

## Call for Proposals

# “Not just an object”: Making meaning of and from everyday objects in educational research

### International Research Symposium and Exhibition

Funded by the South African National Research Foundation

UK – South Africa Researcher links Grant for Travel and Hosting of Scientific Events

**3-5 February, 2016  
Durban, South Africa**

#### Keynote Presenters:

[Claudia Mitchell \(McGill University, Canada\)](#) and [Kate Pahl \(Sheffield University, UK\)](#)

*“Consider [objects], and you will have humans. Consider humans, and you are interested in [objects]” – Bruno Latour (1993, p. 20).*

*“How do we get at [the] meanings of everyday (and not so everyday) objects and how might their meanings enrich our research?” – Claudia Mitchell (2011, p. 36)*

How do we get at the meanings of everyday (and not so everyday) objects and how might their meanings have significance for our research if as Shanks (1998) explains, “the [object] is *itself* a multiplicity, its identity is multiple” (p. 24)? The study of material culture offers researchers diverse languages of, with, and about objects and visual representations of those objects (Nordstrom, 2013). In generating object narratives that simultaneously occupy the past, present and future we get to understand the “confused and confounded relationship between objects and subjects – both living and nonliving”, entangled and complex (Nordstrom, 2013, p. 238). Researching education through studying the meanings we attribute to objects defies binaries and linearities – to suggest that educational experience is open to new and different re-workings and re-visionings. As researchers mediating meanings of and from objects, “we are not apart from the trajectories of objects, subjects, culture, society, and discourse” (Nordstrom, 2013, p. 253). Working with objects locates us within those trajectories as we try to make sense of them with theories that allow us to see the entanglement and connections in between objects and lived experience (Nordstrom, 2013).

This research symposium brings together local and international researchers and postgraduate students from multiple knowledge fields to a shared space in which subjects and objects, living and nonliving, entangle to open up understandings of the connections made between objects and the “relationships which flow constantly between-across persons and things” (Nordstrom, 2013, p. 238). The symposium will offer a way to rethink objects and subjects as interconnecting entities that can demonstrate the daily lived experiences of education and the objects used in personal and professional lives (Pahl & Roswell, 2010; Turkle, 2007).

Symposium participants will exhibit and narrate visual representations in response to the question: “How do we get at [the] meanings of everyday (and not so everyday) objects and how might their meanings enrich our research?” Each visual exhibit will offer a unique object narrative. Taken as whole, the exhibition will portray “a *message* about our [educational] life, an ensemble which will portray possible [educational] *messages*, of possibility and plurality” (Nordstrom, 2013, p. 252).

The symposium will push the boundaries of what counts as evidence in research to consider the educational possibilities of objects, situated within wide-ranging societal questions (Mitchell 2011). It will raise debates about the potential of objects in generating social, historical and autobiographical narratives (Mitchell, 2011).

To submit a proposal to participate in the symposium and exhibition, please complete the attached proposal form. Proposals are due by **15 November 2015** and should be submitted as an e-mail attachment to: Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan at [pithousemorgan@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:pithousemorgan@ukzn.ac.za).

## REFERENCES

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