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Who's Behind the Lens? A Reflexive Analysis of Roles in Participatory Video Research

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Abstract

This article applies paradox as a metatheoretical framework for the reflexive analysis of roles within a participatory video study. This analysis moves us beyond simply describing roles as paradoxical, and thus problematic, to offer insights into the dynamics of the interrelationship between participant, researcher, and video technology. Drawing on the concept of “working the hyphens,” our analysis specifically focuses on the complex enactment of Participation-Observation and Intimacy-Distance “hyphen spaces.” We explore how video technology mediates the relationship between participant and researcher within these spaces, providing opportunities for participant empowerment but simultaneously introducing aspects of surveillance and detachment. Our account reveals how video study participants manage these tensions to achieve participation in the project. It examines the roles for the researched, the technology, and the researchers that are an outcome of this process. Our analysis advances methodology by bringing together a paradox perspective with reflexive work on research relationships to demonstrate how we can more adequately explore tensions in research practice and detailing the role of technology in the construction and management of these tensions.

Keywords

video methods, paradox, roles, participatory methods, reflexivity

Introduction

While a relative “blind spot” in organization studies (Bell & Davison, 2013), video research is a well-established methodology in other disciplines, for example sociology and anthropology (Erickson, 2011). Videos offer rich data (Brown, Costley, Friend, & Varey, 2010), enabling access to parts

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of lives that would otherwise remain out of sight to researchers (Bloustien & Baker, 2003). Significantly, digital technology has made such video making “radically accessible for the non-professional user” (Shrum, Duque, & Brown, 2005, p. 5), opening up the possibility of more participant-led studies. Here we recount our own video-based study where the videocam was in the hands of the participants and through which we sought to explore their experiences of work-life boundary transitions. Our video methodology fitted well with our research topic, proving invaluable for capturing fleeting experiences and intimate moments that would not otherwise have been observed (Symon, Chamakiotis, Whiting, & Roby, 2014; Whiting, Roby, Symon, & Chamakiotis, 2015a, 2015b).

The focus of this article is a reflexive analysis of the paradoxical nature of the relationships and roles produced by participatory video research. A reflexive approach has been defined as the “practice of continuous, intentional and systematic self-introspection” (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 144). However, there are different forms of reflexivity resulting from varied philosophical underpinnings in organizational research (Cunliffe, 2003; Johnson & Duberley, 2003). Broadly, we take reflexivity here to mean unsettling and questioning “the nature of knowledge, and ultimately our purpose and practice as researchers” (Cunliffe, 2003, p. 985). A “relationally reflexive approach” (Cunliffe, 2003), such as we adopt here, specifically involves interrogating assumptions and power relations in the research process, questioning and problematizing “the way we position ourselves in relation to others in the research in our methodology, interactions, and research accounts” (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013 p. 385). Such an approach is claimed to have the potential to enhance research practice (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013).

In this article, we apply paradox as a metatheoretical perspective (Lewis & Smith, 2014) to provide a reflexive examination of roles in video-based research, highlighting the under-acknowledged role of technology in this process. Metatheory provides an overarching perspective that sits above the particular research topic and method and provides an interpretive framework for the analysis. The core concepts of the paradox perspective led us to focus in our analysis on how the tensions of the intersecting roles of researchers-videocam-participants are managed without necessarily being resolved. We explore these tensions through the concept of “hyphen spaces” (Fine, 1994), which can be viewed as the articulation of paradox in methodology. Thus, “working the hyphens” (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013; Fine, 1994) here involves examining the roles of researcher, participant, and video technology as they are constructed and enacted and the nature, dynamics, and management of tensions that arise within this relational system.

Including the videocam as an active agent in our analysis reflects the growing tendency for organizational scholars to address the material in their empirical research (Symon & Pritchard, 2015; Wajcman & Rose, 2011). However, to date, there has been far less examination of the materiality of our own research methods (Ceccez-Kecmanovic, Galliers, Henfridsson, Newell, & Vidgen, 2014). We therefore include the role of video technology and video images¹ in our analysis of these tensions. We view these not as neutral conduits of information (Pink, 2006) but as actors within the ensuing relational dynamics. We observe how this relational system blurs the boundaries between different roles and identities within the research context. This is closely aligned with our empirical research interest in transitional roles and permeable work-life boundaries, making this reflexive approach an excellent fit in relation to our empirical study.

Our work thus contributes to the organizational research methodology literature in three main ways:

- By applying a paradox framework to our understanding of research methodology, specifically, participatory video research, we identify how tensions in such research are produced and managed.

- By making a methodological link between paradox as a metatheoretical framework and the reflexive hyphen spaces concept, we provide a means of analytically operationalizing the exploration of paradox in research methods.
- By expanding the hyphen spaces concept through a consideration of the role of the materiality of the video methodology, we enable an examination of a three-way relationship between researcher, participant, and videocam.

Our article starts by exploring the concept of paradox in organizational research. We then outline how participatory video methods may be regarded as paradoxical before turning our attention to the literature that has explored researcher and participant relational roles and identities. In particular, we explore the concept of hyphen spaces (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013) as a means of analyzing paradox in video methodology. The empirical context and methodology of our video study is set out with a brief reflexive commentary on each step. We then, through our data, explore how the intersecting roles of researchers-videocam-participants are locations of potential paradox and tension and identify how these paradoxical relationships are managed by the research participants. Our discussion identifies specific features of the video methodology that make it better equipped than other methods for the examination of tensions in the research process, in particular through delivering opportunities for reflexivity on behalf of both the researchers and the participants.

Paradox in Organizational Research

Paradox in organizational research refers to the dynamics of organizational life that contain “contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time” (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 386). These are seen as presenting an irresolvable dilemma because “opposing solutions are needed and interwoven” (Luscher & Lewis, 2008, p. 229). These authors advocate identifying paradoxical tensions, exploring their antecedents and nature, examining actors’ responses, and understanding how these tensions can be managed. This in turn can bring about new ways of thinking, promote alternative understandings, and offer different framings and new options for action. Pertinent to our empirical study, an example of a tension of balancing work-life in the era of modern communication technology is the autonomy paradox (Mazmanian, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2013), whereby reliance on mobile devices simultaneously increases and diminishes professionals’ autonomy. Unpacking these contradictory but interrelated elements, it can be seen how over time these devices enhance individual autonomy by permitting work to be performed anytime anywhere but simultaneously allow work intensification and engagement to escalate to the point of working everywhere and all the time (Mazmanian et al., 2013). In this article, we are reflexively exploring tensions at the individual level and within participatory video research as a specific methodology. As Lewis and Smith (2014, p. 141) point out, qualitative methods are well placed to provide insight into “dynamic processes,” “to surface interwoven tensions,” and to explore the interrelationship between “alternative poles of a paradox” within a specific context.

Some issues of paradox have already been identified in organizational research methodology (Cunliffe, 2003; Johnson & Duberley, 2003). For example, as further explored later, video studies that seek to capture naturalistic data are said to be confounded by the “observer’s paradox” (Hazel, 2015). Specifically, the presence of video or audio equipment (the observer) is seen as inhibiting access to the object of study, namely, “how people speak when they are not being observed” (Labov, 1972, p. 97). The challenge in such research thus becomes how to address “contamination,” namely, the distortion in participant behavior that comes from being aware that their behavior is being recorded (Hutchby, O’Reilly, & Parker, 2012, p. 676). This might involve excluding “acting up” behaviors and focusing on data where participants display no attention to the recording device (Luff & Heath, 2012). Here we follow a constructionist approach that argues that a more sustainable

line of inquiry is to investigate “what participants are doing when they orient to being recorded” (Speer & Hutchby, 2003, p. 317). In other words, we seek to understand rather than to resolve the paradox. Similarly, suggesting that the observer’s paradox is “inescapable,” Gordon (2012) proposes that we should move beyond seeing it as a methodological limitation and instead investigate “the opportunities [the observer’s paradox] might offer researchers and study participants alike” (p. 315). This is an issue we address directly in this article within the context of participatory video research.

The Paradox of Participation: Participatory Video Research

By participatory video research, we refer to studies that aim to “reduce the gap between the concepts and models of researchers and those of individuals and communities by giving participants control of the camera and the process of making their experiences visible” (Jewitt, 2012, p. 3). Thus, our focus here is on what happens when the videocam is in the hands of the participants and where participants decide for themselves what constitutes the concepts on which we asked them to focus (see our discussion on “switches” in our empirical context section). Participatory video research encompasses a wide range of methods; we set out in Table 1 a brief synopsis of these and how they compare with other types of video research. However, we acknowledge that the terminology used to describe video methods is inconsistently applied. Moreover, these methods can be used in hybrid ways, for example, combined with other methods such as ethnography (Jarzabkowski, Burke, & Spee, 2015). For more detailed taxonomies of video research generally and participatory visual techniques more specifically, see Jewitt (2012) and Pauwels (2015).

In this article, the working the hyphens approach offers a basis to rethink power relations not necessarily in terms of participant empowerment or emancipation but rather through the reflexive probing of the relational system of participatory video research (further described in the following sections). The power relationship between researcher and participant has been described as “possibly exploitative because we observe, analyze and represent the lives of others” (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013, p. 365). Thus, participatory methods seek to involve participants in the generation of their own data about their lives (Vince & Warren, 2012). However as noted in Table 1, studies may vary in terms of their commitment to redressing power asymmetries. Indeed, participatory methods can be perceived as paradoxical: attempting to address uneven power relations while somehow reinforcing them. In relation to video studies, there are both optimistic (Bloustien & Baker, 2003) and more skeptical (Gibson, 2005; Muir & Mason, 2012) claims for the emancipatory nature of participant-produced video data (Brown et al., 2010). Some argue that participatory methods shift the balance of power from researcher to participants as the latter can choose the scope and time of their involvement as well as how to direct, narrate, and edit their video (Brown et al., 2010). Pain (2012), however, queries if “increased empowerment” is actually achieved or is just a function of the facilitation of communication and self-expression. As noted previously, constructionist approaches reject the idea of the “observer’s paradox” as a methodological problem. Instead, these studies explore participant interactions with video and audio devices and how these are used as a resource for identity work by participants (Gordon, 2012; Hazel, 2015). These authors focus on how participants talk about taking part and how they orient themselves to the technology. Here, we go further by applying a reflexive paradox perspective to identify how tensions in participatory video research are produced and managed in a three-way relationship between researcher, videocam, and participant. Thus, we are addressing calls to “render everyday materials visible as objects for study . . . given their tendency to fade into the background and to be taken for granted within practical action” (Jarzabkowski & Pinch, 2014, p. 587). Here, we want to draw attention to the role of the videocam in research relationships and the creation of research data as part of a reflexive paradox perspective.²

Table 1. Comparison of Video Research Methods.

| Methods | Related Terms | Description | Examples of Use |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Participatory video research | Participant generated video Video diaries Autovideography Distributed video study Community video | Aims to “reduce the gap between the concepts and models of researchers and those of individuals and communities by giving participants control of the camera and the process of making their experiences visible” (Jewitt, 2012, p. 3). Offers flexibility in terms of how much direction researchers provide to participants, how much contact is maintained during the filming period, and who provides filming devices (participants use their own in distributed study). Community video involves collaboration between participants who receive training in filming and editing. | Used to study embodied experience of health and illness in everyday lives (Bates, 2013) and the experiences of being a consumer from a minority ethnic background (Brown, Costley, Friend, & Varey, 2010). Distributed version is useful if researchers cannot or do not need to provide recording equipment (Bancroft, Karels, Meadhbh Murray, & Zimpfer, 2014) though this is not suitable if seeking to capture participants’ use of same technology (present study). Community video generally seeks positive change in participants’ community by raising awareness of an issue or influencing key decision or policy makers. Often part of social action or an action research agenda (Tremblay & Jayme, 2015). |
| Videography | Video interaction analysis Workplace studies Focused ethnography Video ethnography Video shadowing | Researchers observe and film people “in the field” as they go about their ordinary activities (Knoblauch, 2012, p 252). Videos are analyzed for naturalistic conduct including examination of the nature of micro-practices. Generally involves filming in a particular organizational or cultural setting. | Effective for filming and analyzing micro-behaviors and social interactions in work practices (Mondada, 2012), including teams (Smets, Burke, Jarzabkowski, & Spee, 2014). Useful for capturing and examining multimodal practices that may be key to organizational work but are undocumented and hidden; for example, coordination in a medical emergency call and dispatch center (Fele, 2012). Can be used to prompt improvement with regard to an occupational task (Iedema, Long, & Forsyth, 2006) by using the video data to generate reflection by participants. |
| Use of existing videos | Found data study Multimodal, semiotic, and discourse analysis | Analysis of videos created independently of the research process (not by researcher or participant). Increasingly available video material often accessed via the Internet and broadcast media but also CCTV and organizational videos | Used to examine how events are contextualized and how identities and relationships are constructed and represented (Tan, 2011). For example, used to examine how occupational identities and stereotypes are constructed in |

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

| Methods | Related Terms | Description | Examples of Use |
|-------------------|---------------|--|---|
| | | Focus of analysis may be on video content alone or may include other modes of data. May also involve wider consideration of the context of the video's production and consumption. | various contexts, such as nursing identities in videos hosted on YouTube (Kelly, Fealy, & Watson, 2012). |
| Video elicitation | | Video data are produced either by participant or researcher. It is then used "to prompt discussion, stimulate recall or provide a basis for reflection" (Jewitt, 2012, p. 3). If participants retain a copy of their video data, this may also act as a record for ongoing reflection after interview (present study). Both video and commentary are data. | Useful for generating reflection on broader context of the footage and to supplement participant recall. In cases of researcher-produced data, can be used as intervention, such as to improve understanding and practice in occupational tasks (Henry & Fetters, 2012). In the case of participant-produced data, researcher can explore filming choices with the participants (Gibson, 2005). |

Hyphen Spaces: Addressing the Paradox of Research Roles Within Reflexive Participatory Research

By including technology as a potential source of new tensions in the research relationship, the videocam becomes part of a three-way relational system (researcher-videocam-participant) through which we investigate the paradox of research roles in reflexive participatory research. We use the term *role* here to mean "generalized expectations of behavior" (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1169) within particular contexts. By providing social expectations, roles act as mediators in our identity work (Järventie-Thesleff & Tienari, 2016). From a social constructionist perspective, identities are meanings attributed to self through processes of social interaction and are therefore inherently dynamic. Identity work is the processes and tactics through which people form, revise, or maintain their identities (McInnes & Corlett, 2012; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Roles may be enacted, reconstructed, or rejected in this social, dynamic, and interactive process of identity work (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006).

Our identity claims are always made with respect to a particular context (here, participatory video research). The established roles of "researcher" and "researched" mediate the choices we make regarding what to foreground or background in this dynamic identity work (Cassell, 2005). This can be experienced as tensions between different rights and obligations associated with such roles (McInnes & Corlett, 2012). Here we are concerned with how roles mediate the dynamics of identity work between the researcher and the researched. From Van Maanen and Kolb (1982) to Alcadipani, Westwood, and Rosa (2015), ethnographic studies have attributed roles such as double agent or spy to the fieldworker (Van Maanen & Kolb, 1982). In the research interview, consideration has been given to more interactional identity work as researcher and researched seek to position each other in particular roles, such as the researcher as "evaluator" or "project manager" and the participant as "hero" or "change agent" (Cassell, 2005). This reflexive approach recognizes how the relationship

between participant and researcher influences the nature of the knowledge created and observations obtained.

Identities and relationships are created as participants and researchers negotiate the meaning of the research through such mutually constituted roles and identities. In their research, Cunliffe and Karunanayake (2013) explore fluid and dynamic research identities through Fine's (1994) notion of working the hyphens. This means recognizing the self-other relationship in the practice of research and "surfacing the [varying and dynamic] identity relations that may occur between ourselves and our research participants" (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013, p. 365). Fine is keen that in reflexively working the hyphens, we recognize and address the potential for asymmetric power relations between the researcher and the participants. Cunliffe and Karunanayake develop this idea by offering the notion of hyphen spaces, identifying specific potential roles and relational tensions that emerge, and reflexively considering how these shape the research process. We argue that together these concepts provide a mechanism for applying paradox as a metatheoretical framework (Lewis & Smith, 2014) to develop understanding of the interplay of potentially contradictory forces within participatory video research. Of particular relevance is how a relationally reflexive approach makes paradoxes visible through "exposing the dynamics lying below the surface" of research accounts (Orr & Bennett, 2009, p. 86). However, when combined, as here, with the paradox perspective (Lewis & Smith, 2014), this goes beyond the act of simply making paradox visible (as in Orr & Bennett, 2009) and enables an exploration of how all agents in the research manage the tensions or "work through the paradox" (Luscher & Lewis, 2008, p. 237). In our research, we identify the paradoxes of Participation-Observation and Intimacy-Distance as of particular significance and seek to explore the hyphen spaces of these tensions. However, we do not just apply the hyphen spaces concept; we also develop it by including technology as a potential source of new tensions.

Outside the field of organizational research, some video studies recognize the videocam as more than a filmmaking device (Shrum et al., 2005). Though noting that recording devices are rarely deemed worthy of analytic attention, Caronia (2015) explores how the material agency of the videocam contributes to the production of the research context. Videocams can also problematize the traditional duality of researcher and researched. For example, Gibson (2005) develops a "movie method" form of analysis that recognizes (cinematographic) roles, such as the "director," that are made available to participants and from which they may speak and act. Similarly, Bancroft, Karels, Meadhbh Murray, and Zimpfer (2014) examine the new roles made available to participants in distributed video ethnography, such as the "reflective insider" (commenting on their own and others' behaviors captured on video) as well as "active researcher" (probing and questioning friends). These authors suggest that common ownership of personal digital technology is part of a wider trend toward distributed or crowdsourced research methods in which the researched becomes the researcher, the only difference being that they lack "formal expertise" (Bancroft et al., 2014, p. 149). This highlights the need to include technology as a potential source of new tensions in the research relationship.

In sum, video and participatory methods are both practices that problematize the traditional dualities of researcher and researched. Through our empirical data, we seek to explore further the paradoxical nature of the participatory video research method through a more specific examination of the dynamic tensions between the roles of researcher and researched.

Our Empirical Context

The aim of our video/interview study, part of a wider multidisciplinary research project entitled the Digital Brain Switch project (Symon et al., 2014; Whiting et al., 2015a, 2015b), was to explore how

work-life boundaries are negotiated in a digital world. It examined how contemporary technologies and social media affect our ability to manage role identity “switches” across physical, temporal, and psychological boundaries (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Clark, 2000). Switches were theoretically defined as rapid (almost instantaneous) transitions between different activities or areas of our lives, reflecting the continual and everyday use of digital technologies in contemporary culture. Consequently, we felt that giving video technology to the participants may allow the capture of these rapid switches.

Recent reviews (Bell & Davison, 2013; Meyer, Höllerer, Jancsary, & van Leeuwen, 2013) highlight the range of epistemological and ontological assumptions that underpin visual methods. Jarzabkowski, LeBaron, Phillips, and Pratt (2014) remind us of the need for “careful consideration” of these issues when borrowing methods from other disciplines. We adopted a social constructionist epistemology in our empirical research, seeing domains such as work and home, and the switches between them, not as reified entities but as social constructions that were reinforced, contested, and negotiated in the daily lives of our participants (Cohen, Duberley, & Musson, 2009). Thus, participants were encouraged to make their own decisions as to what constituted a switch for them, allowing for their own constructions of boundaries and domains and providing the potential for new theoretical insights into these. The videos they took of these self-determined switches are therefore not a reflection of an objective “reality” but rather constitutive of the social reality of our participants (Bell & Davison, 2013).

In the following section, we set out the key aspects of our methodology, which we describe in some detail with the recognition that this may be of some benefit to readers unfamiliar with video-based research.

Our Methodology

Prior to conducting the main study, we conducted a pilot study with the eight members of the research team and a handful of our university colleagues as participants. This delivered insight into the participant role. We were able to use our experience as pilot study participants to build credibility and empathy with the study participants. For example, we found that it took longer than seven days for some of us to generate a week of video material as we found we needed to have time “off duty” because we found the video diary either intrusive or temporally challenging. This allowed us to anticipate issues that our participants might face and offer potential solutions (e.g., suggesting a day away from filming to alleviate time or workload pressures). Additionally, we were able to provide video samples from the pilot study data via the website, offering this to participants at the briefing as examples from our own lives. We consciously selected videos that interpreted the video study instructions in different ways in order to reinforce our instructions that there was no one right way to approach the video study. The selected videos also revealed personal aspects of our lives such as the interiors of our homes. We felt that this redressed the power asymmetry of our research relationship in a small way.

For the main study, a total of 45 participants were recruited from three different user groups: social entrepreneurs, office workers, and university students. This was to address the project’s substantive research question rather than the methodological question addressed in this article. These were selected, in line with boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000), to provide potentially contrasting experiences of both work-life boundaries and digital technologies through occupational roles. The groups also addressed the call for expanded definitions of responsibilities within a wider range of household configurations (other than couples with children) and non-work commitments (Özbilgin, Beaugard, Tatli, & Bell, 2011). Basic demographic data for the participants are set out in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants' Demographic Information.

| | | Social Entrepreneurs (SE) | Office Workers (OW) | University Students (US) | Total |
|------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| Gender | Female | 7 | 8 | 8 | 23 |
| | Male | 8 | 7 | 7 | 22 |
| Age group | 18-24 | — | — | 11 | 11 |
| | 25-34 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 13 |
| | 35-44 | 2 | 4 | — | 6 |
| | 45-54 | 7 | 3 | — | 10 |
| | 55-64 | 2 | 3 | — | 5 |
| Family situation | Living alone | 5 | 2 | 5 | 12 |
| | Living with others ^a | 1 | 1 | 8 | 10 |
| | Living with partner | 2 | 5 | 2 | 9 |
| | Living with child(ren) | 2 | — | — | 2 |
| | Living with partner and child(ren) | 5 | 7 | — | 12 |

^aOthers = flat share (with friends or others), halls of residence.

More specifically, our rationale for choosing these three contrasting groups was:

1. Social entrepreneurs (SE) reflect the growing number of self-employed in the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2014). Their challenges may include financial insecurity, a commitment to hybrid missions of creating both social and economic value (Miller, Wesley, & Williams, 2012), and a lack of clear boundaries around work and workplace.
2. Office workers' (OW) challenges may include less control over work processes and technologies and more closely defined roles and work-life boundaries.
3. University students (US) represent a younger demographic group with challenges that may include ill-defined work-life boundaries.

From a boundary theory perspective (Ashforth et al., 2000), these groups represent purposeful sampling on a spectrum of potential high (SEs and USs) to low (OWs) work-life boundary permeability. However, we should also recognize some potential permeability between these groups, although we do not explore this further here.

At a briefing, prior to data collection, participants received an Information Sheet explaining the research project and its aims, together with a Consent Form that they were asked to complete and sign.³ The form asked participants whether or not they wished their real names to be used in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. A majority in each participant group elected use of their real names, the others elected the use of pseudonyms. In keeping with individual participant preferences, the names that appear in this article are therefore a mix of actual names and pseudonyms, the latter indicated with an asterisk the first time they are introduced.

To summarize the key elements of the research project, participants undertook a week of video recording, focusing on their different roles in their work and private lives and how they switched, tried to switch, or were externally prompted/forced to switch between them. The approach required them to capture what they saw in front of them rather than to narrate these switches retrospectively, though we explained this would be a useful supplement to switches too difficult to capture as they happened. We stressed there was no "right way" to approach the task, that it was up to them how to record the material, and that they were free to be creative in their approach. The sequential steps in the methodology are set out in Table 3, including our commentary on issues arising. Our interview protocol is in the Appendix.

Table 3. Methodological Steps.

| Methodological Step | Commentary |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Videocam, instructions for taking part in video study, and consent form are posted to participant in preparation for briefing. The videocam is preloaded with a 32 GB memory card and has a small tripod for use on a desk. It has the ability not just to record but also to review, edit, and delete data; the reversible flip-out screen permits recording outwards (what participant sees ahead of them) and inwards (toward the participant). Consent form is explained, signed, and collected. Participant indicates when they intend to start their week of recording.</p> | <p>We used a mixture of one-to-one and group briefings dependent on participant availability. A few were face-to-face (F2F), but most were conducted via Skype using the Share Screen option to present the PowerPoint briefing and answer participants' questions. We outlined ethical guidance of "what not to film" in the briefing presentation. This included: anything confidential, sensitive, or highly personal; children (unless participant's own and both parents agreed); other people unless in a public place where they might reasonably expect to be observed or were people they knew who consented to being filmed; in shopping centers or areas with high security status; and while driving or cycling.</p> <p>We found it beneficial for participants to receive the videocam before or at the briefing so that they had the opportunity to experiment with it and ask questions. We piloted various models but settled on the Toshiba Camileo S40 for the main study. Given that participants can be deterred from taking part in visual studies if the equipment looks cheap (Bloustien & Baker, 2003), it was important that the videocam reflected latest technology and did not look of inferior quality (Muir & Mason, 2012).</p> |
| <p>2. Participant carries out a seven-day period of filming. Copies of all the participant documentation are available to download from the project website, which also featured FAQs. There is a project email account to which the participants could direct queries.</p> | <p>Participants did not always start on their intended day and sometimes took (much) longer than a week to conclude their seven days of filming. We received relatively few queries, mostly minor technical ones. One participant asked early on in his week if he could record for more than seven days (we agreed), though he later commented that the novelty had worn off, and he did not record much more than one additional day.</p> |
| <p>3. Researcher contacts participant to arrange collection of videocam and data. Participant retains copy of data for review prior to interview. Researcher arranges debrief.</p> | <p>This could be a time-consuming process as it involved finding a slot during which participants would be available in one location for the courier to collect the videocam.</p> |
| <p>4. Researcher debriefs participant via Skype or telephone.</p> | <p>These were short conversations, usually lasting about 10 minutes. Originally included as part of ethical good practice to check on participants' well-being after taking part, we also asked them to reflect on their experience of taking part in the video study. We took contemporaneous notes of the conversation as we knew from the pilot study that these reflections were useful and interesting. There was further opportunity for exploration of these issues at a subsequent interview.</p> |
| <p>5. Researcher reviews video data.</p> | <p>The review was an initial step in the analytic process, assessing quantity, quality, and scope of content of the footage and to gain familiarity with the data. It was at this stage that we noted creative approaches adopted by participants (e.g., interviewing their family members) and how they had interpreted the brief. Suitable video excerpts from each participant's video data were also selected by the researcher (see the following) for use in the interviews. Videos were selected to illustrate one of each of the three substantive topics in the interview, namely, work-life balance, switching, and illustrative of reflexive learning.</p> |

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

| Methodological Step | Commentary |
|---|---|
| 6. Researcher sets up interview with participant. | Participants were contacted to fix a time and place for the interview; these usually took place between two and four weeks after they finished their video recordings. Participants were invited to review their video footage in advance of the interview and to select two or three videos that they would like to view and discuss in the interview. Most however chose not to do so, citing a lack of time. Consequently, we used the video excerpts selected in advance by the researcher. |
| 7. Researcher conducts interview with participant. | These were mostly F2F, but eight were via Skype to accommodate participants with limited availability. Having viewed the video data before meeting the participants at interview, we acquired prior knowledge about their (digital and physical) lives, which prompted us to reflect on the asymmetric power relations between us. We addressed this through providing them with a link to our project and our individual online profiles so that they could find out more about us prior to meeting. We also sought to be sensitive to what we had seen in the videos about their style of dress through mirroring at interview the degree of (in)formality they generally adopted in their clothing. A copy of the interview protocol is in the Appendix. Through the interviews, we sought to embed the participants' videos in their wider work-life narratives. This involved a set of open-ended questions concerning general career narrative, meaning and experience of work life balance, and switching. At points throughout the interviews, each participant reviewed the selected video excerpts with the researcher. In addition, we asked participants to reflect on their experience of taking the videos and its impact on their lives. |
| 8. Researcher analyzes video and interview data; a webinar is set up to exchange feedback and discuss future joint steps. | This is at an ongoing stage in our research following the conclusion of data collection; currently an overview thematic analysis has been undertaken of the combined video/interview data set with more detailed thematic and discourse analysis around a number of initial themes. A presentation of these has been made to participants via a webinar to gather their views on them and their recommendations for further development of the analysis and study. During the webinar, participants also provided feedback on their own learning from the experience of taking part in the research. Further opportunities for joint action were discussed including the possibility of a journal paper to be co-authored by one of the participants and the development of an online research platform that would allow participants to experiment with ideas based on their experiential learning. |

In line with our reflexive approach, we now seek to go beyond the practical considerations highlighted here to address our emergent research question:

Research Question: How does video technology mediate the relationship between participant and researcher within a participatory video study?

Working the Hyphens

We address this question specifically in relation to two hyphen spaces (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013), Participation-Observation and Intimacy-Distance. While these dimensions have been discussed in other writings (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Fraser & Puwar, 2008; Thien, 2005), in

this case these dimensions emerged from our video and interview data and were identified as important methodological issues. We see these relational spaces as locations of potential tensions where the boundaries between participant and researcher are blurred and relationships between them are fluid, dynamic, and mutually influenced (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013; Fine, 1994). Participation-Observation and Intimacy-Distance, as hyphen spaces, are opposing poles that are dynamically interrelated and in tension. A paradox perspective suggests examining these hyphen spaces as a way of understanding the tensions in the relational system of researcher-videocam-participant. It allows us to explore how these impact on research roles and practice by examining how the actors in our participatory video study experienced these hyphen spaces and identifying how they sought to manage these tensions.

Hyphen Space of Participation-Observation

The identity of the participant-observer is well established within ethnography, broadly referring to “observation carried out when the researcher is playing an established role in the scene studied” (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 248). These authors argue, however, that “all social research is a form of participant observation as we cannot study the social world without being part of it” (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 249). The research site is, after all, a shared space (Urban & Quinlan, 2014), and “the researcher, whether physically present or not, is inevitably part of the research world being studied” (Gibson, 2005 p. 3). Thus, there are a range of roles available between being a participant and being an observer with the potential for continuing adjustment within this hyphen space as the research progresses. Our research surfaces some of the complexities emerging when video technology is introduced into this hyphen space. Indeed, the Participation-Observation hyphen space specifically captures an apparent paradox surfaced by the video method, namely, the interplay between the simultaneous potential for external surveillance and for revealing previously unacknowledged aspects of the participants’ lives to themselves.

Most participants managed this tension by acknowledging the physical presence of the videocam, addressing it at the start (and sometimes the end) of videos as if it were a proxy for the research team, for example, wishing us “Good morning from South London” (Cressida*, SE, video). One participant started each video with the words “Hello, recorder.” These instances show how participants worked the hyphen between participation (reporting for duty as digital diarists) and observation (acknowledging to themselves, and us, that they were being observed), lending a stop-start quality to the relationship over which they had control through the technology. Over time, some participants came to refer to the videocam as an “imaginary” or “invisible” “friend.” Some unpacked this relationship in the debriefing or the interview, as here:

As the week went on, I found myself talking to it as if to a friend, saying things like “Hello, me again.” One of my reasons for this was not that the camcorder is a friend or even you personally but that I was not talking to myself or that I knew there was a researcher, at the end; I was seeing past the camcorder, it was a tool for reaching you. I was communicating, not play acting. (Stephen, SE, debrief)

Here Stephen goes to some length to qualify his construction of the videocam “as if a friend” by focusing on its alternative role as a “tool” for communicating with the researchers. We, as researchers, are positioned as offsite, an absent presence, but with the videocam playing the role of our proxy. He works the hyphen between participation (wanting to communicate his report to us) and observation (his insistence that we were there as an audience to hear and see him). The videocam can never just be a technological fly on the wall; it is implicated as a mirror for Stephen in his identity management, which includes explaining the significant time he has spent each day for a week

talking to a device as if it were a human friend, mostly in a one-to-one setting. By describing the revelation of previously unacknowledged aspects of his life as “talking to friend,” Stephen is able to manage the Participation–Observation paradox.

However, as well as creating a “friend” or “proxy” relationship, the videocam was also implicated in potentially less positive relations. Here we see a student participant negotiating her way around campus in a physical switch as she seeks her supervisor:

So now I’m wandering along campus feeling like a spy talking discreetly to a camera. I’m just walking down the spine [central walkway on campus], I’m going to go and see my dissertation supervisor and get her to . . . so I’m getting weird looks . . . get her to sign my ethics approval form for my dissertation interviews. So yes, this is the spying. (Xanthe, US, video)

Again, the video technology is a proxy for us as researchers (recording the data we wish to collect) that positions us as future observers. Additionally, it positions Xanthe as an active researcher, the one who is selecting material, constructing data, and who is “on site,” including her commentary on and explanation of what she sees. The videocam however also positions her as “feeling like a spy” through its small size and recording affordances that enable her to talk “discreetly” to it. This slightly clandestine relationship leads her to receive “weird looks,” which take her out of her normal student role. The video technology empowers Xanthe to observe her own life in a digital diarist role, but paradoxically, she becomes the observer of others, changing power relations with them and invoking a new role of spy. In her debrief, Xanthe describes this as “quite fun” but embarrassing when she bumped into friends; the introduction of technology into this hyphen space thus involves Xanthe in working the hyphen between participation (on her own account) and observation (of others). This is significant because it shows how the video technology impinges not just on the participant in terms of unsought roles but also in drawing others into the research. By articulating to herself and to us both positive and negative aspects of this tension (“quite fun” being an observer, “embarrassing” being observed in this role by others), she embraces the Participation–Observation paradox.

While here we have seen the positioning of the participant as observer (and researcher) on their own lives, using the videocam also enabled an identity as observer—and reflexive critic—of the research process. Here Elizabeth highlights a meta-concern with the enacted study:

Another thing I realized is that the doing of the filming skews the results a bit, I mean that you have to switch to start filming. And then it acts as a prompt so that it influences what you say and makes you reflect. (Elizabeth, OW, debrief)

Elizabeth acknowledges her switches are not just those we had asked her to record between salient roles or domains in her life but relate to new roles acquired within the research process, such as “doing the filming” and “reflecting.” The videocam is constructed as an influence on the way the research unfolds. Note that this discussion takes place in the debriefing. Since filming, Elizabeth has had an opportunity to think about the methodology through both the technological affordances of reviewing the video data she has recorded and through the lapse of the time since recording. She is working the hyphen between participation (on her own account) and observation (as an active researcher, critiquing the methodology). In this sense, she takes up a very active role as a co-researcher with us, giving us feedback on how the method of data collection may affect the data collected. She is managing the tension of the Participation–Observer hyphen space by positioning herself in an active researcher role and challenging the researchers’ roles.

Indeed, some of the participants made active claims for the participant-as-researcher identity:

I gave time, I found [the project] interesting, and I hope the learning that is developed from it, is owned by the people who co-produced it. So, I am part of the team. I am not a subject. That is a very key thing for me. (Jez, SE, interview)

Viewing his videos allows Jez to relive and restate his active researcher role. We see an expression of shared ownership of the research, as Jez articulates his own role, as “co-producer” of the research, “part of the team,” “not a subject,” and how important this is to him. Implicitly, we as researchers are constructed as future developers of learning. Thus, our research design allowed participants to construct a degree of ownership with which they felt comfortable. So while Jez does not stop being a participant in the research, his subject position is reframed by the intersection of the roles identified previously. Jez manages this tension through the identification of these roles; these allow him to position himself acceptably within the power relations of the research in a way that supports him in undertaking the tasks we asked of him as a participant.⁴

In these examples, the participants, the researchers, and the videocam work the hyphen between participation and observation creating particular subject positions and relations as they deal with the tension of this hyphen space. While filming, the hyphen space of Participation-Observation is a location of shifting boundaries with the technology allowing for different roles in a fluid positioning of participant and researcher (as friend, as spy, as critic). For participants, their work in this hyphen space shows the potential for voice that is disconcerting (giving the potential for being judged not just on what they say but what they are seen to do) but also exciting (through what is revealed to them through their participation, including the role of active researchers offering critique and ownership). Empowerment here is thus paradoxical. By this, we mean that the participants have in some ways forsaken their everyday social relationships (becoming spies in their own worlds) for a new social relationship with the videocam (friend) and through this (as proxy) the researchers. This is potentially disempowering through privileging a research (observed) account of everyday experiences. On the other hand, this reflexive process empowers participants to learn more about their own work-life boundaries and indeed to have active participation in editing their own output and critiquing the research design.

From our researcher perspective, we experience our subject position as researchers being likewise reframed by the intersection of roles created for us by the participants. We are flattered to be the participants’ “friends” but are also in some sense “Big Brother” while at the same time challenged as expert researchers through critique. We manage this tension through our discussion with participants in the debriefing, explicitly acknowledging the roles that the video study has created for us and them. For example, we reassure them that we will be viewing their data while also reassuring them of the value of the data to us as analysts, thus working the hyphen of participation (active researchers who analyze data) and observation (the participants’ audience).

Examining how participants, researchers, and the videocam work this hyphen space demonstrates how the polar concepts of Participation and Observation simultaneously coexist in tension and therefore always have to be managed.

Hyphen Space of Intimacy-Distance

Research and intimacy can appear to have “contradictory dynamics”; the very purpose and rationale of research is to reveal what is hitherto unseen, including the private and personal (Parry, 2008, p. 35), which can add helpful insight. So the researcher gets to see these details, but this is also potentially intrusive to the participants (Pink, 2006) and thus has the paradoxical effects of also potentially alienating them.

When the videocam is in the hands of researchers in organizational settings, some detect a fine line between video as a method of surveillance and of self-observance, where the revelation of intimate details of “everyday work” can turn from “cathartic” to “disturbing” when caught up in the power dynamics of research (Iedema, Long, & Forsyth, 2006, p. 165). Putting the videocam in the hands of participants may address some of these concerns about the “invasive” nature of ethnography in organizational studies by putting some (physical) distance between the researchers’ and the participants’ lives (Bancroft et al., 2014). However, we found the hyphen space of Intimacy-Distance more paradoxical than this.

In our study, the videocams allowed participants to choose to film themselves or what they saw ahead of them and also whether to capture an accompanying narrative. We can see these technological affordances as offering options for varying degrees of intimacy. In our first example, we can see the enactment of the digital diarist, a piece “to camera,” which is a reflexive account after the event rather than a recording “as it happens”:

I thought I would talk about, recollect from today, the transition I’ve made from work, to Mum, to Community Leader as I’ve just come back from Brownies, running a Brownie meeting [shows her Brownie Leader badges pinned on her clothes]. (Leanne, OW, video)

In the video, Leanne is seated at home, facing the videocam toward the end of the day and reciting the switches she can recall since recording her last video. She indicates the badges as symbols of a role that we, as an audience, can only hear about but never see in action (given ethical considerations of recording children). Thus, in working the hyphen between intimacy (revealing details about her non-work activities) and distance (not wanting or being permitted to video these activities), Leanne manages this tension by constructing the role of digital diarist for herself, which concomitantly produces the research method in a particular way. In producing herself as diarist, Leanne simultaneously produces us as also working the hyphen between distance (commissioning editors for the film she is producing) and intimacy (the audience for these thoughts as she invites us into her own home through the video technology).

Our second example directly contrasts with Leanne’s in its different choice of technological affordances. Whereas she talks about what has happened, Simon (SE, video) creates for us a “silent movie.” Having earlier indicated how tired he was at the end of the working day, Simon used the videocam with its tripod to film himself preparing supper without commentary. He holds a succession of objects briefly in front of the videocam (such as a glass of red wine that he pours for himself) by way of providing context. Just showing us the act of chopping an onion as he prepares food for his family provides us with the “charm of recognition” that provides a connection between Simon and us as researchers; a “nodal point of intimacy” (Steedman, 2008, p. 27) through viewing an embodied activity that we too have done. Consequently, filming his actions enabled Simon to work the hyphen between intimacy (providing the homely detail of his life through film) and distance (not providing his thoughts and reflections). The affordances of video technology to capture both talk and visual images (looking at the participant or outwards through their eyes) provide him with the agency to manage this tension by varying the degrees of intimacy he provides; he does so by electing not to provide a spoken soundtrack and thus not engaging with all the affordances of the technology.

The same silent movie technique was used by Jason* (US, video) when filming in his shared office. He worked the hyphen between intimacy (telling us what he thought of the university’s online expenses system, “the bane of my existence,” by filming typed messages to us on his monitor) and distance (preserving the quiet space of the office by not commenting aloud, thus keeping the research at a distance from his colleagues). Later, at an interview and prompted by reviewing his videos, his hyphen work shifts toward greater intimacy as he describes his pleasure in being able to reveal aspects of his working practices via the video study that had hitherto been hidden from the view of others:

Nobody in the world has any idea how I work . . . somebody says, “Jason, let’s start thinking about writing a paper.” All they do is, express the intent. And then, I like to be able to go away and work privately and by myself on achieving that. So nobody has ever seen me work. Nobody has ever seen how I jump between bits of software and stuff like this. So it was something that I realized was actually, surprisingly, private. And it was very, very interesting to lift the lid on it. It was, yes, I think that’s very personal actually. If you truly show an honest representation of your working patterns, it’s a very, very personal and private thing and I took a lot of pleasure in actually, sort of, giving people a sneaky peek. (Jason, US, interview)

Jason articulates his surprise at how personal and private (intimate even) were his everyday working practices that he was able to capture on video. The videocam’s role here is as a disclosure device (“lifting the lid”), and the researchers are the audience, given “a sneaky peek.” He manages the tension between intimacy (discovering the highly personal and private nature of how he works) and distance (allowing just a glimpse to others) by articulating the link between the two and how it was enabled by the disclosure mechanism of the video technology.

Taking the level of intimacy a degree further, we see technology playing a paradoxical role as it brings us into a very intimate space: We see a participant lying in bed having just woken up and planning his day:

Good morning. It’s day three of this video diary. It’s 7:30 in the morning and I’ve just woken up and we have an [name] meeting . . . a flash [name] meeting at 8:20 this morning, in [name] Coffee Shop in [town] . . . So, I’d better get up and . . . I’d better get myself into gear, because I’ve got 50 minutes to do that, and yes, it’s quite a busy day today. I think I’ve got five meetings, and I want to try to squeeze as much . . . [yawns] excuse me . . . I want to squeeze as much Ivory Tower computer work processing [in], as I can, as well. (Michael, SE, video)

From our researcher perspective, we watched the intimate moment of Michael yawning and stretching as he begins to wake up; however, we felt simultaneously distanced from this (as “voyeurs”), even making us feel uncomfortable as the traditional power relations of research were enacted. We have been invited into a very private space that has been invaluable for our research purposes as giving insight into the everyday planning of intertwined work/life activities. We are confident that only the immediacy and visual nature of video technology could have captured moments like these. However, we feel distanced because we are observing this very intimate space without being in a close social relationship with Michael. Our relations with Michael feel thus paradoxical; we seek to manage the tension between intimacy and distance here through foregrounding our researcher role, which enables us to focus on the research benefit of this video extract, namely, its contribution to understanding in our empirical research.

While we see here a willingness on the part of Michael to engage with intimacy, others seemed to acknowledge the tension of this hyphen space more directly. In the following example, one participant reaches the end of her video recordings and decides that she should show us her face, having thus far only filmed “outwards,” in keeping with what we had requested (that is, to film primarily what they saw).

So I hope this has been helpful in some way; it’s been helpful to me. And, actually, I should just turn it around so that you can see me, because I don’t think I have shown my face . . . ; that is me, I am Jane, and I’ve been talking to you for a week and now I’m turning off and I’m going to bed. So, good night. (Jane, SE, video)

Jane takes advantage of the videocam's two-way filming affordance by rotating the flip-out screen. But what we note in particular is Jane's decision to show her face only at the end of the video study, an act of deliberate disclosure of something very intimate: her face and thus her visual identity. Here she is working in the hyphen of intimacy (the revelation of her visual identity) and distance (she has kept this hidden from us for the rest of the video study). The videocam's role here is as our proxy; we are distant and future observers. But the other intimacy that we are offered is her revelation that taking part has been "helpful to me," an important methodological insight into the reflexive opportunity that the video diary method provided. She thus manages the tension of Intimacy-Distance through using the particular affordance of the videocam to film inwards only after she has told us that this is her last film; here she uses a design feature of the study (a seven-day recording period) to manage our expectations (no further footage), tempered by the intimacy of a verbal personal disclosure.

Similarly to Participation-Observation, we examine how participants, researchers, and the videocam work this hyphen space to demonstrate how the polar concepts of Intimacy and Distance simultaneously coexist in tension and therefore always have to be managed. We see how a number of paradoxes play out, for example, how the videocam produces data without the physical presence of the researcher (who is at a distance) but enters into very personal parts of the participants' lives so giving an unprecedented intimacy. It follows other (non-video) research at a (physical) distance that can nevertheless invoke a sense of intimacy on the part of the researcher who later reads the participant material (Harrison & McGhee, 2003). Here, however, we argue, the videocam gives the potential for much more tension in this space because of its immediacy and visual nature. As before, the technology allows a fluid positioning of roles that enables the management of tensions.

Discussion

By applying a paradox framework to participatory video research through the hyphen spaces concept, we identify how tensions in such research are produced and managed. Additionally, through actively considering the role of the videocam, we expand previous examinations of relational systems in research to include some consideration of materiality in this process. In examining the relational system within each hyphen space, we show how a range of subject positions—from participant to observer and from intimate to distant roles—allows tensions to be accommodated and embraced in ways that go beyond a simple redressing of power relationships. Our paradox perspective has also surfaced a number of methodological features of a participatory video study that make it better equipped than other methods for our examination of such tensions in the research process. First, the video technology was a physical presence in our participants' lives and made new subject positions available to participants and researchers. Second, our consideration of the materiality of the videocam revealed how the videos offered the participants a reflexive tool in the form of their account of their week. Third, the video technology provided agency for the participants in their hyphen work (that is, managing these tensions) through its immediacy and visual nature while temporarily minimizing our own agency. We now unpack these three features, paying particular attention to how they enable a reflexive examination of roles in this research context and its contribution to our understanding of the nature of paradox and the dynamics and management of tensions within such research.

First, a relational reflexive approach allowed us to examine the three-way relationship where the video technology was a physical presence in the lives of the participants and made new subject positions available to them and to us as researchers. The videocam, combined with our briefing, prompted and enabled participants to find ways of internalizing the role of active researcher (e.g., Jez, Elizabeth, and Xanthe), as in Bancroft et al.'s (2014) study, but also that of spy (Xanthe), that is, an observer of others. This brought the potential for reflexive examination back into the research

process,⁵ making this a useful research method for those adopting a paradox perspective. For example, the videocam captured the simultaneous experience of being both participant and observer, allowing the apprehension of paradoxical life as it plays out (cf. interviews where participants may seek to rationalize tensions and paradoxes). As researchers, however, we have had to embrace an inherent paradox whereby video methods simultaneously raise tensions but are also part of the process by which we can explore tensions. In the writing of this article, we struggled with an either/or approach: Are video methods locations of paradoxical tensions, or are they part of how such tensions can be addressed? This article demonstrates our management of this tension by embracing the paradox and adopting a both/and approach. In doing so, we recognize participatory video research as a method that perhaps uniquely captures paradoxes and tensions as they play out in a way that, for example, observation or written diary studies might not. These methods lack the same means (the combination of verbal and visual data) to ascertain that a participant was necessarily experiencing a tension. Yet at the same time, through providing us with these verbal and visual data, participants were required to manage the tensions the participatory video research itself created.

Second, our consideration of the materiality of the videocam in the relational roles revealed how the videos offered the participants a reflexive tool in the form of their account of their week. This included the contribution of the videocam's specific technological affordances to the management of tensions. The affordances enabled participants to record, play back, edit, share, and review their digital video data; combined with the research design itself, this enhanced their opportunity for self-reflexivity. They noted tensions in their own lives. For example, they observed the paradoxical quality of the concept of work-life balance when these domains are not bounded ("my work is my life"), they recognized the paradox of being positioned within discourses as responsible for their work-life balance yet vulnerable to the demands of others in ways that prevented them managing boundaries between these domains, and those who were self-employed rather ruefully wondered how they could be their own boss but not be in control of their own lives. Using their video account as a reflexive tool, some even began to experiment with ideas for improving their work-life balance and reported these to us in the interview. In some ways, the way this work-life tension was embraced represents an ideal outcome: The participants (who may have looked to us at the start of the research process to provide answers or solutions) created knowledge for themselves. They did not require us as researchers to analyze the data or report results back to them in order for the study to be useful to them.

Third, the video technology provided agency for the participants in the hyphen space of Intimacy-Distance through its immediacy and visual nature. The videocam allowed a choice of whether to film themselves or what they saw ahead of them (e.g., Leanne and Jane) and also whether to record a narrative to accompany their footage (e.g., Simon and Jason). We can see these technological affordances as providing agency through the role of digital diarist, which was used to vary the degree of intimacy participants were prepared to share. The videocam allowed the participants to manage this tension through both control and creativity. While participants generally did not mention editing their data, we know that some did. This was of course revealed later through the nonsequential numbering of data segments, indicating deleted material. Thus, the technology shapes an unwitting disclosure to the researcher about participant recordings, enforcing a degree of transparency into the relationship. As researchers, although we were positioned as commissioning editors, once the video study was underway, our roles were essentially passive; we were audience or distant and future observers with little agency as a result of an "asynchronous participation framework" (Hazel, 2015, p. 4), a role we consider further in the following.

The participants on the other hand embraced the agency afforded by the videocam, filming us while we briefed them. We added complexity to our participants' lives through the new roles demanded by the research and by the videocam, which is itself ironic given our empirical quest to understand how digital technology (e.g., smartphones and laptops) affected their switches

between domains. Filming us can be seen as a way of embracing this paradox. We suggest this as a tentative “observer paradox” for the digital age, where the participants responded to us as a future audience that would watch them by capturing us on film and thus demonstrating this paradox to us. For some participants, dealing with the paradoxical roles arising from taking part in the study was empowering; one reported how taking part had led to her gaining confidence: “Getting through that week was quite a challenge for me, because I knew I would have to discuss my inner/outer world with other people, and I thought, if I can do that, maybe I can do Twitter” (Cressida, SE, interview). She had previously rejected engagement with social media as too intrusive, so this decision suggests a transfer of learning from the video study of how to embrace paradox, here managing Twitter within the polar concepts of her inner/outer worlds.

Using the videocam reveals the paradox in the hyphen space of Participation–Observation where the tensions of being observed while directing that observation and positioning the researchers as both Big Brother and co-researcher can encourage particular enactments of the research process. These include the editing of videos, reflexive critique of research processes, and strong claims on the part of participants for researcher identity and data ownership. Thus, examining identity work in the Participation–Observation hyphen is a more nuanced approach to the issue of emancipation in participatory video research. Additionally, participants working in the Intimacy–Distance hyphen space can affect the kinds of films produced: here, diaries rather than observations or silent movies rather than commentaries. This highlights how we manage and deal with paradox in the research process and relationships within it. We suggest that these ostensibly polar concepts are synthesized and embraced through simultaneous accomplishment (Lewis & Smith, 2014), for example, the participants being observed as a participant while directing that observation as a researcher and the researchers being distanced by the act of viewing a participant in an intimate space. As Fine (1994) observes, work at the hyphens “must always struggle ‘between’” (p. 75). We suggest that these are instances of managing the both/and approach to paradoxical challenges and offer insight into how these can be worked through rather than seen as requiring an either/or response. This contributes to a deeper understanding of the particular ambiguities and tensions within participatory video methods than their straightforward classification would suggest.

The tension we managed as researchers (expressed as our commissioning editor role) reflected our relative lack of agency during part of the research process compared to the agency of the videocam and participants. However, we recognize that this enabled the participants to provide rich data through access to parts of their lives that would otherwise be out of sight. Ultimately, we suggest that researchers in a participatory video study must be prepared to embrace this, as we did, through recognizing and accepting the link between the two poles, in other words, understanding that these are the natural working conditions of such research.

For us, there were demonstrable benefits to embracing the tension and the methodology. The dynamic identities and shifting relations that we have surfaced through applying a reflexive paradox perspective to video research aligns with our empirical research interest in transitional roles and permeable work–life boundaries. We now understand our data better because we have considered reflexively how these can be expressions of certain tensions and relations in the research process. As an outcome of our experiences, we recommend that video researchers in organizational research actively consider these complex paradoxes and how the resulting tensions are managed. In our case, giving the videocams into the hands of the participants made co-construction of the data more explicit, enhanced our reflexive understanding of our own research designs, and produced co-researcher relationships in some cases. While we were encouraging reflexivity on the part of the participants to learn about their own work–life boundary transitions in a digital age, they were encouraging us to a more reflexive understanding of our research practices. We suggest video technology has played a significant role in the workable management of tensions between our role as researchers (addressing our empirical questions and meeting the obligations of our funded study)

and the role of participants who sought more personal answers to individual questions than our research could ever address.

Conclusion

In this article, we explore the roles of researcher, participant, and video technology as constructed and enacted in participatory video research as well as the nature, dynamics, and management of tensions that arise within this relational system. This contributes to a deeper understanding of the particular ambiguities and tensions within participatory video methods than their straightforward classification would suggest. Our paradox perspective has surfaced the particular methodological features of such research that make it better equipped than other methods for the examination of such tensions. Participatory video research allows the apprehension of paradoxical life as it plays out in ways that interviews or observational studies may not, either through rationalization or lack of articulation by participants. Moreover, it enhances the participants' opportunity to create knowledge for themselves through the provision of a reflexive tool in the form of their video account of their week. Dealing with the paradoxical roles arising from the research likewise facilitated a transfer of learning from that context to their daily lives for some participants. In this sense, they did not need us to analyze data and report back for the study to be useful to them. Moreover, such knowledge concerned more individual questions than our research could ever address. At the same time, we benefited from an enhanced reflexive understanding of our own research design, particularly the account we must make of material agency in our explanations for the outcomes of our video research. We hope this article encourages other researchers to adopt the perspective and methods we have explored.

Appendix

Digital Brain Switch Interview Protocol

Background

- How would you describe your occupation? (What do you study?)
- Tell me about your life outside of work? (Tell me what is student life like for you?)
- Would you say your “self” at work (uni) was similar or different to your “self” at home?
- What kinds of technologies enable your work (studies)?

Work-Life Balance (WLB)

Discussion of video excerpt relating to WLB:

- What does Work Life Balance mean to you as a(n) Social Entrepreneur/Office Worker/University Student?
- Tell me about how you manage your WLB?
- Can you give me an example of a time when your WLB strategies broke down?
- What would help you manage your WLB the way you want to?

Transitions/Switching

As you know, one of the main focuses of our project is how people manage switching from one domain of their lives to another, for example, from work to home, or from one work role to another, or from work to local community (or from university to home), and so on. Some switches might occur within different domains (e.g., switching across tasks at work) or across different domains

(e.g., between home and work life). Some switches might be quite long transitions (e.g., commuting to work/university), but others may be quite sudden and quick.

- This is what switching means to us but what does switching mean to you?

Discussion of video excerpt relating to switching:

- What do you think triggers your switching?
- How much control do you have over your own switching process?
- What role do your technologies play in this switching process?
- Did completing the video diary reveal aspects of your switching not realized before?
- What would help you manage switching the way you want to?

Methodology

Discussion of video excerpt relating to methodology:

- How representative was the week of videoing?
- Were there any incidents/events you are surprised we did not highlight or that you would particularly like to talk about now?
- Is there anything that you feel might have been of importance to us that you have not been able to capture in your diaries, and if so what/why?
- Do you think videoing yourself has had any effect on your work/studies or personal life?

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Notes

1. We acknowledge that this does not amount to a thoroughgoing sociomaterial analysis of video methodology.
2. We recognize the possibility of treating the videocam and video data as two different actors in the interaction, but for the purpose of this article, we consider them together.
3. Copies of all the participant documents, including the Consent Form, are available on the legacy website for the project: <http://digitalbrainswitch.org.uk/outputs-media/participant-documents/>. The project metadata statement is available here: <http://oro.open.ac.uk/46687/>
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5. We thank one of the anonymous reviewers for these insightful contributions.

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