I only have to carry around three files. I used to have to carry around so many books and for so many subjects now it's good that we've had to choose the subjects that we enjoy	Choices
Izzy	L1011	We were in the sixth form lab and I think there's ten of us maybe eleven in our set and we've done a lot more experiments than we did last year I think 'cause there were so many of us in our set last year, all our Science teachers know that we learn from doing stuff so we did this experiment like last week for Physics that was good	Small Classes
Izzy	L1011	I'm really neat when I write and it takes me ages and I used to get so behind on my revision, revision used to take me so long but now I'm working on a laptop and it's a lot quicker	Laptops
Izzy	D1011	I don't bring in water to school just because it leaks in your bag or you forget to bring it in and we have the water fountains but they're not very good they come out really slow and there's always a queue	Water Fountains
Izzy	CN	Yeah a lot more than last year I did at the beginning of year 10 I did and I dropped swimming because I had so much work to do but now I'm used to it	Homework
Izzy	CP	I think we get more freedom in year 10 I think. I think 'cause the teachers have got to know you better and you're older, you're more mature I think you get more freedom	Treatment

Izzy	Improve	So we have to pay I think £3.60 or £3.80 for our meal and I think we get a good option for our meal but the desserts, we used to get hot desserts and now we don't, it's like fruit or yogurts and we still pay a lot of money.	Hot Desserts
Izzy	Improve	Well I get two free periods a week but lots of people have been saying we should get a free period just to be able to study or revise or do some homework	Study Periods

Figure 6.8 – Coding Izzy's transcript

Izzy discusses a wide range of issues that impact her life at the school. Whilst academic issues feature in her discussions, so do far more day to day issues such as feeling the cold, water fountains, or hot dessert options being removed from lunch.

Such themes might seem trivial to the reader, or those involved with school improvement plans, who may focus upon results, quality of teaching and learning, extra-curricular provision, etc. However, the photo-elicitation opens a 'student-eye view' of life in the school, of issues that matter to the students and impact upon their perceptions, enjoyment, and feelings. The images produced in this study of lockers, desserts, stairwells, rooms, vending machines, sofas, and toilets are a hidden view of the school not necessarily experienced, understood, or noticed by teaching staff.

In contrast, BethH's semi-structured interview (figure 6.9) produced:

	Code	Transcript	Theme
BethH	L79	The lessons were really good, and I liked all the teachers. They were all really nice and friendly. There was nothing that was bad	Lessons
BethH	CN	I remember there was much more work and I was getting more stressed a lot, I'm OK now, but I remember falling behind a lot in year 10	Work Load
BethH	CN	I probably would have said that it was really stressful and that it was hard	Stress
BethH	CP	I like how closer we are with the teachers, it's much nicer, the classes are smaller, and I like how close we are with the teachers now. It's more mature	Teachers
BethH	CN	That upset me when I got split up from all of them, because I remember there was a couple of spaces in the form I wanted to be in, but they just wouldn't change us	Forms
BethH	L1011	I like how the teachers are because I can come to a teacher, out of lesson, and ask for help. I find it alright.	Teachers
BethH	CP	I don't think so, I think we are more trusted. We are allowed to eat in the classroom and it's more of a nicer relationship with the teachers.	Treatment

Figure 6.9 – Coding BethH's transcript

Whilst the data provided by BethH is valid and useful, it centres almost entirely on academic themes and shows almost no insight into her experiences of everyday life in the same way that the photo-elicitation has done with Izzy.

Data produced by the students during the photo-elicitation process appears broader than that produced just within the semi-structured interviews. This may be due to the space and time given to the respondent in the production stage of the data. During a semi-structured interview the respondent has virtually no time to think and consider their response to a question. Even when interview questions are given to the respondent the day before, how much actual time is given to the response is limited. In an interview a pressure exists when asked a question to respond as quickly as possible, creating a time imposed stress that may lead to the respondent becoming anxious, or giving the first answer that occurs to them. In one of the evaluation questionnaires a student wrote, *"The questions asked were easy enough to answer although we didn't have time to prepare our answers and so felt embarrassed when hesitating or using fillers"*. The student had been given the interview schedule the day before, but they still felt that during the interview they did not have time to consider their response.

My diary notes from 12 February 2013 following a semi-structured interview with Anna and a photo-elicitation discussion with Setareh read, *"Anna was difficult to interview, she had told me before that she was nervous."*

Interviewer: ... You've taken lots of notes here, is there anything else that we haven't covered that you had sort of thought about earlier?

Anna: No not really, just different answers.

Interviewer: Yep ok, can I have a quick look at some of these, is that alright?

Anna: Yeah

Interviewer: So just tell me about this bit here, 'new subjects' so that's in reference to-

Anna: -Did I not mention that?

Interviewer: - years 10 and 11?

Anna: Yeah.

Interviewer: Just talk to me about why you wrote that down.

Semi-structured interview snippet with Anna

In the semi-structured interviews the respondent is sat with the researcher during the physical process of creating the data. The data is conjugated, created and evaluated with the researcher present. For a student to do this with their teacher present may create a pressure or anxiety, even if not acknowledged by the student. This will influence the type of response given and the nature of the data created, creating a narrower and more expected set of results. During photo-elicitation this proximity between researcher and respondent during data production does not exist.

In the same diary entry on 12 February 2013, I continued, *"Contrast with Setareh [photo-elicitation], a wide range of thought provoking responses. The setting of the photo task encourages students to think more about their responses – even with a schedule given to semi-structured students in advance, their answers are not nearly as thought through."*

During photo-elicitation the data is created by the respondent outside of the interview room. As the photographs are taken without the researcher present, the influence of the researcher is reduced, causing less anxiety, reducing nervousness, and giving the student space to create the image/data that they want to, giving the opportunity to create a broader range of responses that may not have been thought about in a semi-structured interview. This agrees with Robinson & Taylor's (2007) discussions about Freire's arguments of empowerment. A flexible notion of power can exist when it is not a possession of the teacher, but instead the

moment of communication between the student and teacher. In this instance there is a difference in the 'moment of communication' when the data is created either in the company of the teacher in the interview room, or independent of the teacher when producing the image.

In addition to having separation from the researcher to create data, those taking photographs also had one week to produce photographs, creating a long period of active time where they were able to consider and decide what image they wanted to present. This time between being given the questions and producing the pictures allows the students to make more personal decisions, or time to consider and remember memories that might not happen in the immediacy of an interview.

Photo-elicitation not only separates the teacher-researcher from directly influencing the student whilst they produce data, but also gives time for more consideration of exactly what answer the student wants to present. These two factors appear to encourage a broader range of themes and answers to the questions.

An image that demonstrates this is GeorgiaE's 'Music Lesson' (figure 6.10).



“Every time I walk past I remember playing the violin and I used to think if I was playing badly everyone outside could hear me playing really badly {laughs}”

Figure 6.10 - ‘Music Lesson’ by GeorgiaE

GeorgiaE’s image demonstrates how having space and time to produce data allows the respondent to be more reflective. Although it is about music lessons and extra-curricular activities, common themes from both research methods, GeorgiaE explains how walking past this particular music room brings back particular memories. Deciding to include this room and this memory may not have occurred in the more sterile environment of an interview. It demonstrates how a small and seemingly trivial part of her school experience has actually had a lasting and powerful impact on her, and may otherwise not have been considered by the school management.

In contrast, those who took part in the semi-structured interviews gave far more school orientated and somewhat predictable answers to the same question. During the semi-structured interviews the only themes discussed about what students most enjoyed in years 7 to 11 were:

- Having fun / messing around
- Extra-curricular clubs and activities
- Being in an all girls' school
- Pastoral care
- The lack of pressure
- Settling in
- Making friends
- Playing sport
- Lessons / subjects
- School trips

All of these themes were covered in the photo-elicitation discussions, but alongside these were additional and less expected topics. These included:

- Break times
- Community spirit
- Freedom
- Friendliness
- The school grounds
- Sledging
- Space
- Vending machines

Photo-elicitation appears to have encouraged more emotional aspects of schooling that might not otherwise be considered.

Depth of data

The photographs produced not only appear broad in their content, but also deep in their portrayal of the students' thoughts about the questions. The photo-elicitation process

encourages greater emotional involvement and personal evaluation by the respondent of why the data is being produced.

Students were given a week to submit ten images and asked to title each to bring to the interview. This process creates a transformation of learning, with each stage adding further depth to the data.

This is in contrast to the transformation of learning that takes place during a semi-structured interview without photo-elicitation. Here, verbal answers are considered and given in an interview room, away from the physical localities being discussed. There is little time to evaluate which answer to give, and once spoken the data is in existence and cannot be 'deleted' in the same way that deciding not to submit a photograph allows. Further, once the data is produced in the interview, a verbal explanation can follow but little else. The stages of the learning transformation are therefore shorter, less evaluative, and largely out of context. This reduces the potential depth of understanding for both the researcher and respondent. This is represented in Figure 6.11 below:

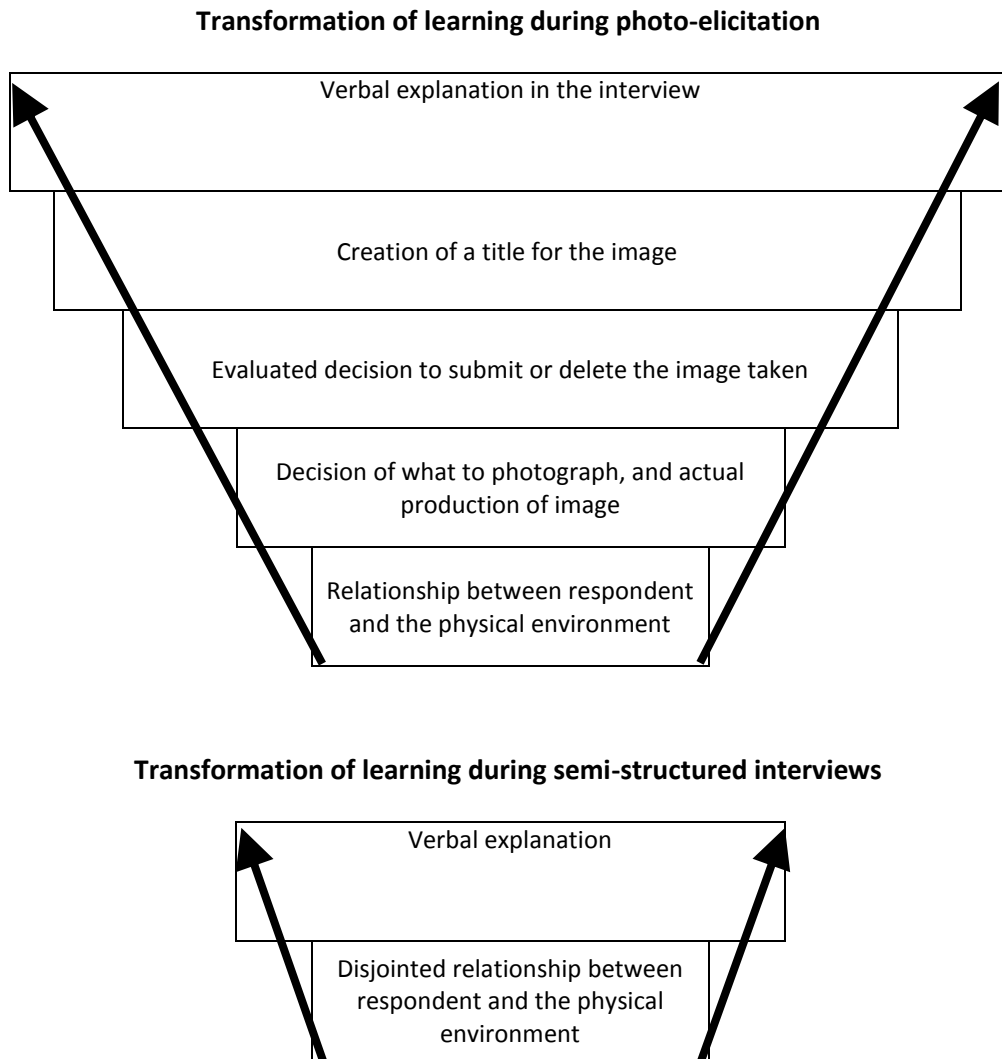


Figure 6.11 – Transformation of learning during data production

Each image shown below illustrates how the picture, title, and discussion build upon one another to create a deep understanding about the context and meaning of the data to the student who created it.

The first relates to a theme that was discussed by nearly all respondents, both via semi-structured interview and through photo-elicitation, that of increased workloads in years 10 and 11 compared to lower years. Whilst this was discussed by most of the respondents, the image and the personal relationship to the student adds to the contextual understanding by the researcher. An example can be seen in figure 6.12



“Going from years 7 to 11, is a big step up, like the amount of work you get is a lot more, and it really teaches you that you need to be organised straight away and if you're not, it's not going to go well”

Figure 6.12 – ‘Amount of work’ by Charley

Charley presents a locker full with work and files, clearly demonstrating her description of an increased workload. It creates a visual context of exactly how much work she now has to do, making her statement about being organised or, ‘... *it's not going to go well*’ easy to understand. An empathy is created allowing the researcher to begin to understand the difficulties Charley has keeping up with her workload and her work organised. The feeling of ‘*it's not going to go well*’ can be understood by seeing how difficult it is to organise this amount of work.

In contrast, the following interview snippet is taken from Emily’s semi-structured interview. Here she talks about the same issue of workload, but without a prior image creation, the data and information gleaned from it is less profound.

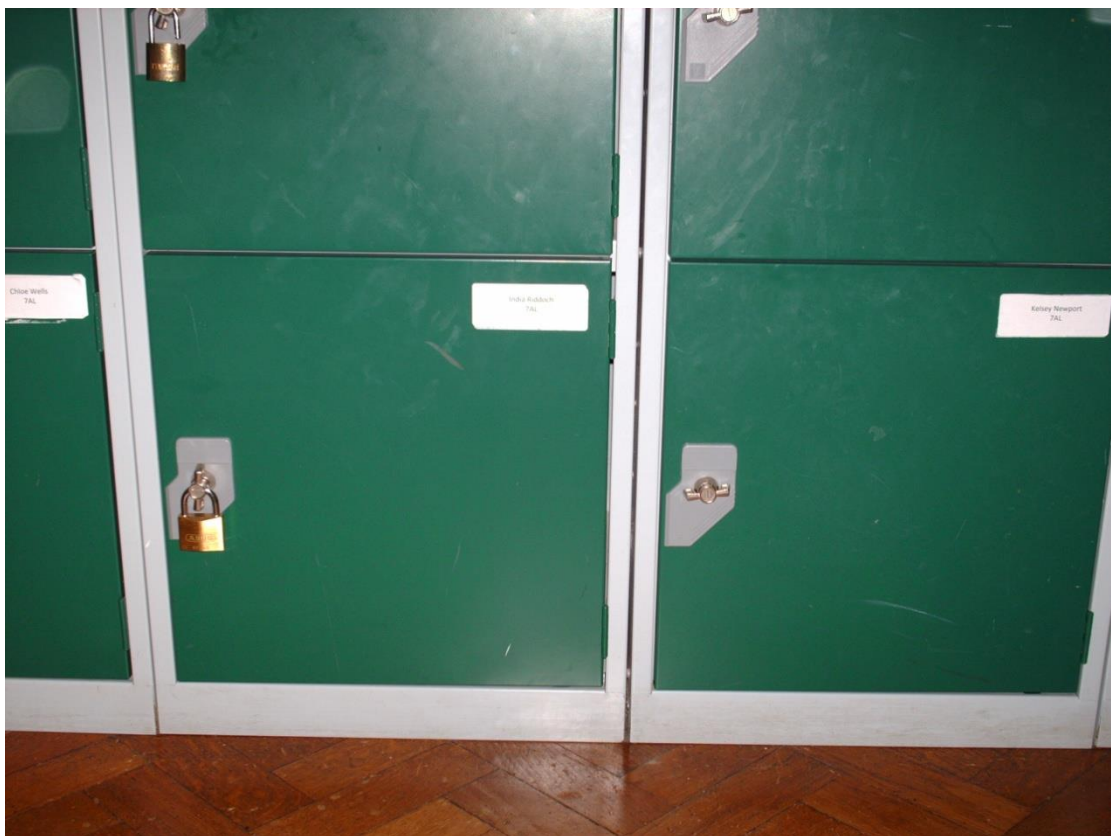
Interviewer: What was the worst thing about being in 10 and 11?

Emily: The amount of work just in general, it was a bit of a shock especially in year 10. I was so taken aback 'cause I thought we were working really hard in year 9 ... but I really wasn't 'cause you're like a bit more stressed 'cause you know it was all counting towards these GCSEs ...

Semi-structured interview snippet with Emily

Emily is discussing the same issues as Charley, but without depth it is far harder to place into a physical context.

Taking images in their familiar environment, an insight can be gained into the relationship between the student and the physical environment that may not be fully appreciated, or known about, by the school staff. The next two images (figure 6.13 and figure 6.14) are examples of this.



“This is what I put as my worst part of year 7 which was having to constantly go down to the locker and sit on the floor while you try and get your stuff out and then the corridors were manic, everyone would walk past you it was so difficult.”

Figure 6.13 - ‘Bottom-floor Locker’ by Bobbie

The difficulties faced by an 11 year old student trying to get belongings out of a locker at floor level whilst the rest of the school pushes past has obviously had an impact on Bobbie. Her relationship with that environment of being forced to sit on the corridor floor and the problems this created for her are clearly remembered. Her decision to include the photo as her worst memory of being in the lower school should provide a powerful message to the school management. The image brings the issue in question to life. Problems such as locker location may appear trivial to the school management, but photo-elicitation helps to bring the student view, not just student voice, to life.



"I never knew that quad existed, and then when we got to year 10 our lockers were in there. It was like the secret place that year 7 to 9 weren't allowed in, and only 10 and 11 were allowed in there, and we actually used to hide in there a lot of the time and not go to lessons, which is a bad thing I know, but it was quite fun to go there, and we'd always sit on that wall and look in the mirror and just talk. It was a fun time that place, it was like a kind of relaxing place to go.

It is a busy place where people do their hair and their make-up before they got the train home or fixing their hair half way through the day, but there was usually a lot of us in there at a given point It was really fun."

Figure 6.14 – 'Year 10 + 11 Quad' by Setareh

This image of toilet cubicles appears bland, but it gives an otherwise unseen and unknown insight in to the daily life of the students and Setareh's relationship with this area in a part of the school almost off-limits to staff. The student ownership of this area, and its importance, has been chosen and presented by Setareh, permitting an insight to an otherwise unknown environment. This agrees with Menter *et al.* (2012) that student participants have the tendency to capture images of mundane objects and activities, yet prompt rich discussion of how people view themselves and their day to day activities.

In many cases the title of the image created added depth to the data. By giving a title to each image an initial evaluation of the image is being undertaken by the respondent. This initial evaluation allows the respondent to consider their responses prior to the discussion far more than in a semi-structured interview where little prior evaluation or consideration of responses might have taken place. An example is shown in figure 6.15 below.



"We got assigned a classroom which was our own space and everyone in that form is always in that classroom. That is basically our home, or our second home. It feels like your own space, and you don't need to share it with anyone. It's just nice to be there"

Figure 6.15 – 'Classroom is our Home' by Maisie

In Maisie's image 'Classroom is our Home' the context of the physical location could have been any classroom. However, her choice of title creates a significance for the room and space that she has photographed. The importance to the older students to have their own space is apparent in a number of the discussions, with photos of the year 11 sofa room and The Courtyard (an outdoor space reserved for Y11 and above). The choice of the words 'our home' in the title shows the significance of these privileged areas before the discussion has even taken place.

In the case of GeorgiaW, her entire selection of photos were imaginatively titled and agrees with Lomax that children's editorial decisions are influenced by what they think might work well visually and how the images might be interpreted by others (Lomax, 2012).

Further evidence that photo-elicitation creates data that is potentially deeper in understanding than that obtained through semi-structured interviews is apparent in the final step of the transformation of learning that takes place, the verbal explanation of the image and title. It became clear early on during the interview process that during the discussions using photo-elicitation, the lucidity of the students and the length of their discussions were greater than the students who did not take photos.

In my research diary, I note after the third interview, a photo-elicitation discussion with GeorgiaE, *'Certainly GeorgiaE spoke more using the pictures, and at the end said that she liked the fact that she took them and so knew what she wanted to say.'*

Conversely, after my semi-structured interview with Daksha, I noted in my diary, *'Very difficult to interview – didn't have much to say. Noticeable difference between semi-structured and photo-elicitation in this regard'*. It was clear that when talking about their photos, students had more to say and were being more open. Whilst this may be due to the individual nature of the respondent, or how relaxed they were in the interview, the photo-elicitation interviews on average lasted seven minutes longer than the semi-structured interviews.

By considering, creating, and evaluating the data through the production of images in advance of the interview the respondent feels at ease in the interview, knowing what they want to say about the images. They talked far more openly and verbosely than the students who were creating the data during the semi-structured interview itself.

As an example the following interview snippet shows a response to the question, “What did the students like about being in year 10 or 11?”

Interviewer: Are there any things in the upper school, years 10 and 11, that you particularly like about the school, or being at the school?

Daksha : You feel kind of more like more confident and umm, I don't know how to explain it.

Interviewer: Is that because you are older?

Daksha : Yeah.

Interviewer: So walking around the school you feel more confident?

Daksha : Yeah.

Interviewer: So when you were in years 7 and 8 were you particularly nervous of the older year groups?

Daksha : Oh yeah, I was like proper scared of them.

Interviewer: Why were you scared of them?

Daksha : I don't know, they seemed like quite intimidating, but now you are like the intimidating people ...

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel?

Daksha : I don't know, sometimes you're like, "You don't have to", but then other times it's quite nice.

Semi-structured interview snippet with Daksha

It is clear from the interview snippet with Daksha that the interviewer is having to work hard at getting the respondent to talk openly. So much so that it is possible that the interview is being led too much by the interviewer and that the questions are increasingly closed.

The level of lucidity from the students is very different in the photo-elicitation discussions, as can be seen from the next snippet from BethT. BethT's image has not been included as it contained other students.

Interviewer: The next picture is what you particularly like about the senior part of the school and this is 'Spending Time in Friendship Groups'. Can you tell me a little bit about this?

BethT: Basically in the older years I found that there is a lot less petty fights and friendships being like broken up. We are all pretty solid now, we know who we are friends with and who we get along with. I spend so much time with my friends, just like sitting and chatting, it's something at lunch time just to sit and chat is just really relaxing, it's just nice to talk to other people 'cause they're the people who are going through exactly the same things as you are, at school especially. Obviously we have like social life outside of school and we chat about that and just all normal things. I like it because I know they'll always be there. I know that they'll always be sitting in that corner on the window sill and we always chat and we have the funniest times. We've got so many memories just from chatting and being with each other.

Photo-elicitation discussion snippet with BethT

In the snippet with BethT, the interviewer has only had to ask the respondent to tell him about the image. With no other prompting, BethT talks openly and in detail about her image, what it means to her, and how it answers the question. Her answer is more considered than those in the semi-structured interviews and cannot be accused of being led in any way by the interviewer.

Labov (1972) talks of restricted code and the difficulties this presents in interviews. In many cases the respondent is capable of more lucid discussion than what they are presenting, but the circumstance and context of the interview restricts what they are willing to discuss. Photo-elicitation appears to alleviate many of these issues and de-restricts the respondents in their responses. The data is not being created in the interviews; rather it has been created in advance by the respondent without the influence / pressure / presence of the researcher. The respondent has already evaluated and considered their answer through the production of the image and the creation of the title. In the interview, they are merely explaining their image and thoughts, rather than having to create answers and new data on the spot as happens in traditional semi-structured interviews. In many ways this agrees with the 'social child' model that sees children as research subjects comparable with adults, but with different competencies and skilled in different methods of communication. Non-confrontational, non-invasive and participatory methods that encourage children to interpret

their data may reduce the ethical problems of an imbalance of power between teacher-researcher and student (Morrow & Richards, 1996). As a teacher myself, it is clear that confrontation and invasive use of the students' time only reinforces negative power differences and dissuades students from actively wanting to participate. Teenaged students do not always necessarily want to give up their free time to participate in research. Teachers have to be careful not to overuse the goodwill of students or make them feel that they have to participate because it is a teacher 'asking' them to do so. Even if not intended, a resentment of time being used from a student's perspective is likely to have both a negative impact on their responses being given and the learning experience gained by the student.

The relationship between the researcher and respondent

After the semi-structured interviews and photo-elicitation discussions, confidential questionnaires were given to the respondents, part of which attempted to look at how the respondent felt during the research process. For those who underwent the semi-structured interviews, they were asked, 'During the interview, how comfortable did you feel?', and were given four options:

1. Very much at ease, and not nervous at all.
2. Fairly comfortable, although I was a little nervous.
3. A little uncomfortable, although I wasn't too worried.
4. Very uncomfortable, I did not like being in that situation.

The students were then asked to write a sentence to explain the option they chose.

The literature surrounding interviewing school aged children (Powney & Watts, 1987; Seidman, 2006), suggested that most respondents would choose options 2 or 3, with a significant minority being very uncomfortable. However, the results shown in figure 6.16 were unexpected.

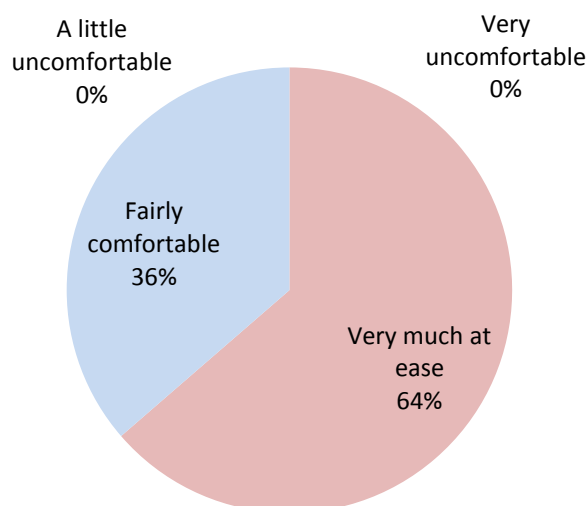


Figure 6.16 – How comfortable students were during semi-structured interviews

The majority of the students reported feeling very much at ease during the semi-structured interviews, none were at all uncomfortable.

For those who were a little nervous, their reasons were expected:

“It was an unusual situation as I have not participated in many interview situations before.”

“...being recorded made me slightly nervous, but it passed.”

“...because it was quite formal.”

The formality and unusual experience of being in an interview created some nerves, but not enough to have had a negative impact on the validity of the results. Students said they were very comfortable, stating:

“... it was very casual and there was no pressure on me so I felt comfortable.”

“I felt comfortable because the questions being asked were fairly easy for me to answer.”

“... I knew him so I felt comfortable to talk to him.”

“With teacher I knew.”

“I know Mr Waymark and feel comfortable in the school.”

From these responses students report feeling comfortable in the interview because they knew the interviewer as one of their teachers, and the content of the questions were non-controversial.

Although these results were somewhat unexpected, it may well be to do with the contextual background of the students and the research. St. Agnes' is a selective fee paying school, therefore reducing the likely spread of students from different social backgrounds. Further, the students involved were all older teenagers, if younger students had been interviewed the results may well have been different. Finally, the nature of the questions were not controversial or embarrassing for the students even to share with a male teacher.

The group that undertook the photo-elicitation were asked the same question following the discussion about their images. Similar numbers said they were 'fairly comfortable' or 'very much at ease' to the semi-structured interview group. No-one reported being at all uncomfortable in any of the interviews (figure 6.17).

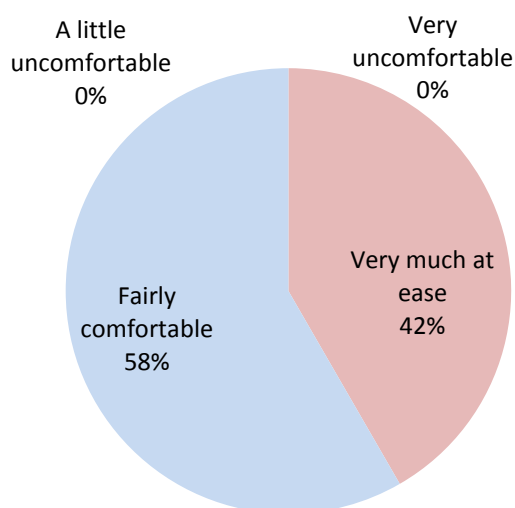


Figure 6.17 – How comfortable students were during photo-elicitation discussions

Again, students report to being only a little or not at all nervous during the discussions, giving the following reasons:

"I already knew you, so wasn't nervous about the discussion."

"It was in a relaxed environment."

"... the situation was relaxed without pressure."

"I felt nervous because it was all recorded, but as the interview went on I felt more comfortable."

"At first I was slightly nervous as to how the interview would be conducted, but after the first few questions I felt at ease to share my opinions ..."

Having an activity to do prior to interview appears to put the respondents at ease, similar to the findings of Woolner *et al.* (2009) who noted that a mapping exercise made respondents visibly more relaxed.

In this case-study it cannot be said that photo-elicitation improved the relationship during the interview between the teacher-researcher and student-respondent, some comments made by the photo-elicitation group are particularly interesting.

"... I knew what I was talking about and, as they were my photos, there was no right or wrong answers"

"It was my own thoughts so didn't feel as if there was a right or wrong answer."

"... I had an answer for all of them."

"... I already knew what I would be roughly asked."

Producing the images prior to the discussions, the students already had ownership of the discussion. The interview was less about answering questions, this had been done during the taking of the photographs, but more about explaining their images. The space and time between the researcher asking the questions and hearing a verbal explanation allowed students to know what they wanted to say. As such, the formality of the 'interview' is reduced, and there is a reduction in the power differential between researcher and respondent. This agrees with O'Brien *et al.* (2012) that having a prior task to complete before the interview based on the research questions creates an opportunity for participants to 'settle in' to the research and its purpose. In semi-structured interviews the ownership is

from the researcher asking the question. During photo-elicitation the ownership switched to the respondent as it is their images that are being discussed.

For those participating in the photo-elicitation, they were asked, ‘Think about the photographs that you took for me. How comfortable did you feel doing this?’ They were given four options and asked to comment on their answer:

1. I felt very much at ease taking photographs of what I wanted.
2. I was fairly comfortable taking photographs, although on some occasions I felt a little nervous or awkward.
3. I felt a little awkward or uncomfortable taking photographs, although I wasn’t too worried.
4. I felt very awkward and uncomfortable taking photographs. I did not enjoy it at all.

The results of this question are clear, the majority enjoyed taking the photos and had no problem selecting the images they wanted. A few were a little nervous on occasions, but none felt awkward, uncomfortable, or did not enjoy the image creation (figure 6.18).

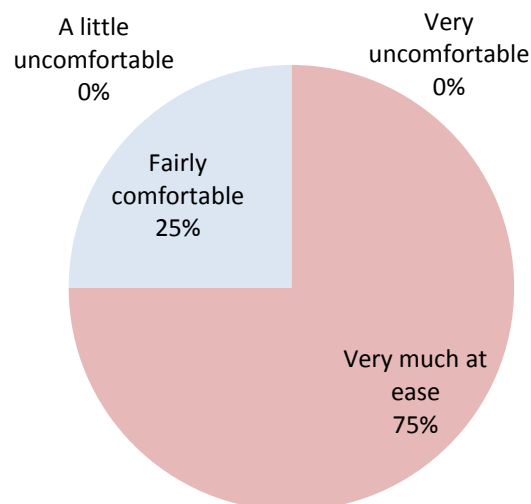


Figure 6.18 – How comfortable students were taking photographs

The comments explain why they found it easy to produce images:

"I felt at ease taking the photos because I am very familiar with the environment."

"Easier to capture a picture of the memory than write about it."

"I didn't mind taking the pictures because of the statement they represented gave me a clear idea about was needed."

"I enjoyed taking the photos, it made me think creatively."

"I knew what I needed to do so didn't feel uncomfortable or awkward."

The process of taking photographs appears to be enjoyable, improving the research experience for the respondents, and therefore improving their relationship with the researcher during the discussion. It is clear that for some students it is easier for them to express their ideas in the picture rather than to write or talk about them. Respondents know their physical environment in a personal way, the images allow them to express this student level view in a way that is easier than just discussion. One respondent talks of it allowing her to be 'creative', something that may be difficult to do in a formal interview, again increasing her enjoyment of the research process and creating a more relaxed atmosphere in the subsequent discussions.

Only one negative comment was made about the production of the images:

"Because not everyone understood the purpose of the photos and asked questions about why I needed them and what I was using them for."

Even without the presence of a teacher-researcher, the taking of photographs can be intrusive. However, proper instructions for the students as to how to go about taking the images, what to say to people, and when to take photographs may reduce this. Despite this, for the students, taking images to express their ideas and thoughts was easier than just discussing them face to face with the teacher-researcher.

Although in this case-study and context there was little difference in the relationships between researcher and respondents from either group, in other contexts where students are younger or less familiar with talking to adults from a particular social background, the production and discussion of images may improve this relationship. For teachers acting as

researchers, photo-elicitation provides an opportunity for students to create and discuss data in a less formal way, giving them the space, time, and ownership to do so. Students appear to enjoy the process of taking images in a physical environment that they are familiar with. This helps to relax the student prior to interview.

The extent to which the pedagogy of teaching is present

As a teacher-researcher, I agree with Dewey (1901) that a link should exist between the theory and practical work. Dewey continues that it is the participation by the practitioner in the theory that determines the effectiveness of the work done. Within education there is a clear divide between the theories of education as developed and proposed by academics and government institution, and the day to day practical work that exists in the school. These two distinct elements both stand alone and impact one another. It therefore figures that researcher conducted with school children should have some genuine educational benefit to them as well as benefits to the researcher and the school. In this research students were able to develop alternative ways of independent thinking, were able to think through and consider their evaluated responses to questions. During the research process and the subsequent discussions and interviews it became clear that using the two methods with school aged children had the added advantage of developing several learning techniques that would be beneficial to the students. For a teacher-researcher this allows them to obtain the information they require and to ensure there is a direct benefit to the students who are involved. This agrees with Cook-Sather who noted that when students have an opportunity to articulate their perspectives this offers not only a valuable insight in to schooling, but also gives the students an opportunity to hone their own thinking skills (Cook-Sather, 2002).

For those involved with the photo-elicitation the level of teaching pedagogy was greater than for those involved with only the semi-structured method. Using photo-elicitation with students allows several areas of teaching/learning pedagogy to take place:

- Using scaffolds
- Time to think and consider responses
- Independent thinking/learning
- Self evaluation

Using scaffolds

The use of scaffolding in teaching assists and supports a child in order to enable them to do a task which they may not be able to manage on their own and which brings them closer to a state of competence that will enable them to carry out other similar tasks independently in the future (Maybin, Mercer & Stierer, 1992). Scaffolding sets up an easy entry for the child so that they can concentrate on the skill that they are in the process of acquiring (Bruner, 1983).

To a degree scaffolding takes place within the semi-structured interviews as the students are given a schedule of the questions in advance. However, it does not provide the series of steps that the student needs to complete the task, they are simply told the question and then asked to answer it in the interview. In comparison, the photo-elicitation method provides a more substantial scaffold for the student (figure 6.19):

Students are given the questions



Students are given instructions and parameters of how to create images



Students are given specified time to produce images



Students are asked to give titles to images that have been produced



Students are given schedule regarding discussion of images



Students are invited to explain and discuss their images

Figure 6.19 – Scaffolding provided by photo-elicitation

This process leads the student through a series of steps, each helping them to develop and evaluate the decisions and responses they are making. The potential stress of trying to work out what the interview question means only seconds before answering is reduced. Instead the student can concentrate upon exactly how they would like to represent and develop their

responses through a number of evaluative steps. This has similarities with Wall & Higgins (2006) whose speech and thought bubbles (albeit for much younger students) provided an effective scaffold in which to develop and verbalise their thoughts.

Time to think and consider responses

Allowing students time to consider and think through their responses is widely accepted as beneficial to the learner. Time allows the student to consider, reject, and evaluate possible responses before settling on a chosen idea. By having time to undertake learning activities the student has the ability to learn (Karjalainen *et al.*, 2006).

During semi-structured interviews this is not possible as suitable time is not given, nor do learning activities take place. Of the students who took part in semi-structured interviews, all were given the interview questions at least 24 hours in advance, but only two arrived with any pre-prepared notes. In my research diary after the 18th interview, '*... even with a schedule given to semi-structured students in advance, their answers are not nearly as thought through.*' It was clear that for the majority of students involved in the semi-structured interviews the only time that they considered and thought through their responses was the seconds immediately after the question had been asked in the interview.

Photo-elicitation creates more time for the student to consider and evaluate responses. It also provides a learning activity, allowing the student to gain from their involvement more than during a semi-structured interview alone.

Similar to the semi-structured interviews, students taking part in photo-elicitation were given the questions in advance. However they are 'forced' to read and consider the questions in order to be able to take the photographs. For those involved in the semi-structured interviews, even though they are given the interview schedule there is no compulsion or incentive to read the questions, let alone consider responses in advance. Those taking photographs are involved in an activity that leaves them no option but to read and consider the questions, and partake in a learning activity.

Students taking photographs will spend significantly more time considering and evaluating their responses than the few seconds between question and answer in an interview. Even if a student does not use the full week to produce the images, the required action of deciding what to photograph, going to that location, taking the picture, and giving the image a title takes time. Whilst the activity is taking place the student has time to consider, evaluate, and learn from the process.

Independent thinking / learning

Independent learning is associated with a number of other concepts such as 'personalisation', 'student-centred learning' and 'ownership' of learning. Independent learning allows the students to establish an 'enabling environment' within their physical environment, involving interaction and support from both teachers and peers. Independent learning develops cognitive skills such as memory, attention, and problem solving (Meyer *et al.*, 2008).

Photo-elicitation allows for independent learning and thinking to take place as the images are created without the teacher-researcher being present. By creating images from their own experiences of their physical environment, the learning activity and data production is 'owned' by the student and is completely 'personalised'. Many of the students who took part in the photo-elicitation did so with the support of their peers to re-create memories or shared experiences (Figures 6.20 and 6.21). The necessity to be creative when trying to represent ideas and answers visually caused the students to give far more thought to some of their responses than a traditional semi-structured interview.



“Things have definitely got better and I think I owe a lot of that to my friends because I found it quite a struggle in year 9 because everything was getting on top of me. They helped me through it quite a lot. Now that we are in years 10 and 11 it’s just made it so much easier”

Figure 6.20 – ‘Friendships’ by Maisie



“So years 7 and 8 was kind of downhill, year 9 was kind of uphill, but year 10 is slowly going downhill”

Figure 6.21 – ‘The Ups and Downs’ by LauraPh

Self-evaluation

Self-evaluation is defined as students judging the quality of their work, for the purpose of doing better in the future. Self-evaluation is a potentially powerful learning technique because of its impact on student performance through enhanced self-efficacy and increased intrinsic motivation (Rolheiser & Ross, ud.). How this contributes to learning can be seen in figure 6.22:

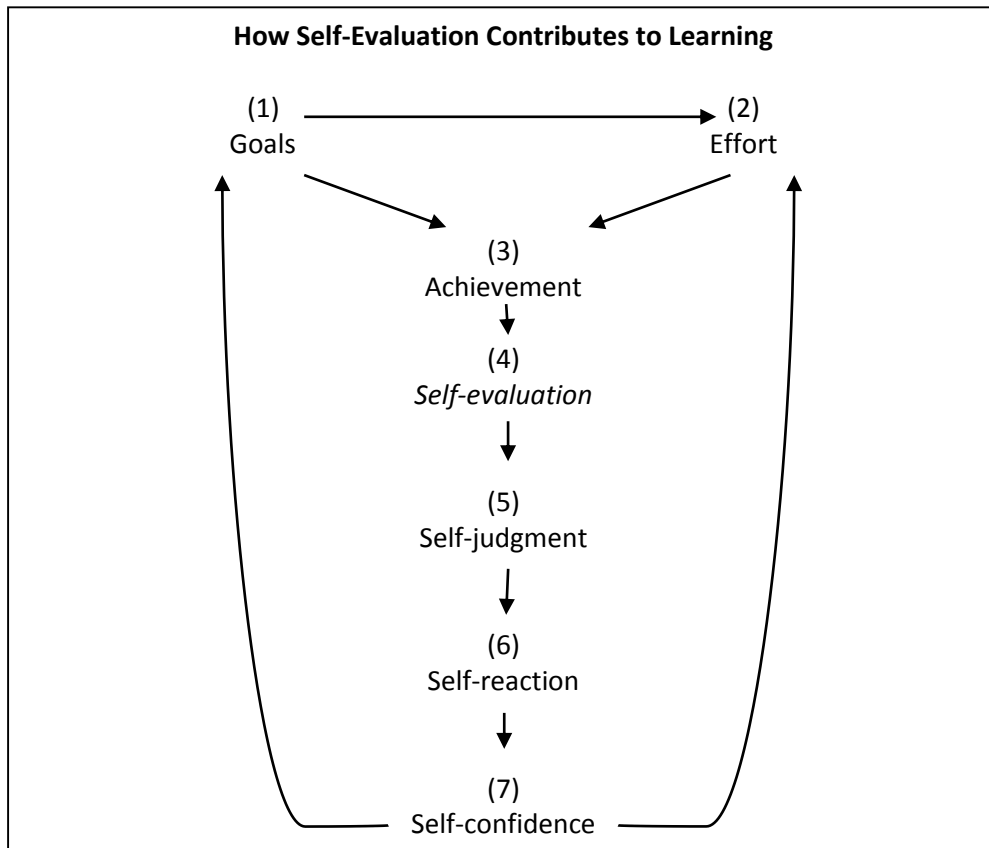


Figure 6.22 – How self-evaluation contributes to learning (Rolheiser & Ross, *ud.*)

As in Figure 6.22, student self-evaluation of judging and reacting to their work leads to increased self-confidence, higher levels of effort and greater achievement. During the photo-elicitation process the students were able to take multiple images and discard the ones they did not want. This process of reviewing the photos taken allowed them to evaluate their achievement.

Early evaluation and self-analysis built self-confidence amongst the students of their images and responses, allowing them to talk more openly and less nervously in the discussions. In traditional semi-structured interviews, none of this process is possible.

Chapter 7 – Conclusions

The conclusions of this case-study are presented in four parts; a discussion of the key themes and questions, consideration of the possible contribution to theory, consideration of the possible contribution to practice, and recommendations for potential further research.

Key themes

This research set out four key themes:

1. Interviewing children and potential problems for teacher-researchers.
2. The potential role that photo-elicitation might play as a research method for teachers.
3. The ethical issues involved in using visual methods with children.
4. Contextual data and its importance.

Each of these themes will be discussed in turn, followed by the two key questions:

1. Does photo-elicitation improve the data obtained by teachers interviewing students?
2. What are the key ethical considerations to consider when using photo-elicitation in schools?

Interviewing children and potential problems for teacher-researchers

A problem outlined by Kirby (2001) is the relationship between interviewer and respondent and the potential conflict in roles that can arise when a teacher acts as the researcher. As discussed in Chapter 1 a teacher has an established position of power, whilst a researcher is expected to be detached and impartial. Pre-existing school based teacher/student relationships exist that may not be conducive to collecting valid data from the student. However, in the feedback received from the respondents in this research via the confidential questionnaires, the known and established relationship between student and teacher appears to aid the research process. From the traditional semi-structured interview process 73% of the respondents stated they understood that I was asking the questions as a researcher and not a teacher, and 83% who had undertaken the photo-elicitation also thought this. Many refer to not necessarily 'trusting' an outside researcher, or that their

issues and concerns raised would be better understood by a teacher who would have a better grasp of the context in which they were referring. There is a validity in this instance of being an 'insider', and a protective feeling by the students of their school that they might not want 'outsiders' making judgements about. Caution must be exercised with these statements, however, as the sample size of this case-study is small, potentially skewing the results. Secondly, the questions being asked were non-threatening.

Kirby (2001) identifies the issue that many research methodologies may be inappropriate to use with children as they are designed for use with adults. How children communicate may be different than that of adults (O'Kane, 2001), or they may be unfamiliar with adult communication methods such as interviews. The circumstance in which the interview takes place may also be alien to a child, creating a 'hostile' situation where children will not demonstrate their real abilities (Labov, 1972). Results from this case-study agree with these statements, the depth and breadth of data produced when using traditional semi-structured interviews was less than when photo-elicitation methods were applied. Further, it was clear that some students either felt uncomfortable or nervous in the traditional interviews, causing them to say little, or needing far more prompting from the researcher.

This 'clamming up' of the students was not due to lack of intellect, all being at a selective school achieving individually higher than average examination results. For some, the inherent power differential and established in-school hierarchies between them and researcher-teacher created a barrier for communication.

Interviewer: My next question is about what you particularly like about your experiences in year 10 and 11.

Anna: More freedom 'cause you can drop stuff.

Interviewer: So you dropped Science?

Anna: Science.

Interviewer: When did that happen?

Anna: End of year 10 I think, beginning of year 11.

Interviewer: Has that made a difference to your experience of the school?

Anna: Yeah.

Interviewer: So has that made your experience of the school better?

Anna: Yeah because you can do work then and it makes it a bit less stressful.

Interviewer: So you're quite pleased at that happening?

Anna: Yeah.

Semi-structured interview snippet with Anna

Anna's responses were either short or led by the interviewer. Indeed, 47 of Anna's answers were just one word, making it difficult to create any depth to the data she was providing without heavily influencing and prompting her for answers and the interview becoming increasingly less semi-structured. This agrees with Shohel who identified weaknesses of data generated by 'traditional sit-down research interviews' with children. Shohel noted that children often answered questions briefly and ambiguously (Shohel, 2012).

The range of topics that the students divulged in the traditional semi-structured interviews was less than during the photo-elicitation process. During the traditional semi-structured interviews the students stuck closely to expected topics of subjects, lessons, and other academic related issues indicating that they were unable or unwilling to convey other information to their teacher. Anna included just nine topics or themes in all of her responses.

Interviewing students as part of the research process therefore presents a number of issues. The breadth, depth, and validity of the data produced appears to be less when traditional

semi-structured interviews are used as a methodology, as opposed to interviews being conducted after photo-elicitation. This case-study highlights the need for other types of research methods to be used, at least alongside traditional interviews, when teachers act as researchers.

The potential role that photo-elicitation might play as a research method for teachers

It is clear from this case-study that the process of photo-elicitation produces deeper and broader data in comparison to using only traditional semi-structured interviews. By having distance from the teacher-researcher to take the photographs, and time to consider location and content, students are able to evaluate their responses better than in an interview where the immediacy of a response encourages children to stick to expected or safe responses. Photo-elicitation allows more of the individual experiences of school which may not usually be seen by teachers to provide the richest and most interesting data.

Having the time to consider their responses to the questions in advance of the interview allows the student to be more prepared, confident, and comfortable in their narrative. Students who used photo-elicitation spoke for longer and with less prompting than those who were only in the semi-structured interviews. Boyden & Ennen (1997) discuss how children's vocabulary is different to adults. By using photo-elicitation as a starting point for the students' own evaluations, and the image providing a physical context to speak about, students are able express their ideas with less fear of misrepresentation or misunderstanding from the teacher-researcher.

As discussed in Chapter 6, the initial phase of photo-elicitation allows for a deeper level of transformation of learning to take place (see Figure 6.12). Even with the best of intentions, very few of the students who were only undertaking the traditional semi-structured interview read the interview schedule given to them the day before, and so were effectively having to consider, evaluate and respond within a second or so of hearing a question for the first time. Those undertaking photo-elicitation were forced to read the questions in order to decide which photos to take. Reconsidering, re-evaluating, discarding images, and creating titles, they were more aware of the questions and better prepared for the interview. This agrees with Harrison's (1996) assertion that by making use of visual materials that children have

teacher/school exactly how she feels about work being '*always there*'. In an interview we may have agreed and sympathised that she has a lot of work to do, but now we can visualise just how much work and effort she has to put in.

In comparison, in her semi-structured interview Georgina also discusses the amount of homework she has to do.

Interviewer: And what do you like least about year 10?

Georgina: The homework probably, we get a lot of homework 'cause in the lower school sometimes they'll be like, "Oh you've got no homework tonight" but we always get homework in year 10 but it's not too bad.

Interviewer: Is it noticeably more?

Georgina: Well we get a bit more than we did last year anyway I think Mondays I have four pieces and it does take up quite a lot of the evening.

Interviewer: Do you cope with it?

Georgina: What I do is I get in from school and then I do it straight away and also, my mum takes my phone off me so I actually get it done which helps 'cause I'm not getting distracted.

Semi-structured interview snippet with Georgina

Georgina's response is less considered and in places almost apologetic, or downplaying the amount of work she has to do. She states that homework is the issue she least likes about year 10, but it is '*not too bad*'. She also states that on Mondays she has four pieces which takes up '*quite a lot of the evening*'.

Both Georgina and BethT are discussing exactly the same issue, yet BethT's visual context gives a deeper understanding of how much of an impact it has on the life of students.

Photo-elicitations increases the level of evaluation through the added step of composing a title for the images prior to interview. This extra level further encourages students to consider and compose a narrative for their data away from the constraint of the interview situation. An example of this is shown below (figure 7.2).



“We always used to try and get into early lunch. We didn't want to wait for our slots so we used to dump our bags downstairs by the RE rooms and then run fast to get to lunch. Most of the time there was like a teacher ready but sometimes it was just like the lunch staff there and they just let us in.

Figure 7.2 – ‘Run to Early Lunch’ by GeorgiaE

GeorgiaE not only chooses a particular location, the stairs leading directly to the refectory, but gives it the title, ‘Run to Early Lunch’. Combined, this gives the researcher a real sense of students running down the stairs to beat the duty teacher by creating a deeper understanding than simply discussing going to lunch early in an interview, perhaps making it easier for the school management to visualise and understand.

I conclude that for teachers acting as researchers, photo-elicitation is an attractive addition to using stand alone semi-structured interviews. The context of the questions and sensitivity of the issues being researched may have to be considered, but photo-elicitation gives a deeper understanding of the issues from a student perspective, allowing the student’s voice to be heard more clearly and with more fluidity than with just an interview alone.

The ethical issues involved in using visual methods with children

An area of consideration prior to research was the potential ethical concerns that might arise using photographs within a school, and the fears and barriers that this can create. The notion of children and images creates knee-jerk fears of 'risk', further entrenching the demand for anonymity in research. As discussed, this position risks losing the value of visual based data. To pixelate faces or otherwise edit images alters the subtext of the image the photographer intended.

This case-study also concludes that fears of images of children can create concerns over allowing the research to take place. The Headteacher of St. Agnes' was very hesitant in allowing the students to take photographs and for them to be used for research purposes. The experiences of this agrees with Lovey (2000) who realised that the senior management of a school like to feel that they have control over any activity in their institution. This creates a need for negotiations to take place to allow entry, leading to compromises that may limit the potential scope of the study. Strict limitations were put on what could be photographed and when. This may impact the validity of the data as respondents may not create the exact image that they desire.

Those in power or authority can influence or coerce others to make or alter decisions. Lukes (2005) discusses how power through the threat of sanctions can secure compliance. By tacitly or overtly threatening to deprive, a course of actions can be changed. The desire to secure research access may have compromised the type of questions asked. Threatening not to allow access may have altered the nature of the research questions, limiting the scope and validity of the data. Whilst this potential problem exists for any educational research, regardless of the research method, using photography pulled this research under even greater scrutiny before permission was granted.

Even where all ethical risks are considered and addressed in a way that satisfies research ethics committees, cultural nervousness and tensions by the school, the natural risk averse nature of those acting as gatekeepers of children, and the compromises needed to create a willingness to proceed may make the use of photo-elicitation impractical to use elsewhere. The experiences of this case-study lead to the recommendation that discussions with all

stakeholders as to the nature, purpose, and conduct of the research can allow the issues, concerns and ethical considerations to develop in a progressive and positive way, but at a risk of compromising the data being produced.

With regard to confidentiality, the children involved with this study were fully aware of its meaning and notion. Confidentiality was important to all the students, and many referred to the comfort of knowing that their comments were being made in confidence in their questionnaires.

As for anonymity, again the students were aware of what this meant, but only two asked for a pseudonym. This agrees with Israel & Hay (2006) who stated that some people are proud, or want recognition, of their actions or identity.

Using visual data therefore highlights an important distinction between the notions of anonymity and confidentiality. Using images does not hinder confidentiality, results and data can be presented in a way that maintains the respondents' confidentiality in the same way as other methodologies. Anonymity, however, cannot be assured in the same way. Even if a respondent chooses not to appear in their images; locations, buildings, landmarks, even school uniforms remain potentially identifiable. So long as the respondents are fully informed of this, I argue that a contemporary generational desire or acceptance to be both seen and heard may negate this issue. In an ever hyper-visual society our ethical concerns and fears over complete anonymity may not be entirely necessary (Wiles, Prosser *et al.*, 2008).

Fears of using visual data with young people appear largely unfounded. Students produced images of their choice, meeting their own objectives. This creative and personal process represents them and their experiences of life, and none wanted to lose their identity through anonymity. Trust should be placed with the students to create appropriate images and respect the confidentiality of others not involved with the research. Even though the students were allowed to take the photographs unaccompanied, not one image submitted was even mildly inappropriate or showing activities that might embarrass or endanger other individuals or the institution.

The school had concerns that the images produced might portray the school in a negative way, or would target individual teachers or students. Neither transpired to be the case, even images of things that students did not enjoy were appropriate, and were not embarrassing or detrimental. Traditional ethics may worry that the use of photographs and children may show inappropriate or explicit images, or involve other children who are unaware of why they are being photographed. Again, with uncontroversial questions to be answered, none of the images produced fell anywhere near these categories.

In a contemporary age where the use of digital photography and on-line social sharing is used widely and daily by teenagers (Durrant *et al.*, 2011) the 'embarrassment' of being photographed is perhaps now a generational issue. Whilst there is an unanswered argument of potential digital naivety (the young extensively using the contemporary on-line world, but not fully aware of its potential consequences), traditional ethical guidelines regarding the use of images and anonymity may no longer be fit for purpose for contemporary youth culture.

Principles and rules should recognise unique circumstances by 'doing the right thing' (Israel & Hay, 2006). For potentially 'soft' research topics that would not normally include controversial situations or images, a *carte blanche* approach to insisting on full anonymity may not be the 'right thing'. A sensible and considered approach involving discussions with the school, the respondents, and their parents allowed the research to progress in the best possible way for all, perhaps even adding to the lexicon of ethical best practice.

Visual methodologies may not fit easily with current published ethical guidelines, but this ignores the change in use of images amongst young people. The images produced in this case-study were creative, thoughtful, and in many cases thought provoking. They created a student-eye view of their physical environment and everyday experiences of it. If schools truly want to embrace student opinion and student voice, perhaps they must also consider the importance of the student 'view', too.

Contextual data and its importance

It is clear from this case-study that the context in which the research takes place is of significant importance to the findings and conclusions. Pawson (2006) talks of institutions being shaped by historical, geographical, and socio-political forces. Conducting this research at St. Agnes' occurred in unique circumstances, the type of school, its ethos, the nature, age, background of the students involved, the background of the researcher, the existing relationship between the teacher-researcher and students, etc. Whilst other schools may be similar, none will be identical. The results found and conclusions made could be argued to be only attributable to St. Agnes'. This does not make the findings irrelevant to other teachers researching in their own contextual backgrounds. This agrees with Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993) that teacher-research may not always attempt to generalise beyond the immediate case, but may be relevant for a wider variety of contexts.

Kazi's (2003) notion of critical realism and realistic evaluation resonate strongly. The individual nature of schools makes a 'what works' approach the only realistic approach to teacher-researcher situations. The majority of the students involved in this study stated that they were comfortable with the interview situation and preferred talking to a known member of staff, rather than an unknown researcher from outside of the school. This may have been different if the girls were younger, or in a non-selective school, or from a wider range of social backgrounds. The nature and ethos of St. Agnes' is particularly focussed on relaxed teacher/student relationships, perhaps allowing the students to be less fearful of the interviews.

The context, mechanisms, and outcomes configuration of research (Pawson & Tilley, 2003) is vital to the understanding and judgement of the data created and subsequent findings. This is not to say that the conclusions of the usefulness of photo-elicitation cannot be recommended to teachers in other schools. An understanding of the context and mechanisms of the research allow the photo-elicitation process to be used in a way most beneficial to the context in question.

Key questions

Does photo-elicitation improve the data obtained by teachers interviewing students?

This case-study shows photo-elicitation produces data that is broader and deeper than that produced by semi-structured interviews alone. It concludes that by giving respondents time and space to formulate and evaluate responses, photo-elicitation allows an insight to the personal experiences of education that may remain hidden to teachers-researchers, or not forthcoming in a traditional semi-structured interview. This can be seen in GeorgiaW's image 'Obesity' (figure 7.3).



"In years 7 to 9 my parents used to always give me money for food and now I never have any money and I'm always hungry. The vending machine is always just there."

Figure 7.3 – 'Obesity' by GeorgiaW

GeorgiaW presented this image as an answer to the question 'What did you most like about years 7 to 9?' The image of the vending machine and her explanation during the discussions is different to the majority of other students. Her daily routines in school still take her past this vending machine that she used in the lower school, invoking the memory of enjoyable break times with friends. By being given space and time to produce photographic data,

GeorgiaW has deliberately sought out this image or decided to include it having been reminded of the memory after she had been given the task and instructions.

In contrast, Kailey, who only took part in the semi-structured interviews without photo-elicitation responded to the same question in a far more conventional way.

Kailey: Nothing was taken too seriously like if you did bad in an exam or something it wasn't the end of the world and I think that it wasn't too much pressure so I think that was good.

Semi-structured interview snippet with Kailey

Kailey's answer is interesting and valid, yet a somewhat expected answer compared to GeorgiaW's. This agrees with Menter *et al.* (2012) that photo-elicitation provides a far more personal slant to research.

In the context of this case-study, photo-elicitation was successful. Students spoke for longer, provided more detail, and covered more diverse subjects than the interviews without photo-elicitation.

The type of question and the images that students are likely to produce are of importance. For this case-study the questions being asked were not controversial, although, the power exercised by the Headteacher in response to their concerns prior to the research being agreed may have led to 'safe' questions being asked. This potential dampening effect of ethics on visual research needs to be investigated further. During this research, students were happy to produce and discuss the images that they wanted, but in other circumstances the nature of the questions asked may have centred on places, people, and situations that students may not have wanted to photograph.

It is clear that the images created represent a closer indication of the students' personal feelings and ideas than occurs from the more sterile environment of the interview room. The evaluative process that takes place in the decision of what to picture, where and when to take it, who or what to include / exclude, and giving the image a title allows the respondent to think about their narrative and answer long before it is asked in the interview. As such, the

students are more lucid and willing to talk during their interview discussing their images, as opposed to those in the traditional semi-structured interviews. Within the contextual background of this case-study, photo-elicitation improved the semi-structured interviews.

What are the key ethical considerations to consider when using photo-elicitation in schools?

Initial fears of using visual research methods with school children centre largely on anonymity and confidentiality. However, many of these issues can be managed in a positive way to allow the research to take place without undue ethical risk.

In this case-study students were given strict guidelines to explain to others why they were taking images and seeking their permission. It is clear the students took this responsibility seriously, the majority deciding not to include any people or to exclude faces.

Anonymity of place is different, especially if buildings, grounds, or school uniform are distinctive. If the research topic is uncontroversial, it is likely that the images will be uncontroversial. None of the images produced for this case-study could be considered as embarrassing for the school. Entrenched fears of photographs and children may mean that convincing schools that this will be the outcome is difficult. By putting in controls over the use of the images, fears that schools may have can be alleviated.

Traditional views of anonymity in an age where on-line social media and instant sharing are increasingly common need to be reviewed. The vast majority of the students did not want a pseudonym and all were comfortable with producing images. Student concerns were not over anonymity, but about confidentiality and their opinions being shared with the school. All the students were happy to have their images published for academic purposes and this was agreed before taking the photographs. This does create a possible tension of what the students are happy to share based around who they think will be viewing the data. A teacher-researcher is filling two roles, one that the student may be happy to share information with and another that they wish to remain confidential from.

An area for ethical consideration is consent. For this case-study, the issue of obtaining consent from persons pictured was left with the respondent. Prior to interviewing, the respondents were again asked if they had the consent of those pictured, to which their word was taken. As it happens the majority of images contained no people in them, and only a handful contained groups or recognisable bystanders. There is no way of verifying whether the students did ask everyone they pictured for consent. This is an uncomfortable situation that needs further consideration.

Further, withdrawing consent after publication, as it is almost impossible to remove images once published electronically.

It is clear that the production and use of images of children in schools maintains a level of fear over what images are going to be produced. Where the research questions are managed carefully with the school, teaching staff are kept fully informed, and careful guidelines and instructions produced for the children can reduce this fear.

Possible contribution to theory

Although using photo-elicitation with school children is not new, this case-study has looked at the method when used by teachers acting as researchers in their own schools. The findings of this research add weight to the argument that images produced during photo-elicitation by the respondents reveal aspects of their lives that they are unlikely to speak about in a conventional interview (Felstead *et al.* 2004). Unlike Felstead *et al.*, this research also used a pseudo-control group to test these claims.

Menter *et al.* (2012 : 176) state, *'You should only resort to "other methods" ... if doing so in conjunction with traditional methods enables you to bring added value to the research.'* This research disagrees and has shown that by giving the child space and time away from the researcher-teacher to formulate a response, many of the issues of interviewing can be reduced. It is the 'other methods' that allow the true voice of the students to be heard within the 'traditional' method.

This case-study concurs with Shohel (2012) that using photographs invites respondents to take the leading role in the interview, relieving them of the stress of being the research subject. Having time to produce images, rather than the few seconds to answer in an interview, the formality, hierarchy, and researcher influence is removed from the production of the data. When the interview is subsequently held the respondent has an evaluated response already formulated outside of the interview room. This agrees with Wall *et al.* (2012) that visual methods such as photo-elicitation can reduce the power dynamics in educational research and increase the validity and rigour of the process, as well as Lomax (2012) that the interpretive process is enriched by a focus on the ways in which images are produced.

Digital cameras have increased the transformation of learning during the research process. The ability to take unlimited numbers of images and delete the ones not required adds another evaluative step for the respondent when producing their data, deepening their narrative and answer to the question posed to them. This agrees with Croghan *et al.* (2008) that the respondent's image acts to trigger the memory and evokes an emotional, multi-layered response, helping bridge differences between researcher and respondent. In most cases the students found producing the images easier and more accessible than the use of the more adult method of traditional interviews alone.

Of most importance is that this case-study has attempted to use the hyper-visual contemporary culture that school-aged children currently live in, where producing, interpreting, and processing images is common place, to access data in a productive and non-threatening way. Traditional oral methodologies employed by teacher-researchers can be aided by visual methodologies such as photo-elicitation. The introduction of digital photography and the parallel explosion of on-line sharing has altered cultural perspectives of being photographed and using images on a day to day basis. Whether research methods, ethics, and general cultural acceptance has adapted to this shift in the visual landscape is an issue which needs to be explored further.

Previous academic research considering practitioner-enquiry has looked at ways of developing student voice (Baumfield *et al.*, 2009; Baumfield *et al.*, 2013; Wall *et al.*, 2012; Wall & Higgins, 2006; Woolner *et al.*, 2007; Woolner *et al.*, 2009). They have shown how visual

methods can be used to encourage active participation and subsequently produce valid student voices in areas of educational research that impact the student themselves. However, much of this research does not consider the implications of similar work being attempted by a teacher known to the students prior to the research and who will revert back to normal school relationships once the research is completed.

This research has shown that a different relationship exists between researcher and respondent when the researcher is the students' teacher. The existing relationship between the student and teacher-researcher is likely to have a large difference on how comfortable and forthcoming students are during interview. Research of teacher-researchers rather than by teacher-researchers has, as Dewey (1901 : 41) discusses, mastered the physical mechanisms to 'turn out possible goods', but does not consider the conditions through which these possible values become actual in life.

The legacy of the research process on the students who participated is not considered by academic researchers (e.g. Wall, 2012; Woolner *et al.*, 2010). This research has shown that photo-elicitation, when used by a teacher-researcher, allows for an improved learning experience for the students, whilst providing a student eye view of their school not necessarily available during traditional interview or freely given to outside researchers unknown to them. Students can be surprisingly protective of their school and photo-elicitation when used by teacher-researchers allows students to feel more involved with the research process whilst developing their own experience and relationship with the school and teacher.

This research agrees with Punch (2009) that teacher-research is pragmatic and should aim to find useful data 'that works' in improving practice, not just to seek data for the sake of research. Photo-elicitation can work, in particular circumstances, to provide a stronger warrant for our assertions whilst improving practice. For the teacher-researcher it can create the link between academic theory/research and professional research/practice.

Possible contribution to practice

This case-study shows that students' opinions sought using only interviews are largely based around expected topics. Whilst these are all topics that any school improvement plan would include, the student view and experience is often hidden from view. How they interact with their environment and one another may not be as expected. By combining photo-elicitation with interviews the data produced is richer, deeper, and more varied. A truer reflection, perhaps, of the student experience that the school wishes to understand. This agrees with Darbyshire *et al.* (2005) that mixing interviews and photo-elicitation provides different yet complementary information, including depicting emotional aspects that interview accounts may not. If student voice is to be valued, hearing it via adult channels such as interviews and questionnaires may not allow the true voice to be heard.

It is clear that photo-elicitation adds to the learning experience of the student respondent. Robinson & Taylor (2007) note that there is a danger that student voice is only used to raise standards or attainment, rather than to benefit the personal and social development of the student, or encourage any sense of active membership within the school community. However, the production of images and the transformation of learning that takes place contains many aspects of good pedagogy. Time to think and consider what images to produce, a self-evaluation process of what to include or exclude, being independent, and the involvement of peers all add to the learning experience for the student whilst undertaking the research. This also involves them more in the research as active participants increasing the enjoyment and willingness to participate. As a result, responses in the subsequent interviews were more considered, encouraging the students to speak for longer and in greater depth. This makes photo-elicitation not only a research tool, but also a learning experience for students.

This case-study has shown that photo-elicitation can perhaps provide data to schools that is more representative of the true 'student voice' sought by educational establishments and subsequently more useful for improving student experience. The images challenge the researcher to understand the context in which they were produced, enhancing the researcher's understanding once the student has explained the image.

Photo-elicitation has the potential to improve the quality and depth of the data created by teacher-led research, but also allows the concept of research-led teaching to take place. Photo-elicitation underpins many areas of teaching pedagogy, giving time for students to develop their own self-evaluated responses, via the use of teacher led scaffolding, and to produce information that is a product of their own independent thinking and learning.

Recommendations for using photo-elicitation in schools

Following the experiences encountered during this case-study, it is possible to produce guidance to other teachers considering using photo-elicitation as an educational research method.

The most likely difficulty to be encountered when using photo-elicitation is gaining access and permissions from the student's gatekeepers. Schools are nervous of students taking photos, perhaps with the expectation that they are potentially more exposing than written texts (Woolner *et al.*, 2009). With this in mind the following guidance is recommended:

- 1) Early discussions with school leaders are vital to address fears regarding the images being produced. Agreed parameters aids this; such as when photographs can be taken, or if there are areas that are off-limits.
- 2) An agreed time-span in which photographs can be taken, for example a five day window, can reduce fears of disruption or interference with school and lessons.
- 3) Photos are only needed as prompts for follow-up interviews, therefore they do not need to be seen by anyone else other than those in the interview room. Doing this allows the students and their gatekeepers to be secure that potential embarrassment to the student, other persons, or the institution will be avoided.
- 4) Providing the cameras and asking for them to be returned each day before the student goes home prevents fears that potentially embarrassing images might be shared electronically by the student.
- 5) Agree on who, if anyone, can be included within the image and how consent is to be sought. To simply ban any persons from appearing in the image should be used with

caution as this potentially stymies the students' imagination and wishes, reducing the data validity. This is dependent upon the questions being asked in the research.

- 6) Verbal explanations to the teaching body as a whole, as to who will be taking images, of what, and the ground rules in place will help to put staff fears or misconceptions at ease. Informing staff that the images will not be seen by anyone else, or be used for any other purpose such as teaching evaluation.
- 7) Provide written instructions to parents and students, if a face to face meeting is not possible, outlining research objectives, what the images will be used for and who will see them to reduce fears they may have.
- 8) Meet with students to talk through the questions that the research is asking and the parameters in place to take images. This allows students to clarify any points that they do not understand, familiarise themselves with the camera, and immediately start to consider and evaluate what images they are going to produce and why. This meeting should take place on the day that the image production window opens in order to allow immediate interaction from students.
- 9) Once images have been produced and cameras returned, produce a contact sheet of the images for the respondent and number each photo. Ask respondents to title each image and indicate which image relates to which question as it is likely that images submitted will not be in the same order as the questions being asked. Titling each image prompts further evaluation of the response to be given in the interview.
- 10) Arrange for interviews to take place as soon as possible after the images have been produced in order that the evaluated narrative behind each image is fresh.
- 11) Print large images for the interview and allow the student to have the contact sheet available during the interview. The large image will act as one prompt to the narrative, whilst the contact sheet and the titles will act as another.
- 12) Follow-up interviews should largely consist of the question, "How does this photo show << question>>?" rather than, "Tell me what this photo shows." This allows students to express the narrative that they have evaluated and formulated prior to the interview and further retracts the teacher from influencing the answer. Simply asking the research questions, as would take place in a traditional semi-structured interview, does not necessarily allow the student to explain why they chose a particular area or event to photograph, or how the image represents the answer that they want to present.

Recommendations for potential further research

A number of potential avenues for further research have been opened up by this case-study:

- 1) The issue of ethics and visual methodologies. Current ethical guidelines do not fit with contemporary use of images and their cultural publication on-line. Traditional needs for anonymity and confidentiality appear to have changed with the growth of social media and self-publication. How this impacts traditional ethical guidelines needs to be studied further, along with the issue that established ethical considerations regarding images have created a default ultra-risk averse culture. To what extent this has on dampening research questions being asked, or alters the parameters in which images can be produced should also be studied further.
- 2) The notion that anonymity is a cornerstone to research ethics needs to be questioned. To what extent has the growth of social networking, blogging, etc. altered respondents' desires for their story to be heard along with recognition? Has increasing hyper-visual social and on-line sharing changed attitudes towards anonymity, or is this a naïve notion not yet properly understood in a relatively new and rapidly developing on-line age?
- 3) A recognition that as a case-study this research was carried out within its own particular contextual background, generalised evaluations cannot be made. The students were all female, academically above average, and aged 15-17. The topics, what they liked and didn't like about school in Years 7 to 9 compared to Years 10 and 11, a non-controversial area. It would be interesting to repeat the research in various other unique contexts; with far younger children, or from very different cultural and educational backgrounds to see how different the results obtained using photo-elicitation were compared to traditional semi-structured interviews. Likewise, seeking answers to more controversial questions would further test the use of photo-elicitation and how comfortable students would be producing and sharing images under these conditions.

Although bound by its own contextual background, and without attempting to make generalised statements outside of the case-study, this research begins to demonstrate that

using photo-elicitation as part of the interview process produces different data to that achieved by only interviewing students. It has the potential to bridge the gap between adult centred research methods and student focussed research. This may allow a different student-eye view of the topics being discussed not otherwise easily seen by schools, teachers, or researchers. It appears to allow students to express their ideas more in interview and increase the chance of a student preparing a richer narrative before answering the questions. Photo-elicitation may also increase the enjoyment and learning potential for the students being asked to participate in school based research.

This case study has also shown that it is possible for contemporary research ethics to include photographs taken in schools and has provided a framework and potential advice to other teacher/researchers considering using visual methods in their own institutions and individual contexts. Via a single embedded case-study, it has shown that photo-elicitation has the potential to improve the research process when interviewing secondary school aged children and it is hoped that it has helped to move forward the practical uses of photo-elicitation as a research method for teachers researching in their own schools.

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Appendix A – Letter to the Headteacher of St. Agnes’ seeking consent for research

Bruce Waymark
Southampton Education School
University of Southampton
Building 32
Southampton
SO17 1BJ

November 2012

Dear <<Headteacher>>

Doctoral Research

Following our discussions before half-term about my proposed doctoral research, I have been working with my University supervisor to frame the research around the perceived Year 10/11 dip in student perceptions of their experience of their time at St. Agnes’, using student voice to investigate possible reasons for this, and to answer the concerns you have about students taking photographs.

Enclosed is part of the University proposal / approval paperwork to give you more detail about what I have been studying and aiming to achieve. I am hoping that the school may find real value gathered during the small scale research.

With regard to the students taking photographs, they will be given firm guidelines regarding what can and cannot be included, as well as activities, times of the day, or areas of the school where taking photographs would not be appropriate. The photographs will only be used during the interview with the student who took them, whilst some may be included as examples of the methodological process in the thesis itself or other academic conferences or papers.

Ideally I would like to conduct a small pilot study this term, using three members of the current Lower Sixth. I anticipate that the main study would take place in late January 2013, after the A level units and GCSE mocks, using a small number of Years 10, 11, and 12. Students would only be given five days or so to take any photographs.

I hope that the enclosed information addresses your concerns that you may have had and gives you full details of my proposal, who it involves, and the processes involved. I hope that it also shows the value of the research to the school. If you would like to discuss any aspect of this research further, please do ask. I would be grateful, if you are in a position to give your consent, if you could do so in writing.

Yours sincerely

Bruce Waymark

Appendix B – Letters to participants seeking consent for research

Bruce Waymark
Southampton Education School
University of Southampton
Building 32
Southampton
SO17 1BJ

Dear Students and Parents

Doctoral Research

I am currently undertaking a Doctorate of Education (EdD) at the University of Southampton. My thesis is investigating educational research methodologies, in particular when teachers act as researchers in their own schools. I am attempting to see if the use of a method known as photo-elicitation produces more valid and useable data than that obtained through traditional interviews. I would like to use these methods to gain an understanding of students' perceptions and experiences of Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) compared to Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11), to see if their experiences changed between the two key stages, what they felt improved in their school experience once in Years 10 and 11, and what they felt could have been improved.

I would be very grateful if you, the student, would agree to participate in the study. You would be asked to participate in the following:

- 1) An interview with me for 30 minutes on the school site. The questions would be about perceptions and experiences of Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) compared to Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11).
- 2) To complete an anonymous questionnaire regarding your experiences and thoughts of the research processes that you had been through.

The general findings taken from all of the interviews will be shared with the school governors, the school's Senior Leadership Team, and Independent School Inspectorate inspectors.

If you would like to remain anonymous you may wish to choose a pseudonym, and the contents of our individual discussions will remain confidential, although I may need to discuss and share these with my supervisor at the University. The data received from them would be used in the publication of the thesis, and may be presented in other academic publications or conferences. Naturally, the research is subject to the University of Southampton's ethics procedures and committee.

You would, of course, retain the right to withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty or prejudice. I anticipate needing around 45 minutes of your time and I anticipate that the research would take place in January 2013.

Please read the attached information sheet carefully and if you would like to discuss any aspect of this research further, please do not hesitate to contact me. I would be grateful, if you are in a position to assist, if you could provide me with your written permission on the attached consent form.

Yours sincerely
Bruce Waymark

Dear Students and Parents

Doctoral Research

I am currently undertaking a Doctorate of Education (EdD) at the University of Southampton. My thesis is investigating educational research methodologies, in particular when teachers act as researchers in their own schools. I am attempting to see if the use of a method known as photo-elicitation produces more valid and useable data than that obtained through traditional interviews. I would like to use these methods to gain an understanding of students' perceptions and experiences of Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) compared to Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11), to see if their experiences changed between the two key stages, what they felt improved in their school experience once in Years 10 and 11, and what they felt could have been improved.

I would be very grateful if you, the student, would agree to participate in the study. You would be asked to participate in the following:

- 1) You would be asked to take some photographs that represented your perceptions and experiences of Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) compared to Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11), using a camera that I will provide. You will be given guidelines as to areas, events, or times of the day that could or could not be included, but it is expected that the majority of the pictures will be taken in and around the school. Very few of these images would be published, as the images themselves will not be analysed or discussed in my written thesis. The majority of the images would only be used in discussion between yourself and me.
- 2) We would then arrange to discuss your images. This will take about half an hour, during a lunch time on the school site.
- 3) Finally you would be asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire regarding your experiences and thoughts of the research processes that you had been through.

The general findings taken from all of the interviews and photos will be shared with the school governors, the school's Senior Leadership Team, and Independent School Inspectorate inspectors.

If you would like to remain anonymous you may wish to choose a pseudonym, and any photos that you take and the contents of our individual discussions will remain confidential, although I may need to discuss and share these with my supervisor at the University. The data received from the interviews and photographs would be used in the publication of the thesis, and may be presented in other academic publications or conferences. Naturally, the research is subject to the University of Southampton's ethics procedures and committee.

You would, of course, retain the right to withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty or prejudice. I anticipate needing around 45 minutes of your time.

I anticipate that the research would take place in late January 2013, after the A Level units and GCSE mocks.

Please read the attached information sheet carefully and if you would like to discuss any aspect of this research further, please do not hesitate to contact me. I would be grateful, if you are in a position to assist, if you could provide me with your written permission on the attached consent form.

Yours sincerely

Bruce Waymark

Appendix C – Interview schedules and questionnaire used for traditional semi-structured interviews

Interview Information and Schedule – For Interviewer

Before the interview begins:

- Make sure the student is comfortable, has access to water etc.
- Give the Interview Information and Schedule – for Participants to the student and ask them to read it through.
- Ask the student if they have any questions about what they have just read.
- Check that they understand that they can withdraw from the interview at any point.
- Ask permission to record the interview.

Start of Interview:

- In order to make the student feel more at ease, start the interview by asking general questions such as if they joined the school in Year 7, what subjects are they studying, are they involved with any sports etc.
- Once the discussion has begun there are eight key questions or themes that should be discussed. This is a semi-structured interview, and so it is not necessary to stick with this order, or the exact phrasing of the questions. It is also permissible to explore other areas as the conversation develops, and to drill deeper into the key questions. The eight key areas are:
 - What are your memories of your time at school in Years 7 to 9?
 - What did you enjoy most about being at St. Agnes' in Years 7 to 9?
 - What did you like least about being at St. Agnes' in Years 7 to 9?
 - What is it like to be in Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11)?
 - What do you enjoy most about being at St. Agnes' in Years 10 and 11?
 - What do you like least about being at St. Agnes' in Years 10 and 11?
 - Do you think that your time at St. Agnes' has improved, or got worse, since the end of Year 9 (or maybe stayed the same)?
 - What do you think could be done to make Years 10 and 11 better?

At the end of the interview:

- Ask the student if there is anything else they would like to say or add to the interview. Explain that they will be given a copy of the transcript, once written, for agreement and approval.
- Ask if the student wishes to be known by a pseudonym, and what they would like that to be.
- Thank the student for their time and help.
- Remind the student that they will be asked to fill out an anonymous questionnaire in due course.
- Remind the student that they still may withdraw their consent, should they wish, at any point even now that the interview has ended.

Interview Information and Schedule – For Participants

Dear Student

Before the interview, please take a moment to read the following information. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to ask me before the interview starts, or at any point during the interview.

The interview will last about 30 minutes and will be recorded – this is to make it easier for me to remember what we spoke about. If, at any point, you want me to turn off the recorder, that is absolutely fine.

The only people in the interview room will be me and you.

You may want to choose a pseudonym (a made up name). If you do, I will change your name to this after the interview and in any further work that I use the interview data for. I will also always change the names of any other people that you might mention in order to protect their anonymity.

Please speak openly and honestly at all times. Remember, the interview is part of my research and will not be used in any way 'against' you in the future.

Remember, you do not have to answer any question if you do not want to, and if you want to end the interview at any point, that is absolutely fine.

During the interview I would like to talk about the following topics:

- 1) Your memories of your time at school in Years 7 to 9.
- 2) What you enjoyed most about being at St. Agnes' in Years 7 to 9.
- 3) What you liked least about being at St. Agnes' in Years 7 to 9.
- 4) Your experiences of being in Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11).
- 5) What you enjoy(ed) most about being at St. Agnes' in Years 10 and 11.
- 6) What you like(d) least about being at St. Agnes' in Years 10 and 11.
- 7) If you think that your time at St. Agnes' has improved, or got worse, since the end of Year 9 (or maybe stayed the same).
- 8) What you think could be done to make Years 10 and 11 better.

The topics are 'open ended', there are no right or wrong answers and depending on our conversation we may cover other topics too.

Remember – if you have any questions or concerns at any point, or you no longer wish to continue with the interview at any point – that is absolutely fine.

Types of Research Methodology Questionnaire - Interviews

Dear Student

Thank you for your recent participation in the interview that you had with me. I am interested in your thoughts and feelings about the process that you just went through.

I would be very grateful if you could complete this questionnaire. It is entirely confidential, so please do not put your name anywhere on the document. It is very important that I do not know who has written what. When you have completed it, I would be grateful if you could seal it in the envelope provided and put it in the box marked 'Questionnaires'.

1. During the interview how comfortable did you feel? (Please tick one)
 - ☐ Very much at ease, and not nervous at all.
 - ☐ Fairly comfortable, although I was a little nervous.
 - ☐ A little uncomfortable, although I wasn't too worried.
 - ☐ Very uncomfortable, I did not like being in that situation.
2. Could you please write a sentence to help explain, or give an example why you felt comfortable or uncomfortable.

3. Think about the answers you gave to some of my questions. Were they (please tick one)
 - ☐ All completely open and honest.
 - ☐ Mostly open and honest, although on occasions I changed some details.
 - ☐ Sometimes honest, sometimes not, depending on the question or topic.
 - ☐ I mostly made up my answers, although on occasions I was open and honest.
 - ☐ Almost always made up, I did not want to be open and honest with my answers.

4. Do any of the following statements help explain your answer to 3? (Tick as many that apply to you, and / or write your own reasons below.)
- ☐ I knew that our discussion was confidential and therefore was happy to answer openly and honestly.
 - ☐ I understood that you were asking me these questions as a researcher, and not as my teacher, so I was happy to answer openly and honestly.
 - ☐ Even though you are my teacher, I was not worried about you hearing my open and honest comments.
 - ☐ I was open and honest as I would like the school to listen to my opinions.
 - ☐ I changed my answers to fit the sort of comments I thought you were expecting me to give.
 - ☐ I was a little worried that some of my opinions would not remain confidential, and so I changed some of the details.
 - ☐ Some of my truthful answers would have been a little embarrassing for me (or my friends) to share with any adult, and so I changed some of the details.
 - ☐ You are a teacher at my school, there was no way that I was going to tell you the truth about everything.
 - ☐ I changed some of the details as I was worried about the future consequences my truthful answers would have for me.
 - ☐ I exaggerated some of my answers to sound better or more controversial.
 - ☐ Others (please write)

5. Do you think it would have been better or worse if (please tick one box for each statement, and write a reason for your answer in the last column):

	Better	Worse	The Same	Reason
You had been interviewed by a teacher who is <i>not</i> a member of the Senior Leadership				
You had been interviewed by an older teacher				
You had been interviewed by a younger teacher				
You had been interviewed by a female teacher				
You had been interviewed by me, but within a group of students				
You had been interviewed by an adult you did not know, unconnected with the school				

6. Thank you very much for your time. If you have any other comments that you would like to make about how you felt about being interviewed by me, please feel free to write them below.

Appendix D – Guidance for taking photographs, interview schedules and questionnaire used for photo- elicitation

Instructions for Taking Photographs

Dear Student

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the taking of photographs, please take a moment to read the following information. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to ask me at any point during the research.

Please take all the images on the camera provided.

You may take as many pictures as you like, but you may only take the photos over a one week period, starting on Friday 25 January 2013 and ending on Friday 01 February 2013. At the end of the day on Friday I would like you to select no more than 10 of the pictures. Please delete all of the other images, leaving only the 10 that you selected on the memory card, plus one picture of yourself so that I can identify whose pictures are whose!

I would like you take at **least one** picture that represents to you the following:

- 1) Your experiences of your time at school in Years 7 to 9.
- 2) What you enjoyed most about being at St. Agnes' in Years 7 to 9.
- 3) What you liked least about being at St. Agnes' in Years 7 to 9.
- 4) Your experiences of being in Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11).
- 5) What you enjoyed most about being at St. Agnes' in Years 10 and 11.
- 6) What you liked least about being at St. Agnes' in Years 10 and 11.
- 7) How your time at St. Agnes' has improved, or got worse, since the end of Year 9 (or maybe stayed the same).
- 8) What you think could be done to make Years 10 and 11 better.

It is entirely up to you how you take the images, and what to include. However, there are some guidelines that I would like you to follow.

- 1) If you want to take photos of other people in a way that they will be easily recognised, they must know that you are going to do that, and they must know why you are taking photos. They must agree to be photographed before you take the picture. This does not include people in the background who are not the focus of the image.
- 2) You may only take photos of lessons if the teacher gives their permission first.
- 3) If anyone asks you to stop taking photos, for any reason, please respect their request.
- 4) Please note that if you give me any images of criminal activity, or of a nature that may raise child protection concerns, I may have to pass these on to someone else.

The ten pictures that you send to me will only be seen by me, unless you give your specific permission otherwise. Remember that the pictures you take are for the purpose of this research only and will not be 'used against' you in any way in the future. We will look at the ten pictures together at a later date, after which they will be destroyed, other than the ones you agree can be used in my write-up or other linked pieces of work.

Remember – if you have any questions or concerns at any point, or you no longer wish to continue with the research at any point – that is absolutely fine.

Photo Discussion Information and Schedule – For Interviewer

Before the interview begins:

- Make sure the student is comfortable, has access to water etc.
- Give the Interview Information and Schedule – for Participants to the student and ask them to read it through.
- Ask the student if they have any questions about what they have just read.
- Check that they understand that they can withdraw from the interview at any point.
- Ask permission to record the interview.

Start of Interview:

- In order to make the student feel more at ease, start the interview by asking general questions such as if they joined the school in Year 7, what subjects are they studying, are they involved with any sports etc.
- Ask how easy it was to take the photos, use the camera, if they had fun etc.
- Explain that we will be looking at each of the photos they took in turn, and that you are interested in why they took the picture and what it means to them.
- There are eight key questions or themes that should be discussed. They may come naturally from the images and what the student says, however, they may need prompting by asking questions about the image you see. This is a semi-structured interview, and so the exact phrasing of the question may change. It is also permissible to explore other areas as the conversation develops, and to drill deeper in to the key questions. The questions that might help develop information about the eight key areas are:
 - Is this representative of your memories of your time at school in Years 7 to 9?
 - Does this show what you enjoyed most about being at St. Agnes' in Years 7 to 9?
 - Does this show what did you liked least about being at St. Agnes' in Years 7 to 9?
 - Is this representative of your experiences in Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11)?
 - Does this show what you enjoy most about being at St. Agnes' in Years 10 and 11?
 - Does this show what you like least about being at St. Agnes' in Years 10 and 11?
 - Does this show that your time at St. Agnes' has improved, or got worse, since the end of Year 9 (or maybe stayed the same)?
 - Does this image help to explain what you think could be done to make Years 10 and 11 better?

At the end of the interview:

- Ask the student if there is anything else they would like to say or add to the interview. Explain that they will be given a copy of the transcript, once written, for agreement and approval.
- Ask if the student wishes to be known by a pseudonym, and what they would like that to be.
- Thank the student for their time and help.
- Remind the student that they will be asked to fill out an anonymous questionnaire in due course.
- Remind the student that they still may withdraw their consent, should they wish, at any point even now that the interview has ended.

Photo Discussion Information and Schedule – For Participants

Dear Student

Thank you for letting me have your ten photographs. I have printed them out exactly as you sent them to me. Before we talk about your pictures, please take a moment to read the following information. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to ask me before our discussion starts, or at any point during the discussion.

Please bring to the interview the contact sheet and identify which question number the picture represents. Please also give each picture a title.

The question numbers are:

- 1) Your experiences of your time at school in Years 7 to 9.
- 2) What you enjoyed most about being at St. Agnes' in Years 7 to 9.
- 3) What you liked least about being at St. Agnes' in Years 7 to 9.
- 4) Your experiences of being in Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11).
- 5) What you enjoyed most about being at St. Agnes' in Years 10 and 11.
- 6) What you liked least about being at St. Agnes' in Years 10 and 11.
- 7) How your time at St. Agnes' has improved, or got worse, since the end of Year 9 (or maybe stayed the same).
- 8) What you think could be done to make Years 10 and 11 better.

The discussion will last about 30 minutes and will be recorded – this is to make it easier for me to remember what we spoke about. If, at any point, you want me to turn off the recorder, that is absolutely fine.

The only people in the room will be me and you. No-one else has seen your pictures.

You may want to choose a pseudonym (a made up name). If you do, I will change your name to this after the discussion and in any further work that I use the discussion data for. I will also change the names of any other people that you might mention in order to protect their anonymity.

Please speak openly and honestly at all times. Remember, the discussion is part of my research and will not be used in any way 'against' you in the future. No-one else will see your photos, unless you give your permission for this to happen.

Remember, you do not have to answer any question if you do not want to, and if you want to end the discussion at any point, that is absolutely fine.

During the discussion I would like to talk about:

1. What your photographs are of.
2. How they represent / answer the question(s) given to you earlier.
3. Why you decided to take each picture.

There are no right or wrong answers and depending on our conversation we may cover other topics too.

Remember – if you have any questions or concerns at any point, or you no longer wish to continue with the discussion at any point – that is absolutely fine.

Types of Research Methodology Questionnaire – Photo-Elicitation

Dear Student

Thank you for your recent participation in the photo-elicitation and discussion that you recently had with me. I am interested in your thoughts and feelings about the process that you just went through.

I would be very grateful if you could complete this questionnaire. It is entirely confidential, so please do not put your name anywhere on the document. It is very important that I do not know who has written what. When you have completed it, I would be grateful if you could seal it in the envelope provided and return it anonymously to me.

1. Think about the photographs that you took for me. How comfortable did you feel doing this? (Please tick one.)

- ☐ I felt very much at ease taking photographs of what I wanted.
- ☐ I was fairly comfortable taking photographs, although on some occasions I felt a little nervous or awkward.
- ☐ I felt a little awkward or uncomfortable taking photographs, although I wasn't too worried.
- ☐ I felt very awkward and uncomfortable taking photographs. I did not enjoy it at all.

2. Could you please write a sentence to help your answer to 1.

3. Of the pictures that you took and submitted, do any of the following statements apply? (Please tick all that do, and / or add more at the end.)

- ☐ I was happy to take photographs of exactly what I wanted, they represented my true thoughts and feelings.
 - ☐ There were some pictures that I decided not to take, or submit in the end, as I decided that I did not want you to see them.
 - ☐ There were some pictures that I wanted to take, but could not because of the restrictions imposed on me at the start.
 - ☐ Some of pictures I submitted were there to 'please' you as I thought they were the sort that you were expecting.
 - ☐ The pictures that I took were mostly of anything just to complete the task. They did not really represent my true thoughts and feelings
 - ☐ Other (please write)
-

4. Do any of the following statements help explain which photos you decided to submit? (Please tick all that do and / or write in any others at the end.)

- ☐ I knew that the pictures I was taking were confidential and therefore was happy to take any images that I wanted.

- I understood that you were asking me to take these photos as a researcher, and not as my teacher, so I was happy to take the images that I wanted.
 - Even though you are my teacher, I was not worried about you seeing the images that I took.
 - I took certain images as I would like the school to know my opinions.
 - I was a little worried that some of my pictures would not remain confidential, and so did not take some of the images that I wanted.
 - Some of the images that I wanted to take would have been a little embarrassing for me (or my friends) to share with any adult, and so I changed some of the details or did not take them.
 - You are a teacher at my school, there was no way that I was going to let you see the images that I really wanted to take.
 - I changed some of the details, or did not submit some images, as I was worried about the future consequences they would have for me.
 - Some of my images were deliberately more controversial than they needed to be.
 - Others (please write)
-
-
-

5. During the discussion that we had together about your 10 images, how comfortable did you feel? (Please tick one.)

- Very much at ease, and not nervous at all.
- Fairly comfortable, although I was a little nervous.
- A little uncomfortable, although I wasn't too worried.
- Very uncomfortable, I did not like being in that situation.

6. Could you please write a sentence to help explain, or give an example why you felt comfortable or uncomfortable.

7. Think about the answers you gave to some of my questions. Were they (please tick one)
- ☐ All completely open and honest.
 - ☐ Mostly open and honest, although on occasions I changed some details.
 - ☐ Sometimes honest, sometimes not, depending on the question or topic.
 - ☐ I mostly made up my answers, although on occasions I was open and honest.
 - ☐ Almost always made up, I did not want to be open and honest with my answers.
8. Do any of the following statements help explain your answer to 7? (Tick as many that apply to you, and / or write your own reasons below.)
- ☐ I knew that our discussion was confidential and therefore was happy to answer openly and honestly.
 - ☐ I understood that you were asking me these questions as a researcher, and not as my teacher, so I was happy to answer openly and honestly.
 - ☐ Even though you are my teacher, I was not worried about you hearing my open and honest comments.
 - ☐ I was open and honest as I would like the school to listen to my opinions.
 - ☐ I changed my answers to fit the sort of comments I thought you were expecting me to give.
 - ☐ I was a little worried that some of my opinions would not remain confidential, and so I changed some of the details.
 - ☐ Some of my truthful answers would have been a little embarrassing for me (or my friends) to share with any adult, and so I changed some of the details.
 - ☐ You are a teacher at my school, there was no way that I was going to tell you the truth about everything.
 - ☐ I changed some of the details as I was worried about the future consequences my truthful answers would have for me.
 - ☐ I exaggerated some of my answers to sound better or more controversial.
 - ☐ Others (please write)
-
-
-
-

9. Do you think it would have been better or worse if (please tick one box for each statement, and write a reason for your answer in the last column)

	Better	Worse	The Same	Reason
The images had been seen and discussed by a teacher who is <i>not</i> a member of the Senior Leadership				
The images had been seen and discussed by an older teacher				
The images had been seen and discussed by a younger teacher				
The images had been seen and discussed by a female teacher				
The images had been seen and discussed with me, but with a group of students				
The images had been seen and discussed by an adult you did not know, unconnected with the school				

10. Thank you very much for your time. If you have any other comments that you would like to make about how you felt about being interviewed by me, please feel free to write them below.