What next for ethnography 2.0?: a reflection on practice, principles and methodology

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In a special issue of Ethnography and Education: Shifting boundaries in ethnographic methodology I wrote about the use and implications of digital production, presentation and dissemination of educational ethnographic research. The paper focussed on ethnographic research at Educational Video Center (EVC), a non-profit media education centre in New York City. Travelling to New York I had a number of questions about ethnography, the role that digital technology plays in teaching and learning and the use of digital technology in research practice.

To investigate how digital technology might be used in educational ethnographic research I set out a framework that brought together three parts of a story. The first part of the story was focussed on understanding how meaning is made through a complex series of pedagogical processes between youth producer and adult teacher (EVC staff), text (the documentaries produced as part of the EVC curriculum and the methodological digital video production process), and the technology used and the audience who view the work. The second part of the story investigated how young people who took part in the Documentary Workshop (a credit bearing programme as EVC) engage with new digital technologies, the creative and educational potential of these forms and how technology is adopted to frame a narrative of transformation. In the research through their words, images and digital video, recorded as part of the research process and the EVC curriculum, I explored how young people represented themselves and their experiences of digital video production in a third space (Bhabha, 1994). The third and final part of the story addressed being a digital video ethnographer in a community of enquiry.

Through the practice of research I came to understand the pedagogical process and the digital video production practices that enabled young people at EVC to communicate in meaningful ways about their culture and communities, their identities and their educational experiences. Offering digital video examples and ways of analysis I went on to describe this practice as ethnography 2.0 (White, 2009).

In this paper I reflect on the stories of the research to present possibilities for re-imagining our understanding of ethnographic research practice in the twenty first century. I begin by describing the research method that I used and revisit some key theoretical issues in the practice of methodology to consider the question: what next ethnography 2.0?