

Geographies of Children and
Young People 2

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Methodological Approaches

Geographies of Children and Young People

Volume 2

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Geographies of Children and Young People is a Major Reference Work comprising 12 volumes that pulls together the best international reflective and innovative scholarship focusing on younger people. Volumes 1 and 2 establish and critically engage with the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological groundings of this geographical sub-discipline. Volumes 3–11 provide in depth thematic analysis of key topical areas pertinent to children's and young people's lives: space, place and environment; identities and subjectivities; families and peer groups; movement and mobilities; politics and citizenship; global issues and change; play and well-being; learning and labouring; conflict and peace. Volume 12 connects both academic, policy, and practitioner based work around protection and provision.

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Methodological Approaches

With 44 Figures and 2 Tables

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Series Preface

Geographies of Children and Young People now constitutes a major subdiscipline within Geography. This is a very exciting and influential time in its development. Hence, it is important to capture the dynamism, depth, and breadth of the subdiscipline within a Major Reference Work (MRW). Springer Major Reference Works are produced in such a way that updating and editing of the online version can be done every few years. This means that the publication does not fix the data, debates, and delivery but rather moves and evolves with the subdiscipline itself. The intention and expectation of this MRW is that this substantive collection will be the go-to resource for scholars, educators, and practitioners working with children and young people.

While founding scholarship was published in the 1970s and 1980s, the dramatic expansion of research and publication in the field really began in the late 1990s and has continued exponentially. The last decade has witnessed a substantive increase in graduate student research projects and a surge in university-level teaching related to children's and young people's geographies. It is therefore extremely timely that this 12-volume major reference work has been produced. Together as Editor-in-Chief, Volume Editors, and Authors, we have developed the largest single collection of geographic work focusing on children and young people in the world. Intellectually, the work reaches beyond geography to the wider social and behavioral sciences; many of the authors in the series are not geographers, and so, the collection is healthily and engagingly transdisciplinary. Anyone working with children and young people will find chapters that connect very effectively with their own interests. Specialists as well as graduate and tertiary education students will find relevant work distributed throughout the MRW or locate everything they might need within one thematic volume.

This Series was founded on certain key intellectual and political principles. Working with young people and children within the academy has not always been easy nor a straightforward pathway for academics. It has taken time for scholars to convince their colleagues of the following: that children and young people really matter; that they should not be marginalized by the academy; that they have competency and agency and play important roles in society; and that they should be taken seriously as people regardless of age or size. This 12-volume collection is material evidence of the academic importance of children and young people in our

world. The MRW is determinedly international in approach, in authorship, and in content. The huge diversity of nations and territories explored in the collection as well as the geographic locations of author contributors is a real testament to the commitment of the Editor-in-Chief and Volume Editors to be genuinely international. Children and young people are everywhere on the planet, hence it is imperative that this Series reflects that ubiquity. Drawing from scholars and scholarship from within and about the majority world has been a key achievement for each volume. Another aspect of inclusivity relates to authorship. Foundational, well-established, and early career scholars are all well represented throughout the volumes.

The 12 volumes work collectively as a series and also stand alone as single books. The volumes are lengthy and contain between 25 and 35 full chapters; each volume is an excellent resource of expertise, content, and analysis. Volume 1, *Establishing Geographies of Children and Young People*, is designed to pull together some of the foundational work in the sub discipline; demonstrate the emergence and establishment of particular philosophical, theoretical, and conceptual themes; and capture the diversity of geographic work on children and young people as it connects with other sub- and disciplinary approaches. This volume presents the key founding elements of the sub discipline. Volume 2, *Methodological Approaches*, explores the grand array of methodological approaches and tools that children's and young people's geographers, and other social and behavioral scientists, have worked with, adapted, and invented. Chapters explore research practices, techniques, data analysis, and/or interpretation. Working with younger people in research demands different ways of doing research and hence addressing the complexities of power relations. Methodologically, innovation and experimentation have been very important. *Space, Place, and Environment* (Vol. 3) takes these three central geographic concepts and debates and extends them. The volume is structured around five subsections: Indigenous Youth – Space and Place; Children, Nature, and Environmental Education; Urban Spaces; Home Spaces and Homeless Spaces; and Border Spaces. Several of these themes are explored in fuller depth in subsequent specialized volumes. Volumes 1 and 3 will be particularly useful starting points for readers less familiar with geography as a discipline. Volume 4, *Identities and Subjectivities*, is designed to focus on the stuff of life and living for younger people. The chapters examine who young people and children are and what their social identities and subjectivities mean in the context of their spatial experiences. The volume explores identity formation and the spatial meaning of identities and subjectivities in relation to a broad range of social relations. The chapters explore how young people's senses of selfhood and belonging emerge through complex processes of inclusion, exclusion, and marginalization and the important role played by representation, discourse, and creativity. In Vol. 5, *Families, Intergenerationality, and Peer Group Relations*, the focus is on the ways in which children and young people are relationally connected with others. Section I demonstrates that familial relationships and the spatiality of the home are extremely important in all children's and young people's lives, even though the patterns and structures of families and the spaces/places of home vary geographically and temporally. Section II innovatively examines the complexities

and spatialities of extrafamilial intergenerational relationships and the complex meanings of age relationality. Section III emphasizes children's and young people's relationships with one another. This includes work on geographies of emotion and affect, bodies and embodiment.

The mobility turn in geography has been highly influential in the social sciences. Children's and young people's geographers have been significant in the paradigmatic shift around mobilities and immobilities. In Vol. 6, *Movement, Mobilities, and Journeys*, contributors examine the role children and young people play in these "travels" in a range of diverse global contexts. The chapters collectively provide theoretical, empirical, and methodological insights and examples of actual movement combined with analysis of a range of complex contexts, spatialities, and temporalities that facilitate or hamper mobility. Volume 7 takes us into the realm of children and young people as political beings. *Politics, Citizenship and Rights* explores the political geographies of younger people in order to bring analytical attention to intricacies of the *policies* that specifically affect young people and children, alongside the *politics* at play in their everyday lives. Divided into four sections, the volume interrogates the spatialities of the rights of the child, children and young people's agency in politics, youthful practices and political resistance, and active youth citizenship. Volume 8, *Geographies of Global Issues: Change and Threat*, unites three broad research themes that are often examined separately: economic globalization and cultural change; international development; and children and young people's connections with climate change, natural hazards, and environmental issues. What pulls these themes together is the recognition that younger people are important actors and agents within these processes and that their engagement/disengagement is crucial for the planet's future. In Vol. 9, *Play and Recreation, Health and Wellbeing*, important, well-established, but often contentious foci of children's and young people's lives are examined conceptually, temporally, spatially, in practice, and through representation. Many of the debates about children's embodiment revolving around obesity, unfitness, wellness, and neglect are relatively new in the social sciences, and geographers have played important roles in their closer scrutiny. Volume 10, *Laboring and Learning*, provides an integrated and multidimensional approach to understanding what learning and laboring mean to children and young people. The two concepts are explored in depth and breadth in order to capture the variance of what work and education mean and how they are practiced in different places and at different times through childhood and youth. Key thematic areas for this volume include social reproduction, transitions, aspirations, and social and cultural capital. In *Conflict, Violence and Peace* (Vol. 11), the emphasis is on the ways in which children are impacted and affected by, and involved with, highly problematic and fragile conditions of war, violence, conflict, and peace. As more and more younger people experience a range of conflicts and social, economic, and political violence, it is essential to examine what happens to them and what roles they play in processes such as asylum, child soldiering, terrorism, counterterrorism, ending conflict, and building peace. Volume 12, *Risk, Protection, Provision and Policy*, serves to connect academic research and policy and planning that affects children and young people. Policy, planning, and provision

are often purportedly about reducing risk and offering protection but are also associated with the control and containment of younger people, particularly spatially. The chapters explore the ways in which policies at different scales affect children and young people in terms of their access to space and their life chances.

This Series is an extremely rich, varied, and vibrant collection of work centered on geographies of children and young people. Just as children and young people bring vibrancy, diversity, and complexity to our worlds, so this MRW is designed to showcase, deepen, and develop the geographic scholarship that captures, albeit partially, the fascinating social heterogeneity and diverse spatialities of children's and young people's lives.

National University of Singapore, Singapore
May 20, 2015

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Editorial: Geographies of Children and Young People. Methodological Approaches

Introduction

How to go about doing research with children and young people has presented many challenges and generated much debate within the field of geographies of children and young people. Since its inception as a field of enquiry, there have been three key pillars around which critical geographies of children and young people coalesce: the importance of children's agency, that childhood is a socio-spatial construction, and the need to include children's voices in research. This general consensus underpins the ways in which research with young people has been conducted within the field, and these remain critical to methodological approaches. The emergence of the field of geographies of children and youth has been tied to the new social studies of childhood (Christiansen and James 2000; Punch 2002) and increasing interests in the rights and participation of young people (Alderson 2001; Skelton 2007). As Holloway (2015) points out, these were not the only points of origin of geographies of children and youth. Participatory action research (Kindon et al. 2007), with its roots in Participatory Rural Appraisal in the Global South, has also played a role in influencing the methodological approaches and tools used to engage young people as active participants in the research process. Similarly, feminist methodological debates about ethical dilemmas and the positionality of the researcher have also shaped how geographers research *with* young people (Scheyvens and Leslie 2000; Morrow 2008). Nevertheless, the three central pillars outlined above, alongside concerns about participation and ethics, permeate the methodological approaches discussed in this volume.

The chapters in the volume demonstrate the range, creativity, reflexivity, and diversity of methodological approaches in geographies of children and young people. They present frank and honest accounts of how to engage young people in theoretically informed and creative ways. The valuable insights presented in the volume have potential resonances beyond the field of geographies of children and youth to geographies and social sciences more generally, by presenting critical evaluations and creative approaches. There is no reason why such a critical, reflective, and creative approach to methods and methodologies should not be used with a

range of participants, and this volume sets out what we, as a subdiscipline, can contribute to geography and the broader social sciences in terms of lively methodologies. A key feature of geographies of children and young people is the astounding diversity of spaces, places, and contexts in which young people's lives are explored. This volume demonstrates this diversity, which offers rich insights into methodological approaches. Often, the creative approaches discussed in the chapters arise from methodological challenges posed by researching young people and young people in specific contexts, such as in the past, young people on the move in various ways, or young people living on the streets. A theme which permeates the chapters is an endeavor to "go beyond" researching "with" children and young people to encouraging children and young people to be equal partners, with equal rights. A notion of transformation or transforming young people's lives is also present in many of the chapters. The chapters presented in the volume reflect the current state of methodologies and methods in geographies of children and youth and provide a timely and useful snapshot. There is an impressive array of approaches, tools, and techniques.

The volume is divided into two sections. The first set of 11 chapters present "Methodological Approaches," an endeavor to survey the overall epistemological and ontological approaches to research undertaken. The second set of nine chapters, "Methods, Tools, and Techniques," discuss in detail specific techniques and tools which have been developed to conduct research with children and young people in particular contexts. Of course, in many ways this is a clumsy and artificial division. There are clearly many links between methodology and tools and techniques used, and few of the chapters fit exclusively into one section or the other. However, readers can expect from the first section a leaning towards methodological, epistemological, and even ontological debate, whereas the chapters in the second section all provide the reader with some useful tools and techniques to apply, try, and introduce as options when working with young research partners, although this is not all they do.

Methodological Approaches

The first two chapters in this section throw out interesting methodological and epistemological questions, from divergent perspectives. Priscilla Alderson's chapter presents a valuable insight into critical realism as an approach which can resolve some of the central, epistemological tensions in social science, and therefore, geographies of children and young people, between positivist and interpretive approaches. Along with presenting a way of solving some enduring tensions and dichotomies in social science, such as structure and agency, Alderson argues that critical realism can serve as an approach which allows dialogue beyond academia and beyond geographies of children and youth by producing research which may be perceived to be "valid" across different academic perspectives and in the public and policy-making arena.

In writing about the possibilities and pitfalls of autoethnography as an insight into past childhoods, and an awareness of how our childhood memories remain an

embodied part of who we currently are, Peter Kraftl also raises some key epistemological questions about the nature of valid or valuable knowledge. His chapter discusses ontological questions about the nature of childhood and indeed the on-goingness of our childhood in our adult bodies. Kraftl confronts challenges directed at the “validity” of autoethnography. He emphasizes that autoethnography is a creative method and one which certainly does not produce replicable results which can be validated. Kraftl usefully reminds us that claims for validity, objectivity, and so on emerge from particular, masculinist and contested positivist perspectives. Kraftl emphasizes the potential of autoethnography to offer insights into the relational geographies of age, citing Hopkins and Pain (2007).

The following chapters by Hughes and Cooper, and Ruth Evans, provide critical, reflective, and honest accounts of the learning experiences involved in participatory action research. They open the box of ethical and methodological complexities, power-relations, and conflicts, which often go underreported in discussions of participatory research. Hughes and Cooper detail their project with young people living with Austerity in the UK, whereas Ruth Evans draws upon research in East and West Africa. Collectively, these chapters emphasize the potential limits and constraints on participatory video, when anonymity and confidentiality can be compromised. Ruth Evans suggests that participatory dissemination can be a way to bring together more and less powerful groups in “communities” in order to affect social change. Both chapters give insights into how participants can participate fully in all stages of the research, from inception to analysis and dissemination.

The chapter by Christina Ergler questions what it means to include primary school aged children as active partners in all stages of the research process, which is often heralded as the ideal approach. Drawing on her experience of a project in which children became the researchers, she suggests an approach which engages with children’s and young people’s own ways of knowing, capabilities, and preferences. Participation, Ergler argues, should be constantly negotiated and reframed through children’s active involvement in deciding in which stages of research they want to participate.

Reflecting that young people’s lives are characterized by mobility at smaller and larger scales (Holt and Costello 2011), researchers have begun to develop mobile methods. Three chapters in the volume detail researching with young people “on the move.” Heli Ponto reflects on young people’s micro-movements around the city of Helsinki, Daniela Sime considers how the voices and experiences of young migrants can be more fully incorporated into academic debates, and Van Blerk, Shand, and Shanahan explore the mobile geographies of young street people in Africa. Heli Ponto moves the lens fully onto the specific ethical dilemmas of research on the move. She suggests that the mobile research setting is unpredictable, and it is relatively difficult to control or plan for ethical dilemmas that arise. Such situations may include encountering people who threaten or make the child/young person feel uncomfortable and the need for researchers to recognize and facilitate their right to terminate the research encounter at any point, especially if the meeting is happening at a distance from the child’s home or school.

Daniela Sime reflects upon ethical dilemmas of researching with migrant children and young people who moved from Eastern Europe to Britain. Concerns of ethical responsibility, access, and gatekeepers are discussed, along with the complex and uncertain power-relations tied to gender, ethnicity, and language. Sime also points to the importance of critical awareness of the ways in which migrant children's lives are tied to, constrained by, and contextualized within powerful broader familial and community relations, themes which resonate with Evans' chapter. Sime, like Evans, and Hughes and Cooper, critically reflect upon the need to balance attempts to encourage young people's full participation in all elements of the project with ethical concerns to protect anonymity, confidentiality, and an awareness of power relations within "communities."

Van Blerk, Shand, and Shanahan explore the methodological challenges of employing young street people as researchers to maximize participation in all stages of the research. They point to the spatial *and* temporary complexities of life on the streets. They emphasize the need to research with young street people, whose experiences are often outside of academic debate, as well as often being positioned outside the decision-making process and enactment of policies.

By contrast to these methods "on the move," the geographies of the children in White and Tyrrell's chapter, which discusses ethical and methodological concerns of researching migrant children seeking asylum in Ireland, seem surprisingly static. The fraught mobilities of their asylum journeys stand in sharp contrast to the seemingly bounded place of the Direct Provision Centre. In amongst methodological and ethical attempts to "listen to" children's voices or "give voice" to children and young people, White and Tyrrell emphasize the importance of interrogating silences, which are often overlooked but are powerful and full of meaning and insight, as they demonstrate through examples from their research.

Space, place, and the socio-spatial relations that characterize them also frame the chapter by Samantha Punch and Elizabeth Graham, which discusses the methodological and ethical concerns of researching with children at home. In addition to reflecting upon the methodological and ethical practicalities and challenges, such as the ways in which interviews can be a forum for reproducing sibling rivalry or support, the chapter details some pragmatic tools for use with young people in the home, such as: interviews and task-based activities and group or individual interviews.

The section ends with Sharon Bessell's chapter, which focuses on the methodological, political, and ethical imperatives to foreground and preserve children's rights. Bessell argues that children's rights agendas point to the importance of preserving the rights and dignities of children and young people who participate in research, rather than simply suggesting the right to be included in research. Detailing some of the origins of rights-based research, this chapter also highlights how academics outside of critical geographies and social studies of children and youth continue to conduct research *on* children in ways that do not foreground their capabilities as actors and can deny children their rights. The section ends with this chapter, which is a salutary reminder of how much geographies and social studies of children and young people have achieved but also how much still needs to be done to

challenge the way children are conceptualized and positioned in research in many academic disciplines.

Methods, Tools, and Techniques

One of the great strengths of this volume, arguably, is the honesty and reflexivity with which authors discuss the practicalities of researching with young people. In the second section of the volume, authors move on from discussing more methodological concerns towards addressing the specific techniques and tools that can be used to research young people's lives. Taken as a whole, this section highlights the diversity and creativity of methods developed to take seriously the endeavor to research *with* rather than *on* children and young people. Most of the chapters in this section detail methodological concerns along with a specific account of tools and techniques that can be used for researching children and young people.

Multiple methods that seek to go “beyond the representational” and engage with specific ways of knowing typify many of the chapters in this second section, although authors frequently also consider how these can be used alongside more traditional methods. In the first chapter of the section, Matej Blazek details the development and use of participatory video as a technique to work in equal partnership with young people. The chapter also reflects upon some ethical and political dilemmas, many of which have resonance to the foregoing chapters, particularly those by Ruth Evans, and Hughes and Cooper. In particular, he emphasizes the careful role negotiation of the researcher as s/he moves from being a researcher to a partner, a facilitator, and sometimes even a counsellor and community negotiator.

Similarly, Thomas Grant's chapter develops a “tool-kit” of participatory methods, aimed at helping researchers to develop participatory approaches and methods which more fully engage with young people's ways of knowing. He discusses specific tools, ranging from Visual Techniques through Video and Film Techniques – Participatory Video, Diagram Techniques, Mapping, Matrixes, Ranking, and Scoring – Creative Techniques to Written Techniques. Grant reflects upon the potentials, possibilities, and problems of all of these techniques.

Reflecting upon the challenges of conducting research with young disabled people in Ghana, Stefanie Gregorius also provides a reflective account of a multiple method approach. She assesses using Participant Observation, Life Story Interviews, Focus Groups, Solicited Diaries, Participant-Directed Photography, and Participatory Video. Her detailed account provides insight into both how to use the tools she discusses and how to go about researching with groups who can be marginalized in challenging contexts. Gregorius reminds us to ensure that the “different preferences and varying abilities of young people with different impairments are taken into account” and “a multi-method approach can be inclusive and empowering,” highlighting that disabled young people are not a homogeneous group.

Farmer and Cepin reflect upon using visual methods to research mobility and transnationalism with young people in Canadian school spaces, using “multisited visual ethnography.” Specific techniques developed, which the authors describe as

“enabling methods,” including observation, language biographies, personalized body maps, and digital photography. The complexities of analysis and dissemination are also discussed, concerns which are often “quiet” in debates about participatory methods. The chapter details how qualitative methods such as group interviews become spaces in which children and young people take on the role of researchers, questioning each other and also the academics.

Like the majority of geographical studies of children and young people, most of the contributions to this volume detail research approaches for children in middle childhood or youth (see also Holt 2013). However, in an important contribution, Johnson, Hart, and Colwell outline methodological challenges and techniques for involving young children in research. Young children’s voices have been somewhat sidelined in the field, and this chapter provides a helpful entrée into conducting research with young children. Johnson et al. succinctly express the importance of including young children in our social and geographical research by detailing the negative consequences of their exclusion. They outline some useful techniques to engage young children, including interviews and discussion; in situ methods and child-led tours; visual methods including mapping; performance and narrative; play; and games.

Many of the examples drawn upon by Johnson et al. detail endeavors to include young people’s voices in broader community projects, mostly in the Global South. This stands in contrast to much of the field, where researching with children and young people is often the specific aim of the project. In a different context – Reading in the UK – Sally Lloyd Evans similarly reflects upon involving young people in a broader participatory project in a neighborhood somewhat “left behind” by the processes of global capitalism. Her detailed discussions of methods used to include young people within broader participatory projects have the potential to remind social scientists of the importance of including children and young people’s perspectives in all elements of community-based research.

The chapter by Smørholm and Simonsen provides insight into the possibilities of using children’s own drawings to encounter their emotional worlds, as part of a broader ethnographic approach. In particular, they consider how drawings can help to engage with troubling emotions, such as bereavement, drawing upon research in Zambia, Africa. Their detailed discussions of the intersections between drawing and conversation highlight how drawings can provide insight into the more-than-representational world of emotions. They point out, however, the importance of involving young people in the analysis of their drawings, by teasing out examples of when their initial interpretations were disrupted and challenged by conversations with the young people.

Time is a uniting theme in the next two chapters. In common with Peter Krafl’s chapter, Sarah Mills invites geographers of children and young people to explore past childhoods. Specifically, she introduces geographers of children and young people to the methodological possibilities of archives. Along with simply (and helpfully) highlighting what archives are and how they can be used to explore past childhoods, Mills explicitly engages with methodological and ethical complexities of researching past young people’s lives and the implications of digital technology.

The chapter by Gina Crivello discusses the methodological importance of incorporating time as well as space into our research with children and young people and details Longitudinal Qualitative Methods (LQM). Drawing upon three examples of studies that have used LQM, the chapter outlines specific methodological tools that can be used to conduct LQM and provides an excellent insight into how, practically, researchers can conduct LQM. This chapter provides insight into the way in which researchers can follow children's life trajectories as they move from childhood to youth and adulthood. It throws open many questions about the continuities between researching with children and adults and with children as they become adults, which could generate much future discussion and deliberation.

Concluding Thoughts

In sum, this collection showcases the diversity of geographical research conducted with young people in a variety of locations across the increasingly globalized world. It demonstrates the methodological reflexivity and integrity, and the creativity, of research in geographies of children and young people. It provides a useful companion for researchers new to the field, along with presenting learning opportunities and issues of debate and reflection for established scholars of geographies of children and young people and of the social studies of childhood and youth more broadly.

However, some gaps in the way we do children's geographies are apparent from this volume, both from the chapters that are present and from what is missing. First, there is a far greater tendency to listen to children's voices, exploring the agency of childhood rather than examining more fully the way childhoods are represented, which has resonance to how they are experienced (Jones 2013). Second, the research presented is overwhelmingly qualitative, with little large-scale quantitative analysis (see also, Holt 2006). Third, the chapters detail research with children and young people at a variety of ages, but there is little research conducted with very young children (although see Johnson et al.). Fourth, reading many of the chapters reminds us to consider how social differences of gender, class, ethnicity, race, disability, and so on shape young people's experiences (see also Evans and Holt 2011). Young people have different "preferences and varying abilities" (Gregorius), and we should not assume an able norm in our research design. Fifth, reading Bessell's and Lloyd-Evans' chapters reminds us of the need to engage beyond the subdisciplinary boundaries of children geographies and critical social studies of childhood. Disciplines and perspectives abound where young people's voices are little considered or when research continues to adopt a model in which children are treated as objects and their broader rights are disregarded. There is still more work to be done to challenge these approaches.

Finally, it is important to celebrate the many achievements, the diversity of approaches, and the critical, reflective, and creative nature of the methods and methodologies presented in this volume. This collection of chapters provides exciting epistemological, ontological, and practical insights into social research

methodologies, methods, and tools when researching geographies of children and young people.

Louise Holt
Ruth Evans

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Editor-in-Chief



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A/P Skelton is a recognized international leader in the subdiscipline of children's and young people's geographies. In particular, her work has served to challenge the invisibility and marginalization of young people from geographic academic research at the same time as it has demonstrated the rich and varied ways in which young people live their lives both spatially and temporally alongside, but differently from, adults. Her research work has been funded by key research institutions such as the Economic and Social Research Council and the Arts and Humanities Research Council of the UK; the Faculty of Arts and Social Science Academic Research Fund and the Global Asia Institute, both of the National University of Singapore; the Australian Research Council; and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

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Part I

Methodological Approaches

Critical Realism and Research Design and Analysis in Geographies of Children and Young People

1

Priscilla Alderson

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Abstract

There are several complications in the geographies of children and young people and in all social science, including the following three questions:

How can we resolve disagreements and even contradictions between empirical, evidence-based, factual, statistical research versus interpretive and social constructionist research into contingent beliefs, behaviors, and values?

How can we understand and respect each local culture and yet not fall into mere description and cultural relativism?

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Limited micro-observational studies of children can be superficial and misleading if they ignore powerful macro-causes that shape children's lives. How can short studies, without the time and resources of international longitudinal research such as Young Lives, take due well-grounded account of such macro-causal powers as global politics and economics?

The chapter will outline concepts in critical realism and relate them to research reports about children from around the world, in order to show how the concepts help to resolve these problems. The concepts are especially relevant at the stages of designing research projects and later of analyzing and interpreting data. The concepts include being and knowing; intransitive and transitive; theory/practice contradictions; social science and philosophy; the epistemic fallacy; the possibility of naturalism; closed and open systems; polyvalence; depth realism; structure and agency; natural necessity; power; predicting the future; absence, change, and emergence; macro- and micro-levels in research; four planar social being; and a four-stage process of analysis that will be discussed later.

Keywords

Bodies • Change • Cities • Contradictions • Critical Realism • Economics • Epistemology • Freedom • Ethics • Justice • Ontology • Politics • Rights

1 Introduction: Problems in Social Science

Natural scientists broadly agree with one another on their theories and methods. Although there is much debate about the precise and rigorous use of methods and about the validity of the findings, there is still major consensus about the following: empirical research methods (based on evidence gained through the five senses), positivism (proving hypotheses empirically), validity and the search for reliable generalizable findings, fallibility (skeptically testing and retesting hypotheses), technology (as the practical means of conducting and applying replicable scientific research), and policy (it should be based on sound, unbiased scientific evidence).

Quantitative and statistical social researchers tend to accept these certainties. For example, they may assume that standards in schools across the world can be verified and compared accurately, as long as rigorous tests are precisely conducted with each specific age group. An example is the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA [2012](#)) which tested a sample of 510,000 students selected from 28 million 15-year-olds from 70 “economies” or countries. The students’ recorded replies are taken as direct and valid evidence of their learning, in standardized formats that are measured and compared. Hypotheses about which educational methods are most successful are tested and then retested regularly. The global results, obtained through massive computerized programs, are taken to support valid education policies. And these are implemented through new teaching technologies and materials, both printed and virtual. Many materials are supplied through multinational corporations, such as Rupert Murdoch’s HarperCollins.

However, social science is complicated by disagreements between empirical and interpretive researchers. Many interpretive social scientists contest the above certainties. They deny scientism, the notion that natural and social science methods can be identical. “Rigor,” they argue, can be an empty aim, when strictly standardized methods do not fit the complex variety of social life. “Validated” findings, claimed to be generalizable, replicable, and therefore predictable, also ignore this social complexity. People, unlike chemical elements, are unpredictable agents. Students might be enthusiastic or afraid or confused when tested. They might be disadvantaged when required to work in their second or third language. They may have been intensively coached or else neglected by teachers. There is therefore no inevitable, direct link between children’s test results and their ability and potential. And when students vary so much, the relatively small samples can easily misrepresent each nation. “Empirical” research methods that rely on the five senses do not allow for tacit social interactions, contingent meanings, implicit values, or invisible social pressures and policies. Yet when power invades and “governs the soul,” it is most powerful when it is least visible and cannot easily be identified or challenged (Lukes 2005; Rose 1999).

Geographers have shown how social contexts and customs vary immensely around the world. Test questions can therefore be clear in one language but obscure in another; a single word can have very different meanings and associations. There are also moral and political complications in projects such as PISA. Some countries might seem to be highly successful when the governments allow testing only in elite schools or put pressure on teachers to alter the students’ replies. There are further problems in the methods. How can a small sample of students be representative? How and why are the exam questions chosen, and how can the choice be fair and equally relevant and meaningful to students in every country? Inevitably questions will favor some cultures over others, whereas should we not respect cultural diversity? How do cheap, fast, automated methods of mass testing change education, so that teachers “teach to the test?” Teaching is then reduced and fragmented into pass/fail notions of correct replies to specific, easily scored, closed questions (Scott 2010), instead of encouraging individual students’ critical and imaginative discovery and new thinking. Education risks being reduced wholly into a commodity, to be bought by parents and students in order to promote the students’ future earning power. This can leave little time or interest in education’s other crucial aspects, such as to promote critical democracy, and concern with justice and personal fulfillment, concepts that cannot be standardized or easily tested.

These are a few of many complications in social research, which raise doubts about natural science models of proving hypotheses empirically to supply unbiased scientific evidence as a sound basis for policies, practices, and technological developments. Interpretivists who are sensitive to these complexities regard empiricists as rather simplistic or naive for seeming to ignore them. In turn, empiricists question the value and purpose of interpretive research when it describes particular examples but does not generalize or produce sound evidence for politicians and practitioners to apply. When empirical and interpretive social scientists disagree on their basic tenets, they can hardly all convince politicians or the general public that

their work is worth taking seriously. Some consensus which increases the coherence and credibility of social science is therefore urgently needed.

This chapter will draw on ideas that are much more fully developed in Bhaskar (1998, 2008), Yoshida (2011), and Alderson (2013). It will review ways in which deep assumptions held by empirical researchers are defined in contradiction to those held by interpretive researchers. It will outline approaches toward resolving the contradictions, drawing on the strengths of each side, and overcoming weaknesses and omissions. This chapter will examine how we can understand and respect each local culture and yet move beyond description and cultural relativism toward critical and comparative analyses that can inform policies to benefit children. This will avoid relativism that vetoes moral judgments and critical analysis of power, and also vetoes comparisons of children's differing well-being, and normative conclusions intended to benefit people (Lukes 2008).

Concepts in critical realism to be reviewed, which help to resolve problems and contradictions in the theories, design, and analysis of research with children around the world, include: being and knowing; intransitive and transitive; theory/practice contradictions; social science and philosophy; the epistemic fallacy; the possibility of naturalism; closed and open systems; polyvalence; depth realism; structure and agency; natural necessity; power; predicting the future; absence, change, and emergence; macro- and micro-levels in research; four planar social being; and MELD.

2 Seven Contradictions Between Positivism and Interpretivism

Positivist and empirical researchers tend to assume the following seven tenets about their data, such as international comparisons of school students' PISA scores. The scores and indeed childhood itself, as in its Piagetian approach to developmental stages, can consist of (1) objective self-evident facts separated from values; (2) these are understood apart from their social context and as separate variables; (3) they are independent and pristine, so that whoever observes, records, reports, or reads about them sees the same fact. (4) Their essential inherent qualities and (5) stable lasting reality "out there" in the world can remain unchanged when transferred across time and space. (6) Positivist social research, modeled on the natural sciences, can therefore discover general laws, replicable findings, and reliable predictions. (7) This confidence encourages assumptions that "evidence-based" findings can provide self-evident conclusions about causes and effects in social life, which support effective solutions to public and private problems.

Despite the variety among interpretive childhood researchers' theories (for example, hermeneutic, ethnographic, phenomenological, postmodern, poststructural), they are more or less likely to fit into the following summary. However, the next seven points tend to contradict the seven previous ones. Interpretivism cautiously treats phenomena (again such as PISA scores or stages of childhood) as if they are (1) constructed or generated by subjective human perceptions and values and

negotiated interactions and (2) within specific social contexts and cultures. (3) Phenomena are contingent and depend on our individual social selves and perceptions, (4) as if phenomena have few or no essential, inherent qualities and (5) no independent, lasting truth or reality of their own that could transfer intact across time and space. They do not exist “out there” in the world but only through the social institutions and cultures that give them meaning. (6) Interpretivism recognizes dynamic unpredictable human agency, freed from biological, historical, economic, or religious determinism. (7) Connections between research data, conclusions, recommendations, and later policy making may be tenuous claims and constructions rather than self-evident conclusions.

3 Toward Resolving the Contradictions

These deep contradictions complicate the work of social scientists, such as children’s geographers. How can we convince critics, including our colleagues in rival subdisciplines, that our work provides valid findings to inform academic, political, practitioner, and public understanding of children around the world? How can we really know about children’s and young people’s views and experiences, needs, and rights? The next sections briefly outline a few of the ways in which critical realism works to resolve these contradictions and to strengthen and validate social science theories, methods, and findings.

3.1 Being and Knowing

Critical realism resolves these contradictions between facts and perceptions in several ways. First, it clearly separates *ontology* (factual being) from *epistemology* (perceptual knowing). For example, real children, who actually play in fields, learn at school, or work in street markets (ontology), differ from observers’ perceptions of them (epistemology). Whereas children are physical and social beings, childhood is a set of theories about what children and their relations with adults are, or could, or should be like. To confuse “children” and “childhood,” using them as interchangeable terms, is to blur this vital difference between realities and theories. *Intransitive being* needs to be distinguished clearly from our varied and shifting *transitive thoughts* and perceptions.

Social constructionists such as Latour and Woolgar (1979) would contend that everything comes down to our perceptions: through them, we experience and actually construct “reality.” This is partly true; our understanding and behaviors are immensely influenced by contingent and often perhaps fallible perceptions, our own and those of other people. The great variety of childhoods around the world illustrates the power of local beliefs and customs. This view may be taken to extremes to assert, first, that no child has an inner essential reality or, second, that even if such a reality exists, we can never truly know or prove it. We do not have valid grounds of knowing what we know. Instead, it is averred that it is more

accurate to see individuals and their experiences and relationships wholly in terms of their contingent beliefs. And if we could peel away the local layers of the onion of any individual identity, we would not find any essential center left.

Critical realists would reply to the first point: each child has unique, real, biological, genetic, historical origins and continuing social being; the heart constantly beats; there were specific birth parents; children live in particular material housing and neighborhoods, on actual daily resources that provide their food and clothing. Phil Mizen and Yaw Ofosu-Kusi (2012) draw on critical realism when discussing their analysis of photographs taken by children in the slums of Accra Ghana. They consider that it is not “naïve” to take the street children’s experiences and images as real instead of as only subjective social constructions. This is partly because the photos cannot be made by the viewer to mean simply anything and to have no inherent truth or reality. The photos have specific meanings that powerfully convey the “flatness” of real working children’s “wageless lives”:

That photography is so adept as record and memorial is testament to its powers of close description and capacity to initiate historical recall, an ability to affirm the existence, fabric and texture of other people’s lives in all their unfamiliar, edifying or pitiless forms. To fictionalize this function, as visual ethnographers are now encouraged to do, is to risk disabling these powers and possibly to concede that unforgiving worlds like those inhabited by our working children, together with the creativity with which they confront them, are merely a matter of invention. (Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi 2012, p. 12)

The researchers used the photos to record and extend their detailed ethnography and to deepen their discussions with the children and the insights they shared with them into their hard daily lives. Too many children were chasing too few opportunities to work:

The disposability of the children’s labor constantly threatens even the most basic and tenuous forms of work security, while the exclusionary practices of older, adult informal workers means they must work within spatially restricted order governed by the social regulation of space and gender. (Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi 2012, p. 46)

The second point (even if there is reality, how can we know or prove what we know?) is answered by the *theory/practice contradiction*. This means that even if researchers deny an independent universal reality, they still rely on the printed word; they send e-mails and publish journal papers. By assuming in practice that their words, language, and meanings can be read more or less intact anywhere, they accept and rely on universal reality even if in theory they deny it. By signing their work, they claim not only authorship and defense against plagiarism but also the certainty that their own identity exists and continues across time and space. To reduce interviewees’ accounts into social or moral constructs (for example, Silverman 2009, pp. 138–45) yet to treat their own text as authentic, direct communication sets up contradictory double standards. Critical realism aims to resolve such theory/practice contradictions by endorsing reality and thereby the practical relevance of our research for informing policy makers and practitioners.

3.2 Social Science and Philosophy

Readers may be thinking that this chapter is less about social science than about philosophy and so is not suitable for this encyclopedia. The chapter definitely does not aim to add in unnecessary philosophy and confusions. Instead, it is concerned with the practical work of unraveling basic and inescapable philosophical questions about being and doing, which are integral to all social science. When the ideas are ignored, they are left to exert their powerful underlying influences unnoticed and unchallenged. The philosopher Mary Midgley (1996) compares philosophy with plumbing, which is ignored until the taps and drains stop working, resulting in leaks and floods. The contradictions noted earlier are like taken-for-granted but disconnected pipes and blocked drains, which urgently need to be sorted, as this chapter aims to do.

3.3 The Epistemic Fallacy

When critical realism works to resolve differences between positivism and interpretivism by drawing them together, a first step is to note how both of them collapse being into thinking (the *epistemic fallacy*), things into thoughts, real children wholly into perceptions of them. Interpretivists do so by their emphasis on perceptions, interpretations, and theories (thinking). Positivists do so by collapsing observed or reported realities (such as children's daily experiences, living, doing, and being) into data: graphs, statistics, variables, and the results of tests and experiments. All of these translate the original being into words and numbers (thoughts). While this is inevitable in research reports, there is the risk that researchers' representations are mistaken for the original reality or are more highly valued than that.

Long academic traditions favor the epistemic fallacy, which sets thinking over being. Descartes, for example, hoped to prove his own existence, and by extension any other being, by asserting, "I think therefore I am." His egoism, which collapsed reality into his own perceptions, has gradually been challenged. Yet the view still predominates that reality can only be known and translated through the human mind. Critical realism emphasizes that social reality is concept dependent but is not exhausted by concepts. Instead reality extends independently in time and space far beyond our concepts of it, as geographers recognize when they accept that the communities they research continue to exist before and after their visits. Critical realism does not try to invent new problems. Instead it works to unravel and resolve them and to show how seemingly disconnected though widely held views (such as positivism and interpretivism) can both logically be held.

3.4 The Possibility of Naturalism: Closed and Open Systems

As already mentioned, *scientism* mistakenly assumes that natural and social science methods can be identical. Critics of scientism tend to assert that natural science deals with things and is very different from social science, which deals with ideas.

However, each one deals with both things and with ideas when they explain and link causes to effects through the imaginative leap toward an abstract hypothesis. Newton's theory of gravity and Darwin's theory of natural selection are examples. These invisible causal powers can never be directly sensed or proved; they are only known in their visible effects and as reliable explanations that have not yet been disproved. Critical realism therefore recognizes the *possibility of naturalism* (Bhaskar 1998) that there can be unity though not uniformity between the methods of the natural and social sciences.

Newton moved beyond observing falling objects to theorize a hidden power, gravity, which causes the falling. Similarly, it is a strength not a weakness or "bias" in social science to trace the powerful, unseen, abstract, structural causes. These include class, race, gender, and, as Leena Alanen and Berry Mayall contend (2001), generation, in how they are associated with children's higher or lower levels of health or educational success.

To stop analysis at the level of observing and describing would be like trying to trace the causes of the falling within the observed objects or in the patterns between them. Similarly, studies of poverty would search for its causes in many variables, such as types of housing, diet, parenting, or schooling. Yet this can confuse correlation with cause and miss deeper causal analysis.

Powerful as gravity is, it cannot have total or 100% effects. Birds, planes, and spiraling leaves show the counteracting powers of flight, engines, and air currents. However, although they defy gravity, they do not disprove it. Similarly, social causes do not have 100% effect. Some disadvantaged children are very successful at school. They defy adverse structures of poverty and inequality but they do not therefore disprove them.

Critical realism clarifies this confusion. It contrasts *closed systems*, which have a single overwhelming force and almost never occur, with *open systems*, when two or more causal powers compete. Once complex uncertainties in natural science are accepted, then complex ones can be more accepted in the social sciences too.

It is therefore illogical of critics of social theories to assume that exceptions, such as the rare disadvantaged children who are highly successful, can disprove and dismiss theories about class as simply "weak and politically biased." "If these children can succeed," critics argue, "it proves anyone can if they only try hard enough. The problem is not inequality, but lack of personal ambition and effort." Like the American dream, this view reduces problems of political structures into personal (in)abilities and blames those who fail. Yet this sets unrealistic, 100% closed system standards of proof of social theories. And social science involves many more competing forces in complex open systems than the natural sciences do. It is therefore even more logical to accept that there are open systems in the social sciences than in the natural sciences. Like evolution, class structures are determining, they explain and influence events. They are not determinist, they do not wholly control them. When disadvantaged children succeed at school, structures such as class may be countered by chance or by high standards of teaching, by friendships, and by other influences, whereas without these influences, many other children who work equally hard will fail.

Social and natural unseen causal powers are only known through their observed effects. Social powers are apparent in social behaviors, policies, and outcomes. The possibility of naturalism opens social science to being more widely accepted as able to produce reliable evidence, analysis, and conclusions to inform policy and public opinion in the ways natural science is assumed to do.

3.5 Polyvalence and Depth Realism

Darwin and Newton moved beyond the obvious and visible into the controversial and invisible. Darwin's theory of invisible natural selection outraged public and religious belief that humans are created by God and not "descended from apes". For millennia, everyone believed Aristotle's view that stones fall because of the power within them, their *gravitas*. Newton challenged not only Aristotle but also the conservative view that we must respect tradition instead of relying on our own experience and imagination.

There are two reasons for emphasizing these points in relation to children's geography. First, controversy and politics can arise in both the natural and social sciences. Second, ever since Plato, philosophers have stressed that we must adhere to the visible and present and never study "what is not." Bhaskar (2008) terms this *monovalence* or the single value of the present. This continues today in the stress on (visible) evidence. Yet Newton and Darwin give a few of many examples of the need to look below visible evidence to what seems to be missing in invisible real causes. *Polyvalence* analyzes both visible and invisible presence and seeming absence.

Tamaki Yoshida's (2011) study of physical punishment in primary schools in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, shows how critical realism attends to *depth realism* or the three layers of reality: actual, empirical, and real. The *empirical* layer involves how we sense, observe, record, and interpret experiences. During interviews, children expressed their pain after they were punished by having to kneel for hours on the hard floor:

Then tomorrow, tomorrow when you wake up these legs would hurt so much that you cannot even go to school. Because everywhere in your legs would hurt. (Yoshida 2011, p. 160)

The children also talked about the anger and potential violence generated among them by such punishment. Teachers spoke of hope and enthusiasm in their work but also of the severe difficulties of controlling classes of around 100 children in hot crowded rooms with few teaching resources. Those who failed the end-of-year exams had to repeat the year, possibly several times, so that each class included a range of age groups. This repetition seriously reduced families' income when they had to pay for unhelpful schooling and when children who were at school were not being paid workers. Poverty and high unemployment rates increased parents' and children's great anxiety that the children should do well at school in order to

increase their chance of finding reasonably paid work afterward. However, schools had no resources for the work of identifying learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, or for skilled remedial help for the many children with extra learning needs or for those who missed weeks and months of school because of illness or family crises. Children were punished for the failings of the schools and education systems. Long-term devastating effects included a widespread sense of shame and hopelessness. Robert Serpell (1993) analyzed meanings of children's "intelligence" in several African languages. He showed how *nzelu* involved three dimensions, of wisdom, cleverness, and responsibility, all vital for the well-being of rural Zambian communities. Sadly, the local schools did not respect or nurture these capacities, and they left 80–95% of young people and adults Serpell contacted feeling that they were "brainless" failures. This ignores the competent agency of so many children in Africa, for example, Meintjes et al. (2010).

The second visible *actual* layer involves the people, things, and events that actually existed or occurred and could be observed. Besides the empirical and actual levels is the deeper third level of *real causal structures*, real because, like gravity and evolution, they create and are known by their effects. They include politics and economics. In 2003, an estimated 92% of Tanzania's urban population lived in slums, 11 million people (Davis 2006: 24; UN-HABITAT 2003). Slums involve unplanned, insecure housing that can be demolished at any time, from a legacy of Black Africans not being allowed to own land or be recognized as citizens with rights. Slums lack piped utilities and sewerage, while megatons of rubbish lie uncollected (Davis 2006), contrary to children's basic health rights (UNCRC 1989, Article 24). Yoshida's ethnography described her experiences of extremely inefficient housing, electricity, transport, and education administration services in the city. However, the structural causes extend far beyond Africa. When granting loans to countries (and so trapping them more deeply into debt), the US-based World Bank forces strict limits to their public service budgets. African schools are then grossly underfunded, with underpaid teachers in under-resourced classes. In countless ways, children's daily lives are tightly constrained by national and global pressures.

Real structures include unequal power between nations, historical legacies of violent empires, and neoliberal policies to promote commerce and to cut and privatize state services including schools. Though mainly invisible and seemingly absent, real political structures are a vital part of explanations about daily life (Archer 2003, 2013; Harvey 2005, 2012; Keenan 2012; Mason 2012; Mizen and Wolkowitz 2012; Nadesan 2010; Nieuwenhuys 2005; Qvortrup 2005; Serpell 1993; Wacquant 2009; Young Lives 2014).

3.6 Structure and Agency, Natural Necessity, and Power

Critical realism analyzes how *agents* draw on *structures* and are powerfully enabled but also constrained by them. The underlying structures in the previous section precede individual agents yet are also constantly reproduced and refined by and through them (Bhaskar 2008; Archer 2003). To recognize the great power of

adverse structures can increase respect for the relatively few agents who manage to surpass them, as when children succeed educationally despite severe economic disadvantage. Causes can also include people's agency in their hopes and intentions, which become real when they have actual outcomes.

Structures and agents express their *natural necessity*. In humans, that is the reality of our natural-social essentially moral human being that compels us into thought and action. From the first years (Dunn 2004; Alderson 2014), children and adults see people, things, and events largely in moral terms of benefit, respect, and justice (Maybin 2014). Social research is therefore misguided and distorted if it attempts to be "objective" by setting morality aside. Moral questions are central not only to all methods through the research process (Alderson and Morrow 2011) but also to all the research topics and analyses (Sayer 2011).

Children's geographies are imbued with moral questions, such as of justice. However, political research, for example, about respecting or withholding the spaces, freedoms, rights, and resources of people, is mainly about adults or about younger adults versus older ones (such as Harvey 2012; Howker and Malik 2010; Wacquant 2009). Mainstream "adult" research reports and debates mainly ignore the particular needs, interests, and rights of children and young people, although one third of the world's population and up to one half of the people in Africa are aged under 18 years. The wealth of findings in childhood geographies research could greatly inform and expand these debates.

Conversely, despite repeated urging from Qvortrup (2005) and others, childhood research rarely attends to the multilayered politics and structures that control childhoods. Such multilayered research by Katz (2004) and Nadesan (2010) is fairly unusual. So children tend to be doubly excluded from vital debates about policy making, when they are ignored in adult-centered work and when childhood research is largely apolitical. And yet today's children will live through the effects of these policies for many more decades than will the older adults who dominate today's debates.

One reason for the exclusions is ambiguity about the politics of children as citizens. Most of the related research examines how children learn to become citizens, rather than how they are active citizens now in legal, political, and economic contexts. Another reason is that most childhood research is funded to be conducted with only quite small groups of children and in sheltered rather than openly public settings. And large projects such as the longitudinal birth cohorts, which measure and describe thousands of childhoods, tend to eschew political analysis, saying that it is too early to judge the effects of government policies (e.g., Hansen et al. 2010). The 15-year-long Young Lives (2014) program is unusual in drawing together micro- and macro-, qualitative and quantitative, local and international, personal, political, and economic levels.

Central to critical realism's analysis of morality are concerns with power. To avoid a common confusion, critical realism separates power₁, which is creative emancipatory power, from coercive oppressive power₂. (The numbers are part of the two terms for power, not end notes.) Human beings are seen as constantly aiming to work away from power₂ and through power₁ toward freedom (Bhaskar 2008).

Although rights and freedoms are sometimes classed as “Western” values, the wave of mass protests demanding freedom and justice around all continents during this century has shown how these concerns are universal and greatly involve young people (Mason 2012). Yet so far, we know little about important questions of how and when their practical political engagement begins in childhood, although awareness begins very early (Connolly et al. 2009).

3.7 Predicting the Future

Natural science involves making reliable predictions based on replicable experiments. Social scientists hesitate to predict futures, when these are likely to be disproved quickly by uncertain and complex open social systems and unpredictable human agency. Their critics then ask, “What is the point of social research if it can tell us nothing about the future?” However, natural scientists’ predictions are also limited. For example, they cannot be certain about the weather and if it will rain at a certain time and place weeks ahead. Yet they can predict far longer-term climate change trends (with agreement among 97% of climate scientists) in that if fossil fuel emissions continue to increase, there will be catastrophic global warming (IPCC 2014).

There are similar limits in social science predictions. Small and individual futures, the empirical and actual (like local weather), cannot certainly be predicted. But deep third level structural trends (like global climate change) may partially be foreseen although, as with natural science, exact rates and dates remain uncertain. David Harvey (2005), Naomi Klein (2007), and others predicted the structural series of global financial crises and neoliberal takeovers. Jeremy Keenan (2012) traced decades of adverse Western political and economic interventions in Algeria, which drove the underlying trends that constructed the “war on structures terror” there. These deeper causal analyses help to explain the present predicaments of many of Africa’s children and young people and their likely futures of increasing inequality and poverty, protest, violence, and forced migration unless changes occur at underlying structural levels. Critical realism’s three layers of reality can help to increase areas of certainty.

There is pessimism among childhood researchers about children being ignored in national and global politics (Smith and Greene 2014). That points to important reasons for geographers to connect their macro- and micro-studies into political and long-term trends. These include: to begin to repair serious, unjust omissions of children from global policy; to understand and explain “adult” researchers’ actual and empirical observations more deeply and accurately by also taking account of children; to avoid superficial and misleading adult-centered analysis; to show the real value of research about children’s views, experiences, and rights; and to inform present and future policy making more fully and accurately.

3.8 Absence, Change, and Emergence

Research with children tends to be like snapshots, fixed into time and set age groups, in contrast to films that follow process and dynamic change over time. Even longitudinal projects may be disjointed when they review children at intervals every few years. To trace processes, three concepts in critical realism can be particularly useful. These are absence, change, and emergence.

Plato's veto on studying nonbeing or *absence* has been mentioned. Awareness of absence as well as presence is vital for understanding change. Absence includes all that ever was or will be or might have been or might be or is elsewhere. Absence includes ignorance (absent knowledge) and unmet need. Bhaskar gives the example of the monsoon that never arrives so that the crops fail. Absence is an almost infinite ocean, whereas the fleeting present moment, the positive, is "a tiny, but important, ripple on the surface of the sea of negativity" (Bhaskar (2008, p. 5).

Negativity includes the vital work of absencing absence, such as when learning absents ignorance, food negates hunger, or clean water prevents disease. A world packed with presence has no spaces for movement, for change, or for alternatives. Yet as children become young people and then adults, we have to recognize their "begoining" and the gaps and spaces, losses, and absences left behind, as well as the so-far empty spaces and potential they move into. For example, as they move toward greater independence, they leave behind the very close intimacy with those who care for them, which they enjoyed as babies.

To understand *change* involves seeing how it contrasts with *difference*. For instance, if one child leaves a room and another child enters it, a different child is in the room but there has not been transformative change. Real change occurs when, for example, a child learns to read; she becomes more independent and less reliant on others to read stories or instructions or websites to her. Her relationships and identity, her scope for making choices, and her understanding of the world are transformed. Another example is when children start to use public transport on their own and can roam far more freely and confidently.

Bhaskar (2008) considers that denial of absence and of begoining prevents us from understanding change and becoming. Instead, for millennia, researchers have concentrated on *difference*; on classifying and grouping things, species, age groups, and other concepts; and on identifying differences between *the one and the many*. Taxonomy assigns objects and people into fixed groups according to their function. Child/adult, reason/emotion, and mind/body are among the countless resulting dichotomies that dominate our thinking.

In contrast, research about change involves recognizing both continuity and transformation or *the one and the other*. In growing older, the child continues to be the same one person as well as the other different person. Child and adult can be seen as dynamic, dialectical aspects of the same person, with many continuities as well as differences. We are our past and present and becoming selves in constantly changing patterns.

This continuity can be seen as *emergence*. Just as water emerges from hydrogen and oxygen, so consciousness emerges from the mind, which emerges from the brain, which emerges from the body. They cannot be collapsed or separated back into their original elements although they remain interacting and interdependent, in dialectical relationships. Since change, emergence, and personal and political transformation are so central to childhood and to child-adult relations, critical realism offers crucial insights for researching them, though there is space here only to outline these ideas briefly (see Bhaskar 2008; Alderson 2013, 2016).

3.9 Macro- and Micro-levels in Research

It is not easy for childhood researchers working on small-scale short studies to set their qualitative material into broader political contexts. One way to do so is to “nest” their work into literature reviews and references to larger projects. Another is to show how their research can involve larger levels of analysis. For example, a study of preschools can refer to how and why they were set up and to their policy contexts, such as the education of future workers and consumers or promotion of mothers’ fuller employment, and to examine how these aims affect the children and their daily routines.

Even topics as domestic as nannies may involve global economics. Olga Nieuwenhuys (2005, p. 168) showed how a vast pyramid of global labor and power, wealth, and care is invisibly displaced upward, supported by the poorest children at the base. Filipino nannies on low wages in California are subsidized by the lower-paid women who care for the nannies’ children in the Philippines. In turn, unpaid adults and children care for these women’s children.

Critical realism offers two major ways of organizing and synthesizing these kinds of diverse and wide-ranging materials, four planar social being and MELD, which will now be reviewed.

3.10 Four Planar Social Being

Critical realism sets human life into four areas or *planes of social being*. The first plane is our *material bodies in relation to nature*. Social researchers tend to emphasize the mental over the physical, our social and mental understanding, and manipulation and presentation of our bodies over our physical sensations and animal needs. This aspect of the epistemic fallacy (to set the mental over the physical) is part of the general undervaluing of nature since the Enlightenment, which has led among many other effects to current ecological crises (Bhaskar et al. 2010; IPCC 2014). Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2012, p. 15) illustrate critical realism’s attention to real bodies and nature in their unusually evocative physical and sensuous description of life in a slum in Accra Ghana that houses up to 40,000 people:

[N]either its myriad shacks nor extensive network of alleyways and footpaths appear on city maps. . . [The slum] is a hive of industry with its metal recycling businesses, fruit and vegetable markets, street vendors, waste pickers, and auto parts and repair shops, the most visible signs of its importance as a place of work. Ringed to the west by the river Odaw, its foul-smelling and dark viscous contents somehow edging downstream into the now-toxic Korle Lagoon, parts of the settlement are regularly flooded during the rainy season. On occasions when the fetid contents of the river invade the settlement, it leaves behind torpid pools of evaporating water that harbour mosquitoes and water-borne diseases. There is no legal supply of mains electricity, running water, sewerage system or organized public waste collection. Emanating from the scattered detritus, discarded human and animal faeces, smouldering rubbish, primitive toilets and nearby vehicles, the settlement is cloaked by foul odours carried on the warm winds blowing in from the nearby Gulf of Guinea.

Young children who have not yet acquired immunity to infections are most at risk of disease when they play in the filthy alleyways. Over 50% of all people now live in cities, and dominant economic views encourage this migration despite the absence of planning to meet the basic needs of many millions. However, realistic micro-studies of children's physical lives in this "planet of slums" (Davis 2006) can crucially inform economic and political debates.

The second social plane is *interpersonal relationships*, and Mizen and Ofoosu-Kusi (2010, p. 444) again illustrate how critical realism can inform childhood studies. They portray the noble, generous agency, the hardiness, and also the vulnerability and reliance on interdependent relationships of young people aged 13–15 years in the slums. Erico said:

A friend may ask you for something and when you refuse, one day you will also be in need and if your friend does not help you, you may think your friend hates you, but it is because of what you did, so you must always help, so that one day your friend can help you.

The third plane is *social structures*. Critical realist Douglas Porpora (1998, p. 339–55) identified different concepts of social structures. Structures may be seen as patterns of aggregate behavior that are stable over time. Childhood is an example, but this agency-dominated concept suggests that structures endure through repeated "childish" and "adultish" behaviors. It does not explain how mature children (and immature adults) step inside or outside these conventions.

Another concept emphasizes culture, rules, and resources that generate systems and relationships, reproduced across time and space while varying around the world. Again, agents seem to have undue power to choose between structures, whereas millions are trapped unwillingly into oppression and disadvantage.

An alternative concept sees structures as lawlike regularities that govern the behavior of social facts. Structural functionalists observe and measure many behaviors before searching for regularities that will indicate almost inevitable underlying structures, such as poverty or "social capital" or crime (Cunha et al. 2010; Dercon and Singh 2011). Porpora questions how this concept of structure can predominate so much over agency and over individuals' beliefs, decisions, and psychology.

Finally, Porpora's preferred model is social structures seen as systems of human relations among social positions. Rather than being underlying or external rules to

be invoked, structures exist as powerful and enduring systems and positions in and through social relations, though they far precede and outlast individual agents. These structures include modes of production, domination, competition, exploitation, and unequal social positions between classes and age groups. “Modes of production” and reproduction during childhood include parents bearing and caring for their children and teachers instructing and socializing them to produce the finished adults. This broad concept of powerful structures allows for individual variety, interactions, and resistance. And it also recognizes tensions between competing structures within open social systems.

Adversity can starkly reveal inexorable social and physical structures. The challenges of living in the Accra slum violently confronted the children with the social structures of gross poverty and inequality and the many absences of unmet needs in the chaotic unplanned city spaces, the dangerously unregulated employment, and the unmanaged refuse, traffic, housing, and crime. In contrast, in well-organized wealthy city spaces, the same dangerous social structures tend to be concealed and smoothly managed so that citizens need hardly to be aware of them. These range from piped utilities to police protection and from city planning to massive systems for delivering necessary goods and removing unwanted waste.

The fourth plane of social being is *inner being and flourishing* and the kinds of societies, intergenerational relations, cities, and schools that either undermine or promote this flourishing. The fourth plane involves further huge topics for research working with and for children and young people, and there is space here only to mention but not discuss them.

3.11 MELD

MELD offers another framework for organizing and explaining complex research and for relating micro-data into macro-contexts. MELD is an acronym for four stages of social process, and dynamic change, and how one stage pushes inevitably forward into the next stage over time. Based on Hegel’s three-part dialectic (thesis, antithesis, synthesis), MELD expands dialectic into four parts and is open to diverse meanings and uses.

IM stands for *first moment*, nonidentity and absence. It recognizes the independent, intransitive being that exists beyond transitive thinking (see above). This links to anthropologists’ standing back, trying to respect others on their own terms, to avoid imposing the observers’ thinking and classifying onto these independent beings. Critical realists try to avoid anthropism, which reduces all being (all nature and other species) into human being and thinking. Childhood researchers also aim to move beyond adultism, which assumes that adults are at the center of the meaning, purpose, and functioning of the cosmos, with childhood as merely a prelude, when instead they listen to children and try to see observed experiences from their viewpoints. Robert Adomo (2013) mentions sacred aspects of inalienable human dignity and our need, beyond precise verbal reason, partly to apprehend it intuitively.

1M is concerned with the actual, the empirical, and also the seemingly absent reality. Childhood is often seen as absence or an emptiness of the powers and qualities that adults have. Yoshida's research in Tanzanian schools showed how children are expected to be silent and "empty" in the sense that in Swahili, *watu wazima* means full people or adults. Yoshida researched children's own views, their moral agency, and the many ways in which their hard work at school and at home tended to be unnoticed by adults. Nieuwenhuys's (2005) pyramid of global labor (see above) is another example of research that moves beyond the actual and empirical lives of Californian children into the hidden subsidies taken from unpaid childminders in the Philippines.

2E is *second edge*, negativity and power₂. Like Hegel's second stage of antithesis, 2E explores problems, needs, and contradictions. The aim is to begin to intervene and to seek to resolve contradictions in research or to plan and implement new policies. The power, accuracy, and relevance of 2E depend on thorough questioning at 1M. One practical example of 2E was when some of the Tanzanian teachers and parents raised funds to provide a daily porridge meal to help the hungry children to concentrate more in class (Yoshida 2011, p. 181).

3L, *third level*, is about building a more inclusive open totality than Hegel's closed third stage of synthesis envisaged. In 3L, nothing is infinite, fixed, or final. Totalities are internally connected and integrated, but they are also always partial and they interact with other totalities: in a (total) child, in a family, in a class, in a school, in a district, in a country, and in the world of many other totalities in open systems. Again, researchers' and policy makers' understanding and responses to totalities depend on the informed care previously taken at 1M and 2E. If they leapt earlier to premature misunderstandings, then splits, fragmentation, unresolved contradictions, and continued violence are likely to follow.

4D, *fourth dimension*, involves self-transformative agency and power₁, through desire for change and praxis, seeking to move away from power₂ and toward a society where "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (Marx and Engels 1848). This crucially involves critical new self-awareness, gained through the MELD process, which can impel agents to begin again at 1M in new cycles.

Yoshida (2011) shows how MELD can trace positive or negative cycles. False beliefs at 1M, of children's assumed deficits, can lead on at 2E to punitive power₂ policies and interventions. These can reinforce 3L oppressive systems and totalities and lead, at 4L, to denial of the critical personal and political awareness that can transform adverse power relations. Then the self remains alienated and detotalized in MELD and on the four planar social being. Among many examples are children's internalized deep feelings of shame, pain, and fear when they are physically punished. Yoshida gave a more political example when adults and children held a big protest about the Dar es Salaam council's plan to double the *dala dala* (public minibuses) fares, until the police dispersed them with teargas. Some children had to travel many dangerous miles to school. The buses greatly increased their freedom and autonomy, whereas higher fares posed serious problems for them. The authorities missed the chance that the protests raised of revising their policies. Yet they

were constrained by higher powers such as the World Bank. Real transformation has to happen at every level.

Dynamic MELD offers ways to analyze how benign progress but also malign cycles drive inexorably on from one moment to the next. Politicians are often criticized for making policies that harm children. MELD analyzes how directions cannot simply be changed. It is necessary to begin the whole process again by careful review at initial 1M if we are to change society, people, and structures and to avoid starting at 2E or 3L by trying to paste superficially different models on to past ones.

4 Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to highlight major current problems and gaps in social research and to outline a few from many ideas in critical realism that can help to resolve these problems and contradictions. Although the chapter has involved unraveling some underlying philosophical complications, such as between empiricists and interpretivists, the purpose has been practical: to enable geographers of children and young people to design, analyze, and report more logical, realistic research, intended to inform policies and practices to benefit children. Examples reviewed include four planar social being, which offers ways to synthesize a wide range of relevant micro- and macro-material even in brief small-scale studies. In the four stages of MELD, 1M lays the basis for explanatory social science critique of process over time; 2E pushes toward concrete visions for the future; and 3L theorizes transition and change, totalities, and interactions between agency and structures and theory and practice that impel analyses into 4D, which can then involve reflective transformation.

This chapter has also briefly reviewed how dichotomies can be reframed as interacting dialectics, how invisible underlying causes can be analyzed, and the need to avoid cultural relativism, so that due account can be taken of the morality that is inherent in all social life, perhaps especially in unequal adult-child power relations.

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Memory and Autoethnographic Methodologies in Children's Geographies: Recalling Past and Present Childhoods

2

Peter Kraftl

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Abstract

This chapter examines how children's geographers have attempted to access, represent, and recall past experiences of childhood. Recognizing that children's geographers' research endeavors have rarely extended to historical contexts, I nonetheless examine one set of approaches for accessing childhood past: autoethnographic methodologies. Initially, I frame the chapter in a recent turn within geography and other disciplines to memory studies, which now inflect earlier debates in children's geographies about the problems of accessing childhoods that are demonstrably “other” to adulthoods. Specifically, I examine how these debates raise important questions for the methodologies that might be developed to engage childhoods, past or present. Thereafter, I assess autoethnography – an ethnographic methodology in which the academic self takes center stage – as a way of interrogating and broaching thorny questions

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about the “otherness” of (past) childhoods. I provide some examples from my own life/work, using these to identify the key features and advantages of autoethnography. Subsequently, some key criticisms and limitations are identified, of which other scholars wishing to use autoethnography should be aware. Some of these criticisms are articulated in light of other possible methodologies for witnessing (past) childhoods. In conclusion, I argue that consideration of autoethnography – and reconsideration of questions about the otherness of childhood – also has implications for how children’s geographers research contemporary childhoods in the present.

Keywords

Autoethnography • Childhood memories • Children geographies • Memory childhood • Recalling past childhoods (*see* childhood memories)

1 Prologue (Adapted from Horton and Kraftl 2006a)

My First Day in School: January 1985 I didn’t cry. Actually, I don’t remember if I cried, because I put my hand on a door which had just been painted. Five-year-olds can be embarrassed – very embarrassed. It took probably a couple of teachers a considerable amount of time to get the paint off. The next day (I think), I got a “very bad” for a piece of handwriting; things weren’t going well. But I remember thinking that they should have been, that I was stupid for having done these things, almost feeling angry. I am sure I felt that, even though it’s easy to transplant those feelings from then to now. I remembered that door for the remaining years of my primary school career – every time I went through it, I waited for the stickiness of brown paint on hand, the smell of what I now know was white spirit, the reddening cheeks, *feeling hot*, facing the class when I came back.

A Supermarket: June 2005 A few months ago, I met a teacher in the supermarket who taught me French [in secondary school]. When she’d gone, I said to my mum (rather loudly) “she hasn’t changed a bit!” Still standing behind me when I turned around, my ex-teacher gave a little cough and a smirk and walked away. I *felt hot* and, honestly, thought about brown paint.

An Office in the Department of Geography, University of Leicester: October 2014 We had just successfully completed a short-answer test for 100 undergraduate students. The test took place in one of our large lecture theaters. At the end of the test, the students passed their scripts along to us. We didn’t take a register or count the students. No need: we could just count the scripts. I collected them, along with one of my colleagues. As soon as we got back to my office in the Department, we counted the scripts. 99 scripts.

With some pride and self-congratulation, we marked the scripts within 24 h. I counted them. 99 scripts. I returned them to our Departmental Administrator.

Two days later, our Departmental Administrator e-mails me to tell me two scripts are missing. Impossible. I am careful – careful to the point of obsession – with things like this. I always have been. Yet, 101 students should have taken the test, but there were only 99 scripts. I've never made a mistake like this. The *hot feeling* comes back as I stare at the computer screen in disbelief. I did everything right. We still had 99 scripts. Damn.

We e-mail the two students concerned. One wasn't there. But the other definitely was. In fact, I recognized her at the time. Now what?

A few days later, I meet the student to try to explain what happened. We have no other option. Actually, we don't know what happened, but the only remaining option is that one of the students failed to pass along her script to us. So: not our fault, not my mistake, if that matters. But, as I sit there, facing her, I feel my *cheeks flush* as I tell her she will have to take the test again. Suddenly, as she leaves my office, apparently happy enough to do the test again, I think about brown paint.

2 Introduction

An underpinning tenet of research on children's geographies has been that children be viewed as social actors in their own right. By extension, rather than view children as "becomings" – future adults – children are considered to be "beings": social actors *in the present* (Aitken 2001; Uprichard 2008; Worth 2009). While debates about agency, being, and becoming rage on in the subdiscipline and beyond, a key implication of viewing children as "beings" has gone relatively unnoticed. For within the laudable political imperative to attend to children in the present, children's geographers have tended to neglect the *past*. As Sarah Mills notes in this volume, children's historical geographies remain few and far between. Indeed, this means that fundamental questions that have become the mainstay of children's geographies – around voice, ethics, and participation – have only recently been posed, if not answered, in respect of *past* childhoods (Mills 2012).

It could be argued that children's geographies research is framed by some slightly awkward assumptions about the spatialities and temporalities of children's lives. On the one hand, children's geographies research has remained remarkably concerned with the small scale: with the microscale geographies of backyards, play parks, neighborhoods, and, latterly, the body (Ansell 2009). On the other hand, children's geographers have tended to focus upon everyday and, latterly, ephemeral goings-on that seem to reproduce a concern for the *present*, whether in the service of uncovering children's "voice" or otherwise (Mitchell and Elwood 2012; Kraftl 2013a). Here, children's geographers have, perhaps since the inception of the subdiscipline, focused overwhelmingly on "the present of the now" (Dodgshon 2008, p. 303): the present moment of childhood experience. Undoubtedly, such moves have enabled children's geographers to theorize the micro-*politics* of childhood experiences (Kallio and Häkli 2013) while simultaneously raising the broader question of

“what matters” to children in their everyday lives in ways that cannot and perhaps should not be reduced to the representational economies of adult society (Horton 2010, 2014; Kraftl 2013a). Yet the powerful and longstanding elision of the small scale and the present-at-hand has led to valid, if sweeping, critiques that children’s geographers (especially those persuaded by nonrepresentational theories) “presage a closure of politics, or, more accurately, a depoliticization of ‘events,’ through [...] emphases on the personal, the affective, the individual, and the ephemeral” (Mitchell and Elwood 2012, p. 796; also Kraftl 2015).

Arguably, while a (re)politicization of children’s geographies might require scholars to engage with the dialectical relationship between the ephemeral and what Mitchell and Elwood term “wider” political processes, such a focus might also present a profound challenge to the underpinning principles of children’s geographies research. For as soon as the question of “the past” is raised, legitimate questions are raised. For instance, some scholars may raise questions about the extent to which the imperative for including children’s “voices” in research may be fulfilled in archival research, wherein children’s expressions of agency may be partial, incomplete, or missing (Mills 2013). By contrast, one might ask how a view of children as “beings” is challenged in oral history or autoethnographic research, wherein inevitable reflection may take place on the nature of the relationship between childhood past and the process of becoming adult (of which the prologue to this chapter is one example).

The past few years have witnessed the development of some sophisticated theorizations that have begun to dismantle the assumed primacy of “being” for a mode of conceiving children in children’s geographies research. Examples of work on the elision of being/becoming (Worth 2009), transition (Valentine 2003), intergenerational relations (Hopkins and Pain 2007), and ongoingness (Horton and Kraftl 2006a) are but a few. Yet, aside from Worth’s (2009) conceptualizations of time in the lives of Visually Impaired young people, the category of the present per se has remained, more or less, a black box in children’s geographies scholarship. It may well be that the relative lack of historical research on children’s geographies – whatever the reason for that lack – has been a root cause for a concomitant deficiency in critical reflection on “the present” in children’s geographies. By extension, it may be that the methodological devices deployed by (especially nonrepresentational) children’s geographers limit awareness of both the wider and, just as notably, longer-standing processes and practices through which children’s lives are constructed (Mitchell and Elwood 2012). Whether politically inflected or not, relatively few studies either draw on longitudinal data or make historical comparisons through which fuller consideration of the spatial discourses (Holloway and Valentine 2000) framing children’s lives may be made.

Nevertheless, and in response to the above observations, the aim of this chapter is to articulate how children’s geographers *have* sought to recall past childhoods, despite the pitfalls and inevitable questions raised by doing so. Specifically, I focus on particular kinds of research *methods* that offer the potential to represent and witness past childhoods. The chapter proceeds in three parts. First, I contextualize questions of method within recent interest in human geography in memory studies.

Here, I introduce conceptual debates around the “otherness” of childhood in some depth, since the questions raised by these debates should frame not only considerations of research methods for accessing past childhoods but also the methodologies used in contemporary research.

Second, the main bulk of the chapter examines one methodology that has been used in children's geographies research to recall past childhoods: autoethnography. Autoethnography is a methodology and mode of writing that turns the lens on the academic *self*. Distinct from ethnography, it does not involve observations of a “culture” (whether the researcher's own or another) but more directly involves writing about and reflecting directly upon one's own experiences. It is, therefore, a mode of writing the self that alongside other techniques – such as autobiography – has become increasingly prominent in social-scientific writing over the past couple of decades. Autoethnography frequently relies simply upon the author's memories (e.g., of childhood) or, most commonly, upon memories that may be prompted by stimuli (photographs, objects, texts such as diaries). In these cases, it may not have been planned as a methodology at the time those events (e.g., during childhood) were experienced. However, as detailed later, some authors develop an autoethnographic approach from the outset, leading to questions about whether autoethnography is a valid methodology to use in research with “others.”

Alongside key examples of recent research, the main bulk of the chapter – “recalling past childhoods” – summarizes key advantages and disadvantages of autoethnography; in the case of the latter, I offer some very brief comparisons with other approaches for witnessing (past) childhoods. While not all of these approaches are primarily dedicated to accessing *memories*, they all rely to some extent on the memories of researchers themselves, or their research participants, and are thus distinguished (if loosely) from other historical methods, such as archival research (discussed by Mills in this volume).

Finally, I return to the discussion in this introduction, asking whether and how autoethnography might challenge the predominance of the present-at-hand in children's geographies research. More pragmatically, I ask not only whether children's geographers might engage in more historical research, through a greater range of methods, but whether those methods might also be appropriate for (perhaps more time aware) research in and of the present.

3 Geography, Memory, and the “Otherness” of Childhood

Ever since the development of humanistic and phenomenological approaches in geography, geographers have held an interest in the relationship between place and memory (Relph 1976; Casey 2009). Here, memories underpin the narratives and relationships that give place meaning, constituting our senses of home and belonging (Tolia-Kelly 2004). Frequently, geographers have focused their attention upon larger-scale, collective memories – notably around memorial acts that occur at the national scale (Johnson and Pratt 2009). Often – as Della Dora (2008) notes in relation to public monuments and commemorative events – such memories are

entangled in public debates about which social groups may legitimately claim their memories of a place, for some social groups may be marginalized precisely because they are prevented from exercising their “right” to memories, in and of a particular place. For instance, the memories and narratives of Brazilian dissident groups during the 1960s had, until recently, been deliberately effaced by Brazil’s dictatorship (Reading 2011). During that dictatorship (1964–1985), thousands of dissenters were detained and tortured. However, ongoing “cultural amnesia” in Brazil (in the form of a collective forgetting and reluctance to speak of these acts) has meant that those responsible for such acts have never been tried for likely human rights violations (Reading 2011). Memories, then, are central not only to our individual experiences of a place but to some of the most fundamental questions geographers ask about nationhood, social justice, and those processes that render some groups out of place (Cresswell 1996).

Recently, geographers have exhibited renewed interest in memory and the emerging field of memory studies in the broader social sciences (Jones and Garde-Hansen 2012). To generalize, such studies have tended to (re)visit the more intimate memories of individuals rather than larger social groups. From this work, one can distil four trends. First is a move to witness how memory is entangled with nonrepresentational geographies of life: with those emergent, ineffable, pre-cognitive moments that exceed narrative. In these instances, memories are not simply narratives or stable stories that we tell about ourselves or meaningful others. For instance, Anderson (2004) contrasts different practices of listening to recorded music. On the one hand, he notes the intentional (which we may bluntly characterize as representational) choice of a particular piece of music to evoke a certain time, place, or person. On the other, he witnesses the (nonrepresentational) involuntary eruption of a memory as one hears a piece of music – which may, quite viscerally, catch the listener by surprise – “in which a trace of a virtual past affects ‘in itself’” (Anderson 2004, p. 3).

Second, and related, cultural geographers have noted how material objects may evoke memories of other times and places. Sometimes, such objects – like family photographs displayed in the home – may act as a stimulus or prompt for a memory, enabling us to remember far more readily than we might if we simply stopped and *tried* to remember something (Roberts 2012). At other times, food, photographs, and other material objects provide sensory prompts – sights, sounds, smells – that may transport us to another place (Tolia-Kelly 2004). They are, in other words, embodied acts of remembering: of bringing the past sensorial experiences of a body back into present experience (Morrissey 2012).

Third, there has been parallel interest in historical geography with “life paths” (Daniels and Nash 2004, p. 449). Here, the subject of memory *itself* is not necessarily subject to scrutiny. Rather, the focus is upon different forms of narration, such as autobiography, travel writings, and educational texts, through which different selves are articulated alongside place and landscape. While much of this work has been archival, some scholars have sought to use oral histories in order to access the everyday, often material experiences that constitute place. For instance, Andrews et al. (2006) used oral histories with 12 older people to access their younger lives

during World War II. They offer a compelling argument for the use of oral histories with older people in (re)telling the often neglected modern histories of social life.

Finally, much of the above work brings to mind the complex entanglements of the past with the present. Ironically, as Jones and Garde-Hansen (2012) point out, despite their interest in the ongoingness of life, nonrepresentational geographers have *tended* to reify the present moment. This is, they argue, to “the relative neglect of the trajectories of past-into-present which are always in place through various interconnecting ecological, corporeal, material, cultural, economic and memorial flows” (Jones and Garde-Hansen 2012, pp. 8–9). Indeed, notwithstanding the above examples, this argument might hold for scholarship across the breadth of social and cultural geographies, which, with their overwhelming focus upon the present, remain artificially separated from the subdiscipline of historical geography. For Jones and Garde-Hansen, a more resolute focus on time – and, especially, on the ineluctable *becoming* of self and place – is a pressing requirement for geographers.

It is with this latter argument in mind that it is vital that *children's geographers* contribute to geography's recent (re)turn to memory studies. If, as observed in the introduction to this chapter, the work of children's geographers has been fundamentally influenced by questions of being/becoming, then they could contribute much, both conceptually and methodologically. While there is still considerable scope to do so, one particular, extant debate within the subdiscipline deserves attention: the question of the “otherness” of childhood from adulthood (Jones 2008). This debate has had – and has the potential to have – a fundamental role in how geographers *research* both past and present childhoods. It is therefore crucial that in this chapter – and, indeed, in children's geographies research broadly conceived – there is some detailed consideration of these debates before accounting for the details of research methods themselves.

The starting point for this debate is a deceptively simple question: can “we,” as adults, access our childhood experiences? Not only that: to what extent can we remember – faithfully – what it is *like* to be a child? These questions are not only confined to the realm of memory studies: rather, they are questions that strike at the very heart of the ethical and political foundations of childhood studies, for, methodologically, they recall the questions asked by early feminist scholars about the irreconcilable “gap” between the researcher and the researched. With this in mind, most social scientists recognize that it is virtually impossible to truly “know” the experiences of the “other”: for a man to adequately understand the lifeworld of a woman or a non-/disabled researcher to fully empathize with a disabled person (e.g., Oliver 1992). It follows that the same argument should hold about children: that, as adult researchers, it is impossible to access their worlds.

However, unlike almost all other identity categories, adult researchers *can* claim some experience of this particular “other.” As Jones (2001, p. 177) observes:

[w]e have all been ‘children’, or at least biologically young, so perhaps uniquely in this concern for a form of otherness, we have all been that other once, and may still contain some form or traces of it. This raises the question of whether it [childhood] is retrievable through memory, or whether [it is an] illusion that in fact makes the other even more inaccessible.

This is, as Jones (2001) also suggests, an ethical and political question because at heart it asks adult researchers to critically evaluate the very foundations for our beliefs about children. We are beholden to ask whether our memories of childhood are, on the one hand, themselves used as a framework for our purported ability to empathize with and advocate for children and their rights. And, on the other hand, we are compelled to broach the difficult question of whether the *illusion* of our own childhoods actually clouds our judgment about the children with whom we research today – perhaps to such an extent that we are, in fact, even less able to understand the worlds of children than we are of other “other” groups.

Simplified greatly, these questions about memory serve as a reminder that research with children is *even harder* than it appears. Yet there has been a lively and productive conversation about the extent to which childhood remains “other.” Some scholars have argued that it is possible for adults to access their past childhoods, albeit through less conventional methods than children’s geographers might routinely use with children. Resonating with some of the nonrepresentational accounts of memory summarized above, Philo (2003) argues that “bridging the gap” between adulthood and childhood is not so much a case of intentional memory work, rather a more involuntary process of letting childhood memories take hold. Memories may erupt into the daily “present of the now” (Dodgshon 2008, p. 303), when we least expect them. For instance, when we daydream, we become distracted: literally, our attention is removed from the here and now. Images of other times and places spring to mind, sometimes as if in a sleeping dream, fleetingly, without our beckoning. At times, we control our daydreams, perhaps fantasizing with intent and clarity about a recent holiday in order to escape the drudgery of the return to work. At other times, we drift, transported to a childhood place (a den, a bedroom, a beach) in which we suddenly see – or, rather, *feel* – with remarkable lucidity what it was like to be a child, even if just for a moment. Alternatively, as per Anderson’s (2004) account of listening practices, materials, sights, sounds, and smells that we encounter may suddenly transport us not only to another place but to our childhoods. Hearing a theme tune from a favorite cartoon, smelling food that we loved to eat as children, returning to a favorite playground after many years (Horton and Kraftl 2006a), such multi-sensuous, embodied experiences may evoke childhood perhaps better than any interview or observational study. The methodological implications of Philo’s argument are, clearly, difficult to resolve. They apparently undermine the planned, if not rational, intentionality of methodological convention. The rest of the chapter (and specifically the next section on autoethnography) attends to some of these implications.

If the methodological implications of Philo’s argument are difficult to resolve, the ontological tensions they raise are similarly challenging. Aitken (1994, p. 30) puts it succinctly:

It is one of the great ironies of human development that by the time we are old enough to reflect on what it is like to be a young child, we are so far removed from the experience that it is difficult to empathise. (Aitken 1994, p. 30)

In other words, adults do not develop the mental capacity to reflect upon what it is to *be* a child until it is too late. In his response to Philo's paper, Jones (2003) fleshes out why and how it might be that adults are, ontologically, so far removed from childhood. Firstly, adults' brains are loaded and burdened with many more years of experience. Through education, socialization, and life experience, adults set up a range of coping mechanisms to deal with the vagaries of life that are *both* essential(ized) *and* conditioned by socio-spatial context. Trying to view childhood experience through the lens of such experience is akin to looking at a view through the wrong end of a telescope). Secondly, the process of trying to recover childhoods is both emotionally charged and wrapped up with processes of imagination (as Philo 2003 also notes). Thus, what we remember may be the result of what we *want* to remember; or we may alter our memories or project "false" memories onto our childhoods as a consolation for childhood experiences that may have been less than perfect; or we may blank out and try to avoid distressing or traumatic memories. In some cases, remembering, forgetting, and/or imaginatively revising childhoods may be a therapeutic act (also Morrissey 2012), or, alternatively, our recent experiences may (re)frame our memories such that memories are dynamic, altering as they interact with experience. For instance, our current experiences reframe our recollections of the past: people who experience depression may have more negative memories of the same event than those who do not.

Thirdly, Jones (2003) cites evidence to suggest that children are other from adults, both physically and psychologically. They are smaller, affording a different view of a world that is socially and materially constructed to meet the needs of adults; they are, as several classic studies by children's geographers have demonstrated, also more prone to notice the tiny details of their everyday environs than are adults (e.g., Matthews 1992). Moreover, children's brains – especially those of young children – work in a different way from adults'. Without the (in part, socially constituted) barriers and structures acquired by adults, young children may absorb far more of the manifold stimuli with which we are bombarded in our daily lives, but may be unable to order them as do adults (compare Aitken and Herman 1997). Thus, some educators – like Steiner teachers – see young children as "sense organs," absorbing their surroundings in a pre-reflexive, nonjudgmental manner (Kraftl 2006). Fourthly, and in summary, Jones (2003) likens the act of an adult attempting to enter the world of a child to that of an adult attempting to enter a child's den – whether metaphorically, through their own memories, or literally, through trying to empathize with contemporary children or to become a child again. As the size of an adult's body would ultimately exceed that of a small child's den – perhaps breaking it to pieces as they attempt to enter – Jones (2003, p. 33) asks: "how can adults as researchers enter them [moments of reverie] without shattering their spell?"

In these ways, Philo and Jones ask some pressing ontological questions about what it means to *be* a child, rather than an adult. Notwithstanding the more-than-social functioning of the brain as it develops (Kraftl 2013a), the above debates serve as an illustration that memories of childhood are themselves social constructions.

More than that, they may, recursively, be at the heart of the very social constructions of childhood that children's geographers purport to unpick, and it is important to be reflexively aware of our own complicity in such constructions as they may remain an unquestioned part of the research process. These are ethical, political, and methodological debates that have far from been resolved by children's geographers. However, in the rest of this chapter, I examine how they have been broached – directly or indirectly – through autoethnographic methodologies in which scholars have attempted to remember and recount past childhoods.

4 Recalling Past Childhoods: Autoethnography and Researching Children's Geographies

The rest of the chapter provides a detailed, critical discussion of autoethnography as a methodology that grapples with – or has the potential to broach – the tensions inherent in accessing past childhoods. I note at the outset that the use of autoethnographic methods in children's geographies is rare. Therefore, the sections that follow necessarily draw on relatively few key studies by children's geographers (including the author's own). Moreover, I also importantly note that some of the examples included here are not technically by "children's geographers" – they are either by geographers who include reflection on (their own) past childhoods as part of their work, or they represent research by childhood scholars but which inflects children's geographies scholarship. In addressing these two caveats, this part of the chapter offers some broader context for discussion of these relatively scant studies. On the one hand, it relates examples of relevant research to broader methodological literatures outside geography, and in particular those on autoethnography. On the other hand, it not only reviews but it identifies issues in relation to autoethnography that might be of concern for *future* children's geographies research. Overall, I do not make a case for a particular methodological orientation in children's geographies (nor advocate a particular stance on debates about "otherness"). Rather, the following sections – and the chapter's conclusion – provide a series of examples and questions for further methodological reflection by children's geographers.

4.1 Autoethnography: Considerations and Justifications for Writing the Self

Autoethnography has its roots in the more familiar, ethnographic methodologies. In line with the proper definition of ethnography, it refers less to a method of observation, but rather to a mode of *writing* the world. Most commonly, ethnography entails writing about other cultures, upon which the researcher has some kind of external vantage point. Some of the earliest ethnographies, undertaken by anthropologists, took place in remote, Pacific Island communities that were at a literal and metaphorical distance from the researcher's own culture. Following an often extended visit, the researcher would write up their field observations in the form

of ethnographic notes and analyses. This practice – often, but not exclusively, undertaken by white, male academics – would later be critiqued by feminists for its male gaze, which served, if anything, to increase the gap between “self” and “other” discussed above (Rose 1993).

As the critiques of feminists and critical race scholars have resounded throughout the social sciences, scholars influenced by the ethnographic tradition have revised their methodologies accordingly. Aside from the adoption of radically altered ethical and political perspectives on “the other” (Katz 1994), a key development has been an increased focus upon ethnographies of cultures “closer to home.” In this way, as feminist geographers have shown, an understanding of “the field” as an exotic entity, othered by both distance and unfamiliarity, may be revised (DeLyser and Starrs 2001). Such a recognition has enabled research with cultural groups and in places much “closer to home” – including, for instance, Hyndman’s (2001) research with policy-makers and practitioners at the headquarters of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. As Hyndman (2001, p. 263) puts it, this was a “decision to study up, to analyze and theorize the institutions, organizations, and bodies that govern human relations rather than the governed themselves.” Therefore, it is a widespread (although not universal) assumption in ethnographic scholarship that the academic (self) is rarely a detached observer, reporting back on “the other.” This does not mean that the gap between observer and observed is in any way diminished: rather, it is a recognition that research is an embodied, emotional, relational process that is far from objective (Bondi 2005).

In this light, it is a little difficult to provide a precise definition of autoethnography that differentiates it clearly from ethnography. The inclusion of the “auto-” prefix denotes that the lens of the researcher is somehow being turned back on the researcher themselves. In other words, it is “the study of a culture that *involves* the self” (O’Byrne 2007, p. 1381, emphasis added). The term “involves” can be understood to have a double meaning in this case. On the one hand, it refers to a study that focuses upon a culture of which the researcher is a part. In a conventional ethnography, this could mean that they are simply an acknowledged member of an identity group and include this acknowledgment in their writing in terms of its possible effects upon the research process (this is, in essence, a form of positionality). This might be the case if, for instance, as a geographer, I were to undertake a study of cultures of research in geography and acknowledged my personal and professional convictions as a cultural geographer. On the other hand, to be a piece of true autoethnography, I would have to go further: I would have to include myself as one of the subjects of study in my writing. I would have to *involve* myself more explicitly in and *as* part of the culture of study. I would have to write about my own experiences of being a geographer, reflecting on what it has been like for me to work in different geography departments, or present papers at geography conferences (see Humphreys 2005 for an autoethnography of academic life, although not in the context of geography as a discipline). In other words, I would include in my analyses ethnographic vignettes that recounted my own experiences as *data*, rather than in the methodological terms of positionality or

reflexivity. Fundamentally, then, autoethnography requires this twofold *involvement* of the researcher.

Crudely put, autoethnography can be positioned at one extreme end of a spectrum, in stark distinction to the work of the early anthropologists. In most autoethnographies, it is the self which is the *starting point*, rather than another culture (compare Butz and Besio 2004). This positioning of the researcher is intended to acknowledge the researcher as the originator of knowledge and hence a move to the former side of the “Self-Other hyphen” (Fine 1998, p. 131). Thus, the researcher-self is more than a merely coincidental actor in the story they write. However, autoethnography is not (quite) the same as autobiography. A founding premise for autoethnography is that, through starting with the self, the researcher is able to tell stories that illuminate wider systems of power, justice, exclusion, or shared belief within the culture of which they are a part (Humphreys 2005). Autoethnography is, then, “[a]n autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (Ellis and Bochner 2000, p. 739).

With the above definitions in mind, it is useful to consider *why* autoethnography might be undertaken: not only as a mode of witnessing the world but, specifically, as a way to access past childhoods. This question is best answered through consideration of some of the (limited) autoethnographic accounts of childhood and youth available in geography (for examples “outside” geography, see, for instance, Melina 2008; Kuhn 2010 (As if to exemplify the relative lack of autoethnographic work on childhood, a search through the back issues of the journal *Memory Studies* for “child* and autoethnography” returns just two results, cited here as Kuhn (2010) and Stephens and Neill (2011))). The examples here are skewed to one of the best-cited autoethnographic pieces (Horton and Kraftl 2006a), not least since, in the spirit of autoethnography and the prologue that began this chapter, they relate to the author’s own work/life. From these examples, it is possible to distil five key reasons for undertaking autoethnographic work in accessing past childhoods (also Horton and Kraftl 2012).

First, autoethnography aims to engage the reader in a very different way from conventional academic writing. It aims to affect the reader at an *emotional* level as much as with the rigors of academic argumentation. It seeks to “elicit emotional identification and understanding” (Denzin 1989, p. 12): perhaps a shiver of recognition; perhaps an uncomfortable, amused snort over an experience shared by reader and writer; perhaps a twinge of sadness, guilt or, even contempt. I hope that by recounting the experience of my first day at school in the prologue of this chapter – and in talking about the details of what happened and how *I felt* – that readers might reflect on or be transported back to their first day at school. They may or may not feel (or have felt) the same – it probably depends on whether they unwittingly ended up covered in sticky brown paint. But that is not the point: the point is that the vignette recounts a situation with which some readers – perhaps especially British readers who attended school – will identify and respond to, in manifold, unpredictable ways. Critically, this effort may fail. Other readers may be left cold. But that is also the point: by its very situatedness, and whatever the skill of

the writer in evoking feelings in their readers (and I confess to not being particularly adept at this), autoethnographic writing runs the risk at the very outset of *failing* to engage the reader. Pragmatically, the choice of topic and writing style are crucial and require careful consideration: yet anyone embarking on a piece of autoethnography must do so on the premise that it simply may not work. Less pragmatically, however, that is part of the excitement and the conceptual promise of this methodology: that, ultimately, even if a reader should *not* connect with the author, they are at least reminded of the incommensurability and situatedness of diverse social experiences.

Second, autoethnography may accommodate *diverse styles of writing* (Ellis and Bochner 2000). These may include “stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, journals, and social science prose” (Humphreys 2005, p. 841; see Madge 2014 for an excellent example of autoethnographic poetry by a geographer, albeit not focusing on childhood). Other accounts may include diary-style entries that skip both forward and backward between times and places (Melina 2008) or, as has been the case in the assessed work that my students have produced for an undergraduate module on identity that I have taught since 2009, “talking heads”-style video diaries. Roberts’ (2012) account of the use of photographs is exemplary in this regard. While written in the style of a conventional academic book chapter, it is interspersed with photographs. Some of the photographs are of the author as a child, with accompanying, self-deprecating asides about how “I look so ridiculous/cute” (Roberts 2012, p. 96). Others are of beachscapes in Wales, which serve as both a reminder and a prompt for the authors’ own memories.

Moreover, that the photographs are meaningful both for the author *and* her family enables Roberts to make a further, significant move in the presentation of her autoethnographic text. She also includes in her chapter three brief extracts from members of her family who themselves have been asked to reflect on their childhood experiences of the places in the photographs. While the practice of doing autoethnography with “others” is driven with difficult power relations (Butz and Besio 2004), Roberts’ chapter illustrates that the autoethnographic text does not begin and end with the ever-reflexive “I.” Rather, a key stylistic feature of autoethnographic text is that significant others may appear as actors within a story, which, in Roberts’ case, enables a powerful argument about the entanglements of shared family memories, the physicality of place, and the embodied nature of memory (also Tolia-Kelly 2004). Alternatively, the autoethnographic process itself may be shared by two or more academic writers: the paper in which the events in the prologue are recounted was cowritten with my friend and long-term collaborator, John Horton, and places our experiences of childhood/adulthood alongside each other. In that and another piece (Horton and Kraftl 2012), we wrote three parallel entries – about our first day at school, wearing glasses, and a visit to local playgrounds where we played as children. These parallel “vignettes” (Humphreys 2005) were then used as a stylistic device for illuminating different but overlapping experiences of growing up.

Third, autoethnography may be a useful *cipher for theoretical deliberation*. Used in conjunction or comparison with other method(ologie)s, it may enable the

construction of empirical data that may evoke particular concepts in a different (although not necessarily “better”) way than those other methods. For instance, John and I used our reflections upon our own childhoods to offer a series of theoretical interventions into what at the time was nascent interest in nonrepresentational geographies of materiality and embodiment. Indeed, as detailed below, we used a series of what we called “thinking-writing-doing” projects in an attempt to access our embodied experiences of being children (Horton and Kraftl 2006a, p. 260). In a context where nonrepresentational theories have still failed to engage fully with questions of the past and memory (Jones and Garde-Hansen 2012), we used our reflections to make a case for greater attention to the body in children’s geographies. Significantly, we were not for a moment suggesting that other geographers should do the same, just as most autoethnographers would not necessarily urge other academics to write about the kinds of experiences they write about. In a sense, to do so would be to diminish the effect of autoethnography (although this does not mean that others should *not* write about their first day at school!). Rather, like other autoethnographers, we sought the deployment of autoethnography as just one tool in a broader series of arguments for embodied children’s geographies (Horton and Kraftl 2006b; Hörschelmann and Colls 2009; Holt 2010).

Fourth, autoethnography is a *creative methodology*. Since 2010, there has been gathering interest in a so-called creative turn within geography (indeed, other chapters in this volume refer to the extensive use of other creative methodologies with children by children’s geographers). Herein, geographers have in part continued and amplified earlier strands of research, which critically engaged with art forms (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988), architecture (Kraftl 2009), and literature (Saunders 2010). However, they have also sought to engage creative and artistic practices in their own research methodologies. Thus, on the one hand, Hawkins (2013) notes various ways in which cultural geographers have collaborated with creative practitioners to share research methodologies that might enable more diverse forms of representing the world than traditional methods allow. On the other hand, the “creative turn” has presaged a range of writing practices that share much with autoethnography. An indicative example is Madge’s (2014) critical consideration of the role of poetry in writing the world. As she notes, poetry is not without its drawbacks – not least as different readers have different conceptions of what constitutes poetry. Nevertheless, poesies may – as with the autoethnographic genre more broadly – allow points of emotional and even visceral connection between readers, on topics that may otherwise be hard to represent using traditional methods (such as the experience of living with cancer, as in Madge’s work).

As discussed later, the idea of geographers being “creative” is not an uncontroversial one. Methodologically, however, the idea of being creative begs the question of *how* geographers – not routinely trained in creative methods or arts – might start the process of writing autoethnographically. In the terms of the Philo/Jones debate explored earlier, despite their different positions, *neither* author is convinced that we can simply sit down and try to remember – to represent – our childhood past. Rather, autoethnographic writing may work best through some kind

of trigger. In the article in which the prologue to this chapter is published, John and I undertook three “thinking-writing-doing projects” (Horton and Kraftl 2006a, p. 260). First, we reflected on our experiences of wearing glasses. Each of us attempted to recall particular moments where wearing glasses had been important to us, what it felt like, what others seemed to think of us, and how those experiences had changed. Second, each of us wrote down our memories of our first day at school, prompted, where appropriate, by photographs and discussion with family members. Third, together with close family and friends, we each visited the parks local to where we grew up and where we spent considerable time playing as children. We walked, chatted, played, took photos, and took videos of the spaces, reminiscing and, in the process of physically being there, remembering (Morrissey 2012) our former, embodied childhood selves through inhabiting some of the very same spaces in which we played as children. Then, before writing, we deliberately removed ourselves from the formal environment of our shared office and sat in a comfortable seating area, over a cup of tea, to discuss our various vignettes.

In a more recent chapter, John and I took a different approach (Horton and Kraftl 2012). There, we reflected upon a very specific material practice in which we had each recently indulged – clearing out an old cupboard – to consider what memories those practices evoked. “My” cupboard – in my current house – had become a dumping ground for ostensibly random stuff when we moved into the house in 2008. This stuff included old telephones, boxes marked “certificates,” a floral umbrella, a tattered piece of Christmas wrapping paper, some old slippers, three plastic hangers, etc. (Horton and Kraftl 2012, p. 36). The stuff in our cupboards represented, for both of us, an *excess of materiality*: a material amalgam that resisted neat representational methods, requiring a messier ontology (e.g., Law 2004); an attention to the productive value of mess – whether in prompting nostalgia or as a cradle of creativity or learning (Kraftl 2013b); a real-world set of concerns that pressed on us both, emotionally – in my case, in the long-delayed (and still not complete) act of clearing out that *damn cupboard*; and an attendant feeling of drowning under the weight of all that stuff. As we cleared out our cupboards, documenting and photographing their contents, we came to realize two things. On the one hand, that the act of sorting through material things evokes memories and emotions – not just of childhood but family members and our more recent pasts. It is a process of excavation that is not merely about bringing (almost-) forgotten material things back to the present, but about the resounding thud of emotional recognition as past feelings are brought into contact with our present lives. On the other hand, as we put it, “the act of clearing out a cupboard is spatial in nature [...] its ‘opening out’ in multiple senses” – and its subject to written reflection in autoethnography – “is a moment of exposure and vulnerability [...] literally laying out, laying bare, laying *to* bear a lifetime past” (Horton and Kraftl 2012, p. 41) This is an everyday act of presence-ing that is material and emotional and therefore one of many banal spatialities (Keith and Pile 1993) that autoethnography may help witness.

Fifth, and finally, autoethnography affords a constructive methodology for interrogating and supplementing debates about the *temporalities* of (young) age

and the otherness of childhood. In our first piece of autoethnography (Horton and Kraftl 2006a), we argued for a fundamentally different conception of the temporalities of age: ongoingness. The term encapsulates both being and becoming but, in referencing neither, recognizes that any attempt to reconcile this duality (i.e., through synthesis) is stultified by the continued presence of these two terms. It is, in other words, not sufficient to simply recognize that childhood is both being and becoming because the terms, even when elided, remain laden with conceptual and political baggage (especially the term becoming) (Uprichard 2008). Thus, like that of other scholars (e.g., Worth 2009), the argument is not that we dispense with notions of being and becoming altogether. The notion of being still has purchase for interrogating questions of children's rights. Rather, the term ongoingness recognizes that there is something about the temporality of age that extends beyond these terms – not least because the examples in our writing connected childhood *with* adulthood, both backward and forward in time (i.e., the term “becoming” does not appear to allow for reversal or “going back”). In the prologue, for instance, the “hot feeling” I experienced as a 5-year-old has remained with me in moments of acute embarrassment, and each time I feel it, I am instantly and vividly transported to the feel and smell of brown paint. We do not just carry memories with us as narrative or pictorial representations but as feelings and modes of bodily comportment that are sedimented into our bodies, our habits, our disposition, and our talk. Naturally, these feelings and modes of embodiment twist and mutate over time. But some are carried with us more straightforwardly; others (like my newfound confidence in wearing glasses) develop as we age; others are lost, such as the sporting or mathematical abilities we had as children. Thus, it is not sufficient to talk only of being, becoming, or growing up but *going on*, with its far messier, less assured sense of temporality. This would place us closer to Philo's explication of daydreaming and reverie as passive modes of being through which past childhoods might be accessed. However, bearing in mind the above observations about creative writing practices, autoethnographic methods arguably afford a more active and programmatic toolkit for getting at past childhoods. Intentional acts such as visiting a childhood park or clearing out a cupboard may also afford a portal for the more passive forms of reflection that Philo cites.

4.2 Questioning Autoethnography: Critiques and Limitations

As a methodological approach, autoethnography splits opinion. Some – cautioning that it is merely an archetype of academic navel-gazing (Humphreys 2005) – question whether it constitutes a robust, valid research method at all. If research methods must be reliable and verifiable – even reproducible – then autoethnography may fall short, not least because I am not convinced that if I *now* wrote about my first day at school (in 2014) rather than doing so in preparation for an earlier article (in 2005), I would probably say something different. In other words, the ongoingness and messiness of life itself is both something that is better attended to by autoethnography and something that may also be its undoing as a research method.

It is perhaps for this reason more than any other that, if they are at all enthusiastic for this method, many authors – myself included – tend to offer a limited endorsement of autoethnography (e.g., Besio and Butz 2004; Humphreys 2005).

A particular thorny and related problem is that autoethnography does not offer the same kinds of generalizability as other methods. Centrally, in breaking down the self-other duality, it *does* proffer a method for connecting the personal to the political. It is not quite fair, then, to suggest that autoethnography is entirely un-generalizable simply because it boils down to one person writing about themselves. Indeed, adopting the feminist mantra that “the personal is political,” autoethnography can be a powerful tool for exposing the experiences, exclusions, and emotions of many marginalized groups silenced in more traditional methods (see Melina 2008 for an instructive example). However, regardless of this justification, autoethnography suffers from two problems. First, in comparison with other research methods – whether quantitative or qualitative – the sample size is so small that particular kinds of generalization are impossible. For instance, notwithstanding debates about the self-other, it can still be extremely helpful to policy-makers to gauge widespread public opinion on a particular issue, in a way that is representative of different geographic areas and which can therefore be subject to multivariate analysis or visualization using GIS (for instance). Second, even if used *with* others (as in Butz and Besio’s 2004 research in northern Pakistan), autoethnography cannot in and of itself overcome the personal and social inequalities that might lead to variety in its effectiveness. As Besio and Butz (2004) argue, reflecting on their earlier article, autoethnography affords too much power to a particular kind of transcultural expression, which may reinforce rather than revoke the power-laden, colonially inflected relationships between Western researchers and non-Western research subjects. Moreover, within any given community – in Askole, the village in which they worked – Butz and Besio (2004) observe that particular groups have the education, cultural capital, and relative power to express themselves through a mode of writing like autoethnography, whereas others do not. Critically, they observed that the relative political efficacy of the autoethnographic texts that were produced by *women* in Askole was limited by their positioning within preexisting, local forms of gender relations.

Related to Butz and Besio’s (2004) critique is a question mark over the politics not only of autoethnography, but the nonrepresentational theories to which autoethnography has been related by some children’s geographers (notably in Horton and Kraftl 2006a). As Mitchell and Elwood (2012) argue, nonrepresentational children’s geographies, with their emphases upon everyday, banal, material experiences, have tended to become somewhat evacuated of questions of politics, rights, and voice. The fact that autoethnographic texts are based upon the privileged musings of a few academics does little to diminish this critique (Philo and Swanson 2009). However, in turn, significant strides have been taken to identify the very real micro-politics at play in nonrepresentational approaches to children’s geographies (e.g., Kallio and Häkli 2013) as well as “what (else) matters,” beyond meaning, voice, agency, and politics, in the lives of children Horton and Kraftl 2009, p. 2984; Kraftl 2013a, 2014; Rautio 2013; Horton 2014). Critically, while not necessarily

concerned with memory or with past childhoods, these counterpoints to Mitchell and Elwood's critique do *not* use autoethnography and, rather, use a range of other methods, including interviews, observant participation (Thrift 2000), and rhythm analysis (Kullman and Palludan 2011). A key consideration, then, is whether – alone or in combination with other methods – autoethnography can address the critiques aimed at some nonrepresentational deployments of the method. One obvious solution is to divorce autoethnography from nonrepresentation, emphasizing instead the array of theoretical positions that it may support – from feminism (Melina 2008) to postculturalism (Butz and Besio 2004) – and which often *are* concerned with questions of power and politics. Another solution would be to consider autoethnography alongside a range of other methodologies that could emphasize both the nonrepresentational and representational facets of children's lives – for instance, through multigenerational oral histories in the same family (Brannen et al. 2004) or longitudinal ethnographies that require repeat episodes of research with young people as they grow up (Ursin 2011; also Marit Ursin's chapter in Volume 3 of this major reference work). Autoethnography remains a useful tool for historically informed research in children's geographies that remains alive to the possibilities of delving into childhood memories: yet to do so is to recognize the representational *and* nonrepresentational facets of memory (Jones and Garde-Hansen 2012).

A further set of critiques is rather more technical. Here, one may question the extent to which “effective” autoethnography is contingent not only upon the writer's social position but their ability to write or to be creative. This is a question that relates more broadly to the so-called creative turn in geography, not least in terms of questions about what is or is not “poetry” or “fiction” or “art” (Madge 2014). On the one hand, the question is, then, whether someone's ability to recall and write about their memories effectively should be an acceptable qualification to produce a piece of autoethnography (or not). For instance, does a diary written at the time of an experience (say, when the author was a child) offer the basis for more “valid” or “accurate” forms of reflection than an attempt to remember those same events without the benefit of such a text? There is a clear distinction between these kinds of texts – not least that a diary may not, at the time, have been written *as* an autoethnography. Therefore, for those embarking upon a piece of autoethnography, careful attention is required to any truth claims or claims to authenticity that may be made in justifying the practice (a point developed in the earlier discussion of the “otherness” of childhood). On the other hand, autoethnography is an inherently risky practice. It may, quite simply, be doomed to failure; as much as a piece may be evocative to some readers, its emotional, visceral, or political effects may simply be lost on another. It may, moreover, be subject to constant scrutiny in terms of “authenticity” (Humphreys 2005). What *is it about autoethnography* that makes it seem more authentic (to some) as a mode of writing? And how do readers know that the author is being “honest,” not fabricating the “truth,” not omitting or glossing, or exaggerating certain memories to present themselves in a particular light? These are, of course, questions that are by no means confined to autoethnography. In particular, one may argue that such issues of authenticity are actually heightened in

other, purportedly more objective or generalizable methods – including interviews and questionnaires – that rely upon both the self-report of research participants *and* the far-from-impartial analyses of researchers (Ellis and Bochner 2000).

Finally, autoethnography may be a methodology that opens up a range of emotional responses for the writer. As Jones (2003) notes in relation to our attempts to go back to childhood, these may be colored by our experiences of childhood and our pleasure – or otherwise – in trying to remember them. A characteristic of my work with John is that we experienced very happy and relatively privileged childhoods, and the concerns – as they are – tend to reflect the banal troubles associated with wearing glasses that, again, are the preserve of the relatively well-off country like the United Kingdom (Horton and Kraftl 2006a). Herein, autoethnography is a generally enjoyable experience. But for others, it may not be. Morrissey's (2012) striking and unsettling account of her childhood is a key example. Writing of her drunken father, who would come home and physically abuse her mother and brother, she tells of harrowing moments when she was nearly shot in the course of trying to save her mother. For her, not only is the process of remembering her childhood home a visceral experience but a traumatic one, replete with gaps, absences, and terrors. Indeed, her work evokes a very different kind of ongoingness: of a fragmented memory of childhood whose gaps represent moments that are blocked in the course of simply coping, but one whose fragmentation lives on in the form of personality and post-traumatic stress disorders that still pattern Morrissey's adult life today. A further example – in this case using oral history interviews – is de Leeuw's (2009) poignant and troubling account of the experiences of indigenous children institutionalized in Indian Residential Schools in Canada. As those schools sought to "cleanse" children of their indigeneity, in order to render them "Canadian," the emotional implications were and are profound for those now-adults as they are asked to recall their childhoods. In this way, autoethnography brings to light not only the emotional resonances and dissonances that self-writing may have for readers. Rather, it also throws into sharp relief the emotional effects – positive or negative – that are entailed in the process of *any* research with children (see Horton and Hafield-Hill 2013 for more details).

5 Conclusions: Autoethnography, Otherness, and Witnessing (Past) Childhoods

Autoethnography is clearly not a panacea that will enable children's geographers to overcome thorny, but still hugely relevant, questions about the "otherness" of childhood. It does not, of necessity, bring scholars "closer" to childhood experiences, nor does it automatically allow children's geographers to better empathize with the child subjects of their research. The justifications for autoethnography position it as a method that, potentially, can engage readers with research and with childhood experiences in a way that other methods *may* not: on an emotional, affective level, evoking social and political questions that simply may not arise in the course of other forms of research. While predominantly a mode of *writing* – of

ethnography – autoethnography offers further opportunities for children’s geographers to witness childhood experiences in conjoined representational and nonrepresentational registers. Like the memories on which it is predicated, autoethnographic writing is a mode of understanding the world through narrative and cognition. Yet, like memory, autoethnography is also messier, embodied, visceral, confusing, and, therefore, inherently immersed within the experiential and imaginative functions of human being (as Philo 2003 notes in his discussion of childhood memories).

As a method, autoethnography has many drawbacks, although, arguably, no more than any other method. Perhaps the most profound and unsettling limitations for those who would use autoethnography are that it is inherently risky (and may fail to engage the reader), that it is potentially difficult to pick up a pen and start writing (and to “be creative”), and that it is a process that is wholly entangled with one’s position within society (and, possibly, the preserve of the privileged). Its lack of generalizability – at least in the terms of methodological convention – is a drawback that cannot necessarily be solved by doing autoethnography with others (Besio and Butz 2004). Any attempt to do so is similarly beset by the power relations and iniquities that frame processes of writing and reading in any given socio-spatial context. Moreover, critical questions can be asked as to whether autoethnography is a methodology at all, given questions about robustness, reliability, and validity. On this latter count, those considering the use of autoethnography should probably, ultimately, be less concerned. For as feminist geographers (Rose 1993) and the (hesitant) advocates of autoethnography observe, any sense that other methods are somehow more objective, reliable, or valid is generally one afforded by a long-discredited masculine gaze upon the world.

It is most appropriate to conclude, then, that autoethnography might best be placed alongside a suite of other methodologies – both qualitative and quantitative – for its creative, evocative potential that few other methodologies can achieve. It could form a useful future tool in the armor of “creative geographers,” many of whom could – given the preponderance of visual and participatory methods in the subdiscipline – very well be children’s geographers. As part of a suite of other methods, autoethnography draws attention not only to the exigencies of recalling past childhoods but the conflicting emotions associated with doing so. It could form a lynchpin for much greater interest in the historical geographies of childhood than has hitherto been the case, used carefully to enable children’s geographers to go beyond the immediate experiences of children, here and now (compare Ansell 2009; Mitchell and Elwood 2012). Thus, autoethnography has the power to continue to enable children’s geographers to interrogate the “otherness” of childhood in the past *and* the present. Moreover, it could enable further, productive conceptualizations of the spaces *and* times of childhood, beyond notions of being, becoming, and ongoingness. The implications of doing so for more fully relational geographies of age (Hopkins and Pain 2007) are potentially multiple and profound.

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Critical Pedagogy and the Risks Associated with Performing Lifeworlds

3

Gill Hughes and Charlie Cooper

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Abstract

The following chapter discusses some of the key issues arising in performing research. It draws on a collaborative participatory action research project exploring the experiences of young people, who would be considered disadvantaged, in austerity England. The findings were disseminated through the medium of theater that was also filmed. The project proved a success in several ways: giving some young people a voice they had not had before, building confidence and critical consciousness, and impacting profoundly on the audiences through offering a more proportionate insight into the struggles young people endure, under the impact of forced austerity to that found in mainstream media and political representations. However, the intent and actuality of this project proved, in the end, to be mismatched, suggesting that the co-construction of knowledge is

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complicated by power relations, trust, and the foregrounding of the crucial issues of ownership, consent, and control. Ethical problems arose in relation to committing some of the stories to film. In particular, the issues of anonymity were not fully thought through, and it was only realized afterwards that some young people's well-being might be compromised by experiencing their essence drift into the ether of the Internet for posterity, crucially out of their control.

Keywords

Participatory action research (PAR) • Participatory appraisal (PA) • Performativity • Young people • The "problem" of youth • Snapshot

1 Introduction

The title of this chapter reflects the power relations that can arise from academic engagement in participatory research. The nature of perceived status and expertise engendered through the academy can lead to implicit trust and authority, which might unwittingly undermine ethical intentions, particularly when filming performances that may appear on the Internet. This chapter explores processes involved when a university works with young people to coproduce knowledge with an ethical and practical focus, and the issues that might ensue. It offers an example of a particular project, which used the ethos and techniques from participatory action research (PAR) and verbatim theater – both underpinned by critical pedagogy “grounded in ... lived experiences” (McLaren 1999, cited in Morgan 2000, p. 281). The form of PAR utilized was participatory rural appraisal (PRA) developed for engagement work with communities overseas by Professor Robert Chambers from the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex. The methods and methodology transferred well to the UK and was re-termed participatory appraisal (PA) to encompass urban areas. Its core elements are drawn from research (conducted with/by the community), education (consciousness raising), and collective action (in determining what can be done – i.e., community-led solutions). It predominantly utilizes visual tools in order to be inclusive where language and literacy might be an issue (Chambers 1992, 1996, 2002, 2005). It transferred with ease for use in the UK.

The project was situated at a young people's resource center in the north of England. It sought to explore societal and theoretical concerns from the lens of young people, addressing specifically the “problem” of youth and young people's well-being in England under austerity. These topics are of huge importance to young people, service providers, academics, and policy makers in the context of cuts, “performativity” (Ball 2012), and increasing constraints on resources. (“Performativity” is effectively a form of what Lyotard (1984) calls “context control” that became an essential part of the new public sector management driving British welfare organizations from the 1980s onwards. New criteria for measuring management efficiency replaced the previous Keynesian-welfare model, based on

market fundamentalism rather than bureaucratic/professional debate. Education and welfare organizations ‘are now captured within a complex framework of calculation and judgement valorised by the incentives and self-interest (a kind of calculation) of the market form. The main aspects of this framework are: managerialism and its technologies of the self . . . ; . . . the construction of local league tables; inspection, articulated and enacted on the principles of management, quality and procedure; . . . appraisal, incentive payments and performance –related pay . . .’ (Ball 1998, pp. 191–192).). Such concerns impact the service provider’s ability to deliver services with “care”. In such scenarios, young people’s voices in particular are often marginalized; consequently, this project sought to find a medium through which those most silenced might have their voices heard.

The application of tools from PA and techniques from verbatim theater offered a real opportunity to achieve this. Embedded as it is in a cycle of critical pedagogy, PA offers a process enabling participants to collectively identify and critically analyze the nature of their issues and concerns and, in disseminating their findings, to make informed choices on what to include in a verbatim theater performance. This is recognized as a powerful medium for practicing democracy and delivering messages about contemporary issues more widely (Paget 1987; Hesford 2006).

Within PA participants are considered as the “experts” because they understand their lived reality more than any “outsider” researchers. The ethical principles in participatory practice proffer respect to participants through inclusion in the research process preventing extraction (Chambers 1992, 1996) or “prospecting” (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Success achieved through the development and delivery of this performance was palpable: young people’s voice, confidence, and critical understanding were all cultivated through their engagement, evidenced in their post-performance ambitions to “go on the road” with the play. The impact on the audience was just as profound, as will be witnessed in the “feedback” below.

The euphoria was infectious, and the potential for media exposure to present this piece of creative magic was discussed widely. Sercombe (2010, p. 139) connotes that involving young people within a campaign to further particular causes is extremely powerful; however, he cautions that it can also be equally stigmatizing to the young people because they are then aligned with the issue they raise. In the case of this research, young people researched with others to collect personal narratives, but also included some of their own. Therefore, there were important unforeseen lessons learned from the process, not least how enthusiasm obscured the ethical issues of performing personal and controversial narratives on film which, if disseminated via the Internet, will remain accessible. In a world where search engines and assorted repositories like Facebook and Twitter offer instant access to background checks on people, which employers increasingly utilize, confidences are not always safe; at once, a tool of emancipatory power and democracy – accessible to all – but also dangerousness when lifeworlds are stored and may return to haunt in the future. This can be seen in the example of Paris Brown, a completely different scenario, but makes the point ably. Aged 17 she secured a role as a Youth Crime Commissioner in Kent, but in the past she made derogatory comments on Twitter relating to racism

and homophobia; this was discovered and subsequently undermined her position leading to her resignation (Dodd 2013).

2 Identifying “Main Dangers”

The raw honesty ingrained in the storied lives produced in this research offered powerful messages: a call to make a difference; a challenge to service providers, policy makers, and the powerful; and to issue warnings to other young people that might prevent them from encountering such extreme lifeworlds, exacerbated by a brutalizing welfare regime. The narratives of the young people are not reproduced here, sufficing to say that these encompass the full range of social issues suffered by young people, testing their resilience and survival in and out of austerity. Rather, this chapter explores the unintended impact of the project where as much as the shocking experiences challenged the status quo, and impacted those watching as intended, it also potentially exposed young people to being caricatured, when they might want to escape the past in their future lives, but which the Internet could expose.

Foucault offers an interesting observation, which speaks to the intent and motivations of this project:

My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper - and pessimistic activism. I think that the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger. (Foucault 1983, p. 231–232)

This quotation is a call to arms in the sense that there are “main dangers” which are not quite “bad” but are certainly dangerous – they require action, not withdrawal. The “main dangers” which arose from this project were, as expressed, unintentional, but certainly focused attention for future practice. Edwards and Ribbens identify the intense need for reflexivity when researching with people to navigate dilemmas which come to the fore:

Social research is a difficult and perplexing task, whatever its focus and topic. One of its fascinations is that it requires sensitivity to issues on many different levels. On the one hand, we need to think through our theoretical frameworks and assumptions. On the other hand, research is also an intensely practical exercise, requiring us constantly to make detailed, concrete decisions. But these layers within research cannot be distinguished in actuality in quite this way, since theory and nitty-gritty decisions do not occur in different places but are constantly intertwined within the research process. (Edwards and Ribbens 1998, p. 1)

While the project concentrated on privileging young people’s voice, the enthusiasm of the engagement carried the process forward meaning by-product consequences of filming the performance initially escaped reflexive scrutiny.

Mauthner (2012, p. 157) examines the increasing prominence of the phenomenon of “digital data sharing methods: the preservation, sharing and (re)use of research

data through digital repositories.” She posits that many major funders now have a policy of retaining data in such digital repositories to promote “good research practice”, which allows for purposes of “transparency”; that is, for “public scrutiny”, to enable “researchers to verify others interpretations”, “to investigate data in new ways, by using new techniques or theoretical perspectives”, and by “combining data sets” (Mauthner 2012, p. 157). Mauthner also points to “Freedom of Information” as a possible route for data to be shared. This consideration relates to the opening up of traditional research practice within the public domain. Such research has undergone the ethical processes of anonymizing data to ensure that the source cannot be traced to allow for more freedom in disclosures. Participants are required to trust the researcher but, as Mauthner suggests, such new practices raise “new risks” and require the researcher to consider their “moral responsibilities” by considering “new ontological, moral and political realities” which materialize. While her focus is somewhat different in terms of addressing an increasing requirement of funders of traditional research, who will request such practices at the application stage, her point is that there is a necessity for scrutiny: “as researchers we have a responsibility for the very methods we use; for what they do when *put into practice* and for the risks they materialize in the doing of research” (Mauthner 2012, p. 158 – emphasis in original). The parameters are different in terms of the process, as this research was not traditional in the sense of producing written data and publishing findings. However, other researchers might come across the DVD, if on the Internet, to offer their own interpretations of the lifeworld narratives. Her cautions therefore apply across the board.

3 The Team

The young people’s resource center involved in this project is built on an ethos of empowerment. Those who took part were, for the most part, not strangers to telling their life stories to assist in processes of consciousness-raising. Some have previously spoken on local television or radio programs; some have marched for social issues; some have attended policy forums. The center has a proud history of campaigning *with* young people to promote the need for the best services possible. The youth workers are committed to such work and have extensive experience of similar initiatives, and together with the academic staff (some of whom have been community and youth work practitioners), a team was formed. All held shared beliefs in the Freirean philosophy of starting from where people are at, problematizing social issues, and working towards transformation. Beck and Purcell explain this approach in terms of developing generative themes for analysis and community action, using participative methods:

The main rationale for participative methods is based on the belief that people themselves are best placed to know what their problems are and, with the right support, can develop the most appropriate solutions to those problems. It is therefore incumbent on workers to develop approaches which tap into that local knowledge and capacity for change. To do

anything else is to impose external culture and values and, even for the best reasons, further disempower the communities we work with. As Paulo Freire puts it: *One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes cultural invasion, good intentions notwithstanding.* (Freire 1972, p. 93). (Beck and Purcell 2010, p. 76 – emphasis in original)

Inherent in this approach is the desire to facilitate what Freire termed “conscientization” – where “the oppressed” generate “a critical consciousness about their situation followed by engagement in collective action to transform their world” (Cooper 2008, p. 112). Once people begin to recognize the mechanisms behind social inequality and injustice, they can then begin to formulate their own agenda for change (Cooper 2008).

Certainly, this project continued such ontological practice, centralizing young people in the process; following their lead and allowing them to dictate what was included in the performance and retention of ownership of the process. But, as will be seen, when the research process changes, in this case adding in the film of the performance, the ethical considerations need to be reconsidered in order to offer protection to participants, even when they do not initially recognize the risks posed, to protect against “dangerous” turning to “bad.” This is where reflexivity must be at the forefront of practice in order that “we always have something to do” (Foucault 1983, pp. 231–232).

In the next section, we specify the key theoretical and practical concerns behind this research. This is intended to set the scene for this project; to situate the lived experience of the young people who are at the centre of the research, in order to appreciate the sensitivity of the issues raised.

4 Theoretical and Practical Concerns: The “Problem” of Youth

The key theoretical and practical concerns behind this project stem from what Henry Giroux has identified as an “escalating war on youth” (Giroux 2013, p. xxix) under neoliberal social organizing in contemporary times. While Giroux here is describing the North American context, his observations have ramifications for the UK and other parts of Europe currently in the embrace of neoliberal restructuring programs eroding the social protections of young people and criminalizing their social problems (Clark 2014; Rodger 2008). At the same time, intense pressure on services encountering austerity cuts generates a “double jeopardy” (Abramovitz and Zelnick 2010), a construct which captures how service users need to feel cared about and workers want “to care,” but their efforts are impeded by a lack of resource (Hughes et al. 2014). Tronto suggests that “the world would look very different if we put care at the centre of our political lives” (Tronto 2013, p. x). She cautions to view beyond

the neoliberal “sound bites” of “choices,” “rights,” and “freedoms,” to acknowledge the “main dangers” of such empty language, promising much and delivering little. Tronto points to issues of security and globalization, which add to the complexity of the neoliberal social world, but insists that there could be “hope” and “political possibilities envisioned as part of more caring and more just societies” (Tronto 2013, p. ix).

This research aimed to foreground the extent of the “main dangers” to young people, to prompt a more caring lens which would recognize the extent of impact experienced by the participants under austerity. Care, Tronto insists, should take center stage in “democratic political agendas” and encourage a focus on challenging the impact of “brutal modern liberal democracies” in order to connote “that democratic political life has to be about *something*” (Tronto 2013, p. ix – emphasis in original). The powerful must redistribute resources more justly, operating caring responsibilities to meet the “genuine concerns of citizens” and to reinvigorate the “common good.” The project described herein committed to such ethical underpinnings to raise issues to challenge those who design, orchestrate, and deliver services which fall short of meeting needs, often through the gaze of normative, ideological framings – the intent was to express the “*something*” to a wider audience.

Giroux similarly argues the need for “a new pedagogy . . . firmly rooted in democracy, social justice, and human dignity . . . [to] foster new modes of thought and action” (Giroux 2013, p. xxxii–xxxiii). Giroux was a student of Paulo Freire and an advocate of critical pedagogy that sought to facilitate “conscientization” (Freire 1970) in order to challenge mainstream, dominant discourses on the nature of social problems. This approach would enable people to appreciate the “problem” of youth in times of austerity, not as one caused by their own and their community’s cultural deficit but as one embedded in structural inequalities and the denial of opportunity. It would also provide an occasion whereby young people would be enabled to recount their own stories and experiences at the hands of the “brutal” services they encountered in the everyday. As Kincheloe argued, “Not all parties or all advocates of particular marginalised lived experiences are allowed to sit at the table of official meaning-making” (Kincheloe 2004, p. 11). This is especially true for young people from the working class and minority ethnic groups (Giroux 2013):

When those who have the power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you . . . when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing. It takes some strength of soul — and not just individual strength but collective understanding — to resist this void, this non-being, into which you are thrust, and to stand up, demanding to be seen and heard. (Adrienne Rich, nd, cited in Hinson and Healey 2003, p. 3)

Therefore, a key aim of this project was to privilege the voices of young people and allow their real lifeworld narratives to be heard by providing them with a platform to tell their stories.

5 Spaces of Exploration and Co-construction/Production

This project also aimed to demonstrate the applicability of innovations in social science research for understanding and addressing a social issue – specifically, in this case, the well-being of young people whose lifeworlds are complex. It evolved out of collaboration between the university and youth workers and young people working in and attending, respectively, a young people’s resource center in the north of England. A weekly meeting at the resource center focuses on the premise that the young people themselves are the final arbiter of any decision made. The youth workers sit in attendance as critical friends, advising the meeting of alternative possibilities where required. The details of what would be developed for this project were therefore initially vague, in line with the “blank page” of participatory practice, to be negotiated (codetermined) between young people, youth workers, and academics. However, it was the young people themselves, after considerable argument and debate, who would determine the final conclusion. The university team secured just under £2000 from the Economic and Social Research Council’s Festival of Social Science funding scheme. The university has clear policies on the need to secure ethical consent in relation to aims, informed consent, rights to withdraw, confidentiality, safety from harm, and so forth.

Early in the discussions it was agreed to put on a performance – but dealing with what remained unclear. Around the same time, the team were involved in screening Ken Loach’s (2013) *The Spirit of ’45* at the university and in the local community, attracting some young people from the resource center. Their views about the film came up during one of the meetings held to discuss the project. Loach’s film – about the rise and fall of the welfare state, specifically charting what had been lost in recent years – drew contradictory opinions, with some saying that they had enjoyed and learnt a lot from it, while others had been less impressed with its atmospheric black and white portrayals and its inclusion of retro music from the 1940s. Eventually, however, a consensus emerged that the performance would be researched, scripted, and acted by young people themselves, exploring life in austerity England in 2013.

The aim of this project was to explore the impact of contemporary social policies on young people’s present experiences, opportunities, and sense of well-being, as well as their expectations and hopes for the future and factors that would assist them to achieve or impede their ambitions. Young people face accusations of “poverty of aspiration” from government and opposition alike, whereas Roberts and Atherton (2011) would suggest it is “poverty of opportunity” that young people experience. The hope was to counter the dominant discourse which prevails – emanating from the Poor Laws of the 1800s through to Charles Murray’s (1996) “underclass thesis” on dependency and George Osborne’s binary of “striver” versus “shirker” (Kelly 2012) which offers commentary on moral culture in decline attributed to benefit claimants, single parents, “feral youth,” and so forth. Such judgmental narratives demonstrate the continuous pronouncements on “deserving” and “undeserving” subjects in the UK, divested of structural analysis. This was central to Cameron’s 2011 post “riots” speech in parliament (BBC, 11 August 2011) when he enhanced his trope on “Broken Britain” by positing:

... that there is a major problem in our society with children growing up not knowing the difference between right and wrong. **This is not about poverty, it's about culture.** A culture that glorifies violence, shows disrespect to authority, and says everything about rights but nothing about responsibilities. In too many cases, the parents of these children - if they are still around - don't care where their children are or who they are with, let alone what they are doing. The potential consequences of neglect and immorality on this scale have been clear for too long, without enough action being taken.

Cameron's construction became a central narrative within the subsequent performance; indeed this speech was performed by one participant, drawing on his words to juxtapose demonization with contextual framing. In this way, the performance exposed the *actual* deficit – not that of young people, but that of the government's lack of awareness (or care) of the real impact of their policy decisions. The topic's importance is evidenced by suggestions that young people's well-being in Britain has been in terminal decline since the onset of neoliberalism in the 1980s (UNICEF 2007) – making the condition of youth an increasingly important subject of concern for social scientists, policy-makers, and young people themselves (Giroux 2013).

The project's aims would therefore be achieved through the application of techniques drawn from PA to generate narratives which were then disseminated through a performance that came to include verbatim theater, song, poetry, rap, digital photography, and a DVD documentary. In this way, the project aimed to promote greater understanding of issues relevant to contemporary youth studies; for example, the effects of family conflict, homelessness, unemployment, schooling, homophobia, racism, and media and political representations of youth on young people's well-being.

6 Development in Action

The development process lasted over a five-week period. In the first week, a group of young people from the resource center attended the university to participate in a one-day PA training workshop. Around a dozen young people were equipped with a range of PA attitudes and techniques that included the use of visual images, conceptual drawing to overcome any literacy and language issues, powerful timelines to elicit lifeworld narratives, and a process to evaluate media representations of "youth" to tease through what participants felt were prominent depictions to then challenge.

The following week, the majority of these young people conducted their own participatory appraisal sessions with other young people from a different youth project in the city. The narratives were then embedded with extracts from newspaper accounts and political rhetoric pertaining to young people, scripted, designed, and developed into the performance. This process was coordinated by an established youth worker with extensive theatre-work experience, working alongside center staff, volunteers, and university staff. It was rehearsed by the young people over the final three weeks of the project.

This collaboration allowed young people to be involved in different ways, in harmony with their skills, abilities and desires, engaging, accordingly, in research,

scriptwriting, rehearsals, performance, and filmmaking. The latter (filmmaking) turned the performance into a multimedia initiative with the potential of reaching a wide audience. The inclusion of filmic representations of the developing project was influenced by the DVD *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Wayne and O'Neill 2013) – a community project in Salford reproducing Engels' documentation of the impact of capitalism on the working class in England, written during his time in Manchester between 1842 and 1844 (Engels 1845/2009). This recent remake documented continuities for local Salfordians and was screened to young people and youth workers at the resource center as an example of what was possible.

It was interesting to find its influence in the final performance, as the film solely represented the making of the play – the play was not actually seen in the DVD, only the rehearsals. This frustrated the audience at the resource center but had clearly made an impact because the first 20 minutes of the production contained a documentary of the process of the making of the performance from its inception to completion. Two performances took place in the final week of the project, one at the young people's resource center and the other at the university. The second performance was where the filming took place with a view to producing a DVD of the project – it was this that changed the nature of the project and raised the ethical dilemma of protection of anonymity.

7 Praxis

Critical pedagogy and performance are increasingly recognized as powerful tools for challenging mainstream truth claims – tools that facilitate participants “to consider issues of reciprocity ... [to call] everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active participants in learning” (Hooks 1994, p. 11). It allows subjugated knowledge to be uncovered and reclaimed, “one way to lay claims to alternative histories” (Mohanty, cited in Hooks 1994, p. 22). At the forefront of this recognition has been Kip Jones' work involving the application of tools from the arts to research with communities – an approach he has pioneered as Performative Social Science (Jones 2012). Performative Social Science (PSS) involves adding such devices as

... photography, music, dance, poetry, video installations, dramatic monologues and theatrical performances ... to the researcher's toolbox ... Because of its natural requirement for community, *Performative Social Science* provides the overarching intellectual prowess, strategies and methodological and theoretical bases to engage and unite scholars across disciplines and, in turn, connect researchers' endeavours with communities and stakeholders. (Jones 2012, p. 2)

Through its performative nature, PSS connects seemingly disparate groups – whether they are academics or citizens – into a joint enterprise of exploration capable of generating greater synergy:

... and the collective elaboration of meaning, based in models of sociability, meetings, events, collaborations, games, festivals and places of conviviality. By using the word

‘conviviality’, the emphasis is placed on commonality, equal status and relationship. . . . Through such efforts, it aims to bring people together and to increase understanding. (Jones 2012, p. 3)

This ambition echoed that of the current project under discussion. This was certainly evident: the rapid development of rapport between the varied parties involved came about through the shared process. The young people involved were used to experiencing “injurious speech” – that is, the how “words wound” (Butler 1997, p. 2). Butler examines the work of Althusser (1918–1990) on “interpellation”, where a name is offered to someone – a label – and as such the person accepts the label generally without question as part of processes of subjugation. However, Butler connotes that

One is not simply fixed by the name one is called. In being called an injurious name, one is derogated and demeaned. But the name holds out another possibility as well: by being called a name, one is also, paradoxically, given a certain possibility for social existence, initiated into a temporal life of language that exceeds the prior purposes that animate that call. Thus the injurious address may appear to fix or paralyze the one it hails, but it may also produce an unexpected and enabling response. (Butler 1997, p. 2)

The young people translated their experience of refusal and dismissal offered through a normative lens by authority figures from such as the Benefits Agency and Job Centre; by acting these real-life scenarios. They also offered symbolic representation of the processes Butler explored, above and below, through the wearing of “hoodies” with “scum,” “failure,” “yob” on the back, and when going through a process of contextualizing their narratives beyond the negative perceptions, they remove the labels (hoodies) to an emotional rendition of Cyndi Lauper’s song “True Colors” (Kelly and Steinberg 1986).

Their honesty and openness afforded them another Butlerian notion, that of “recognition” (Butler 2004). Recognition provides acknowledgement which, in turn, assists young people, in this case, to feel that they are valuable “experts” in lived experience, as is central to participatory appraisal. Butler draws from Hegel’s work on desire and recognition in proffering:

. . . desire is always a desire for recognition and that it is only through the experience of recognition that any of us becomes constituted as socially viable beings. That view has its allure and its truth, but it also misses a couple of important points. The terms by which we are recognised as human are socially articulated and changeable. And sometimes the very terms that confer ‘humanness’ on some individuals are those that deprive other individuals of the possibility of achieving that status producing a differential between the human and the less-than-human. These norms have far-reaching consequences for how we understand the model of the human entitled to rights or included in the participatory sphere of political deliberation Certain humans are recognized as less than human, and that form of qualified recognition does not lead to a viable life. Certain humans are not recognized as human at all, and that leads to yet another order of unliveable life But if the schemes of recognition that are available to us are those *that ‘undo’ the person by conferring recognition* or ‘undo’ the person by withholding recognition, then recognition becomes a site of power by which the human is differentially produced. (Butler 2004, p. 2 – emphasis added)

This project offered to “undo” the person by conferring “recognition”: that is, to counter the inculcation of unworthiness that has troubled the young participants. The disrespectful and discourteous treatment they received normally was undone throughout the process and particularly from the audience feedback. Visiting the university also had an important impact; following the training day, some of the participants requested a tour of the campus and collected prospectuses, eschewing the normative “problem” label to reposition themselves as “potential”.

In addition, PSS offers models of exploring social issues and ways of disseminating research to communities in more humane ways; Jones posits

Humanising research methodology means consideration of any community’s part in the overall process and building community participation into the overall plan. A relational humanism urges us as theorists, artists, human scientists and practitioners to seek ways – multiple ways – of generating integrative conversations. ‘How might these research narratives reach beyond the boundaries of the scholarly community to serve the needs of those who do not research, of those who have not yet seen or heard?’ (Gergen and Gergen 2011, draft). (Jones 2012, p. 4)

In terms of disseminating the narratives from this research project, the choice of a verbatim theater performance was intended to have maximum impact. The follow-up discussions after the performances allowed the young people’s voices to dominate: they were surrounded by an enthusiastic audience, interested in them and their experiences, angered by what they had encountered (asking, “what can be done?”), wanting to spread the message and suggesting which people should see the play to have the desired impact.

Verbatim theater and performance – initially intended as a means of recounting community histories – evolved from the late 1970s as a political response to widespread suspicion of elites and their “spin” merchants (particularly the media) and the desire to reveal the suppressed stories of the marginalized (Paget 1987). Clearly, it is as necessary today as then; as Wendy Hesford argues, “verbatim theatre provides important cultural spaces in which to contemplate the ethical and moral questions raised by the repetition of trauma and the violation of human rights” (Hesford 2006, p. 39). It is also important for creating dialectical encounters with audiences – “to critique justice” (Martin 2006, p. 12), generate debate, and disturb mainstream “understandings” in a safe place (safe in the sense that it is, after all, “only acting”). It is this latter point – “only acting” – which leads to an important ethical realization explored below.

In the next subsection, the immediate reflections of the young people who participated in this project, and the assessments of those who attended the performances, are offered. These were extremely positive and, at times, euphoric.

8 Reflections and Assessments

This section brings to life the process of Butler’s “recognition,” which took place; the two performances attracted over 150 attendees in total. The audiences were asked to write down their thoughts of the performance; the feedback was overwhelmingly

positive, invariably affectively expressed in such terms as “powerful,” “moving”, and “inspiring”:

Thought the whole performance was deeply affecting – real sense of the young people being empowered by the process. Moved by the authenticity of their voices. (University Dean)

Very thought provoking. Heart wrenching. Real stories and real emotions. Very well done! A job well done. You should all be very proud. Congratulations to all involved ☺. (University social work student)

The audiences acknowledged the portrayal of the impacts of austerity:

An exceptional performance analysing life experiences of young people in austerity England, and the dysfunctional policies and politics underpinning young people’s alienation. Yet highlighted possibilities from human agency and the potential to fight for a more just society. Exceptional piece of work! (University lecturer)

Amazing. Some of the stories the young people told made me cry. They are a credit to our society and it needs to be recognised. (Youth worker, City Council)

This was a very creative collective effort showing the different levels of perception, experiences and also experiences of alienation in post-welfare, austerity affected England. The description of personal experiences was honest, saddening, infuriating but showed the realities of youth – and gave a rationale of why the youth must be listened to. (anon)

Confidence was also identified as well as the use of creative methods to achieve the aim of presenting the voices of young people – to narrate their lived experience in their way – which included humor and political satire:

BRILLIANT! I think it’s amazing that there are people working for this cause. I think the use of drama praxis is essential for the UK youth to build confidence and get their voices heard. A wonderful job. Please keep doing this and other projects in the city! (anon)

Amazing performance! Passionate, funny, political - loved it! (anon)

Again, there was strong feeling among those who watched the performances that this project needed wider exposure through youth parliaments, schools and universities, political forums, and the general public. Another attendee from South Africa hoped “to see this project going all the way to my country – RSA (Republic of South Africa).”

Absolutely amazing. A very powerful and emotional piece of work/production. This needs showing to every student in social sciences and the public (theatre, etc). Really well done to all young people involved. (anon)

I thought that the performance was really powerful, especially hearing the personal stories from the young people. I think it should be shown in other cities to help raise awareness. And show it to David Cameron!! (University social work student)

The reflections of the young people in relation to what they gained from their experience of the project addressed a number of areas; firstly, their sense of increased empowerment (e.g., some stated that they learnt how to work in empowering ways with others):

I learned a lot about playing a supportive role in group work. I . . . learned how to help young people develop their ideas without influencing the young person whilst giving them the

space to grow. I also learnt a lot about myself and how to use power in an empowering way. (Male, 21)

Better self-consciousness. I've made friends and gained relationships. (Male, 16)

Importantly, the development of confidence was central for many (gained largely through team work and participating in the performance):

[I've gained] more confidence – I got up there and did it. I didn't give up half way through. I got over being frightened on stage. I made new friends. I learnt a lot from listening to other people's experiences. (Female, 21)

I have learned teamwork. I've got a boost in confidence – even though I was confident before it's given me a boost. (Male, 17)

Freire's idea of "conscientization," alluded to above, was apparent in the acknowledgement of greater understanding of how the negative mainstream representations of "youth" impact young people's lives and what young people are going through in times of austerity:

From this experience I gained a greater knowledge of what young people are going through in times of austerity. I gained a great deal of confidence in my own abilities to perform and to be a part of a team trained as peer researchers. (Male, 22)

It was something I'd never done before, except in primary school and I never enjoyed it there. I enjoyed this because it shows the dilemmas and the views people have on young people. It also brought everyone who did the project closer together. I've gained a new experience – something I really enjoyed. (Male, 19)

Knowledge, social bonding, adaptability to emotional responses, my superego fed . . . Writing my own script was great. An amusing and entertaining experience. (Male, 20)

Perhaps most significant was the feeling of being part of something which was instituting change and social transformation – in the spirit of critical pedagogy:

I gained a better understanding of people's perceptions of young people. I also gained the ability to show other people that not all young people are what they are perceived to be. Personally I gained confidence in being able to help and perform with other young people and share ideas and skills. (Female, 23)

Most of the young participants involved in the project wanted it to develop further and to perform it other venues. One male (22) spoke of doing more performances in more appropriate ("proper") theatrical spaces and supporting this with further training in drama studies. Another male (17) wanted to take the performance on tour. Clearly, criticality was articulated throughout the comments above and, in the process, a sense of connectedness within the group was developed, and comfort zones transgressed to produce heightened confidence and skills development.

These comments outline the success of privileging young people's voice; the narratives were received as authentic and acknowledged for their contribution to praxis. The blend of humor and sadness was an emotional force to be reckoned with; their choice for one member of the cast to play David Cameron utilizing his words highlighted the hypocrisy of the government in pronouncing the "feralness" of

youth, yet cutting the services that might be expected to tackle such perceived “threat.” The audiences were offered a window into lives that were far from “feral” – of young people who struggled under the impact of enforced austerity and diminished funding services to tackle homelessness, mental health issues, drug problems, and bullying; of young people’s experiences of being “in care”; and those who were keen to work but who were at the mercy of high structural unemployment and an insensitive welfare benefit system.

There was a feeling of unwanted closure at the end of their second visceral performance; the young people enjoyed the experience of being at the university; they preached to a converted audience challenging the rationalities of government conferred labels. The enthusiasm, emotion, and encouragement were in confluence, rendering stasis, all reluctant to leave and eager to continue the dialogue. As Jones argues, such performances can

... begin to change minds, change attitudes and help to build ... understanding ... beyond academic journals or narrow academic subject groups for new audiences where the benefits of our scholarly activities will encourage meaningful communication and dialogue within communities ... Performative Social Science or a fusion of the arts and sciences are central to both community engagements and as catalysts for change. (Jones 2012, pp. 5, 6)

Following the performances there were offers for the young people to perform at conferences and symposia; everyone wanted to be part of the phenomenon that unfolded, with the hope of making a difference to theory, policy, and practice. Colleagues involved have taken the experience into practitioner learning, to ready new recruits to go forth and work with young people differently. The current requirement of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in Universities requires details of “impact” – this small-scale project offered clear evidence immediately and has the potential for future contribution to practitioner learning.

All concerned with this coproduction, therefore, appeared to feel thoroughly fulfilled by what had been achieved. As a consequence, attention turned to how we might exploit the potential of a professionally edited DVD of the performance. This would cascade the stories and experiences throughout the public sphere and hopefully influence policy-making processes – continuing the aim of social transformation. Here, however, emerged the rub – the ethical dilemma that arose from putting personal stories out on film. The entire process thus far had been coproduced – enshrined in the ethos of critical pedagogy, participatory processes, and youth work values, consistent with empowering practices to ensure young people felt in control of the project. The performance was recorded by the university and “burned” to DVD, at this stage “uncut” with no editing.

9 Film Premiere: Reality Bites and Losing Essence

It was then decided to screen the DVD, at a symposium in the field of community and youth work, at the university. At this stage, some doubts began to resonate, and as the troupe arrived at the university once again, they had discovered that one of the

volunteers involved in supporting the project had placed footage from their phone on to Vimeo, an open video Internet site. There was no malice intended; the volunteer had also been carried along with the power of the moment and felt it should be shared. However, there was a level of anxiety developing and a discussion ensued around “what to do”. It was decided that the footage needed to be taken down because permission had not been granted. It had been posted with good intent, yet without consent.

Clearly, with most research narratives, anonymity is afforded to participants, yet a film of a performance could not offer that. Alldred and Gillies (2012) refer to a “snapshot” within research, one specific moment in time recorded as a response to a particular question. At a particular juncture in time, but if this is placed on to the worldwide web, this moment then becomes immortalized. This too raised alarm bells for some in this project; young people may tell a story now that they may not want to be part of their backstory in the future when meeting new people. If this performance found its way on to the Internet, control would be out of reach – “dangerous” with potential for “bad”. It was suggested that the possibility of a rider be applied, stating that the stories portrayed herein are not those of the performers (which some were not) but merely indirect modes of testimony; it was thought that this might go some way to protect the performers.

At the screening of the film the young people watched on, hooting with laughter seeing for the first time their performance while at the same time recognizing the power of the narratives and the emotions raised. One young man whispered: “*that’s my voice but it isn’t my story*”; he wanted to disassociate himself from the particular narrative. It was at this point that the rider became essential. Anonymity, confidentiality, and pseudonyms are complex in ethical research (King and Horrocks 2010; Crow and Wiles 2008); here, they were not only complex but near impossible as compared to writing an article – the faces and the stories could be seen, heard, and immortalized.

The conclusion of the performances saw the young people become aware of their agency with placards fighting back – calling for “what they want” and “when they want it” – “now!”. Indeed, following the screening and a speech by a national figure connected to a major trade union, a number of the performers stated that they wanted to engage in social action. A similar feeling of euphoria that followed the drama performances ensued and, for a time, the issues of anonymity and the necessity of a rider disappeared, to return later when it was decided to have a discussion, before any further screenings took place, in order to fully tease through the consequences of showing the film.

10 Choice and Consent

Researchers, and for that matter anyone involved with the creation of such a project, arrive with their own experiences and position in life. They come with the best of intentions to privilege the voice of the participants while operating with reflexivity and ethical consideration. However, they could, at the same time, view the participant as a “rational, self-reflexive modernist subject” (Alldred and Gillies 2012, p. 143), fully mindful of research processes and equipped to make informed choices. But this is not always the case. In terms of traditional research, participants trust academic

researchers; they offer their lifeworlds but are not necessarily au fait with the ways of the academy, and may or may not realize that their essences will be woven into articles for publication – even if explained, this is a different world. Indeed, Mauthner (2012) suggests that the participants might well never see what is written about them. This was different; it was not conventional, so in terms of the DVD, the good intent can be outweighed with omnipresence on the Internet:

... borderless digital technologies ... seeped into everyday life making ethical dilemmas, and questions on right and wrong actions more visible and transparent or contrarily, more invisible and fraught. (Miller et al. 2012, p. 5)

While acknowledging earlier that some of the young people involved were experienced in being the face of campaigns, these were perhaps more “snapshot”, short-term inputs. With a film, however, the question that emerged was, who owned the data and who could decide where it went? When the DVD was produced, the university staff obtained copies for all those who had taken part – it was their “story”, “voice”, and “needs” after all. The ownership had always rested with the young people, as a central tenet of participatory practice, but that was initially in terms of the performance; the film was not originally part of the process. While they retained ownership of this too, the complexity of wider access via the Internet brought new problems.

The storied lives offered up to produce the emotional, powerful, and inspiring coproduction suddenly became a tangled “main danger”. Problems occurred, firstly, in assembling all of the young people together at the same time, and then, with multiple voices, ownership was viewed from divergent lenses. One young participant stated, “*I don’t want my parents to know that I was bullied*”; in contrast, another argued, “*why would we make the DVD if we don’t want to put it on YouTube?*”. The clash of transparency and confidentiality was clearly articulated, approaching “dangerousness,” in need of action before it became “bad” (Foucault 1983). Understanding where narratives stray beyond the telling in a performance became amorphous on film – control evaporates and confusion reigns. After much deliberation, the DVD, which had been shown “uncut”, would later be edited, and a rider included ensuring that the film made clear that the people on screen were portraying the storied lives of “others”. The prevailing altruistic outlook of the participants continued – they wanted to make a difference for those in similar predicaments to themselves. The young people took the DVD to present at a conference/symposium of practitioners they had been invited to attend after their drama performances.

Despite such positive outcomes, the overall process of this project proved difficult for the youth workers and academics involved, ably expressed here by Toll and Crumpler who, drawing on the earlier quotation from Foucault, connote:

It troubles us to consider our [project] as dangerous, given our good intentions ... we seek further insight regarding the apparent contradiction between wanting to do good and engaging in an activity that might move from the dangerous to the bad or harmful. (Toll and Crumpler 2004, p. 386)

Quite clearly, lessons from this project were well and truly learned.

11 Conclusion

The aim of this project had been to address a subject of extreme importance to many young people in contemporary England – the increasingly difficult social and economic context of life under austerity in continuing neoliberal times. In many ways, the project proved a success, particularly for giving some young people a voice they had not had before and building confidence and critical consciousness. The performances also had a profound effect on the audiences – offering them a clear insight into the struggles young people endure under the impact of forced austerity, one that challenges the rationalities of mainstream rhetoric on “deficit youth.” So in terms of overcoming the discursive positions of media and political representations on “problem youth,” and challenging the negative stereotyping and myths these construct, the project was a success. It demonstrated instead that lived experience is complicated in many ways, centralizing the importance of context.

However, the intent and actuality of this project proved, in the end, to be mismatched, suggesting that the co-construction of knowledge is complicated by power relations, trust, and the foregrounding of the crucial issues of ownership, consent, and control. Huge ethical problems arose in relation to putting some of the stories out on film. Those involved set out with good intentions to facilitate a project privileging the voice of young people to articulate “This is who I am – my story, my voice, my needs”, but in the end, this raised ethically difficult choices. In hindsight, those involved came to realize that these voices could perhaps be less dangerously represented as “This encapsulates young people, their stories and their voices, their needs” with a disclaimer – the depictions in this film are not representative of those taking part. Reflexivity is clearly an antecedent to working *with* people ethically, employing a “lens of care” (Barnes 2012, p. 5), which was utilized throughout the project, foregrounding decision-making, ownership of the project, and its contents. Except that is for one aspect: the issues of anonymity through film, which were not fully thought through. The power of the narrative and the euphoric response it incited overtook the more obvious practical requirements of research. The message is that young people participating in such performances need to be made fully aware of the consequences. When they signed up for dramatic performances, the film was not part of the equation; in fact, it happened almost by accident. It began with the resource center documenting the training day, influenced by the Engel’s remake, to provide an opening section to the performance representing the timeline of involvement, and ended with a film of the whole event, including the discussion that followed. At least by offering a rider, the powerful, emotive, and inspiring stories relaying the issues identified by young people living under twenty-first-century austerity can be told while at the same time ensuring protection from experiencing their essence drift into the ether of the Internet for posterity, out of their control.

This project had an important impact for a number of reasons, crucially providing a voice to young people through their equal inclusion in collaborative partnership work, utilizing creative approaches of critical pedagogy and verbatim theater to inform audiences. It was important too for its commitment to reflexivity and ethical

principles; once issues were identified, an immediate response was put into practice by closing down the Internet access to the film – fulfilling the **trust** necessary required by those taking part in the process.

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Critical Reflections on Participatory Dissemination: Coproducing Research Messages with Young People

4

Ruth Evans

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Abstract

While the potential and limitations of participatory methodologies with children and young people have been widely debated, much less attention has been paid to processes of *participatory dissemination*. I discuss the benefits and critically reflect on the ethical dilemmas and methodological issues raised by participatory

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dissemination processes, drawing on my experiences of leading three research projects in East and West Africa. Participatory dissemination can engage young people and community members in the interpretation of the findings and coproduction of research messages for different audiences. However, key ethical issues that need to be considered concern power relations, language barriers, and the level of participation that can be achieved when working with marginalized young people in spaces which may be dominated by powerful adult professionals. The use of video and other visual methods raises ethical dilemmas about the time, resources and skills involved in coproduction, and the extent to which the power to film, edit, and present remains with researchers or participants. Concerns about anonymity, confidentiality, and decisions about online publishing and/or the dissemination of videos to different audiences are particularly pertinent when working with marginalized young people considered “vulnerable.” While perhaps not an ideal form of participatory video or of action research methodologies, participatory dissemination nevertheless offers a means of engaging young people, community members, policymakers, and practitioners in dialogue, which in turn may lead to societal impacts.

Keywords

Participatory dissemination • Coproduction • Research impact • Participatory video • Creative methods • Reflexivity • Cross-cultural research • Languages in fieldwork • Africa

1 Introduction

Appropriate dissemination strategies are increasingly recognized as an ethical requirement of social research (Valentine 2003). In addition to treating participants with respect (Baylor et al. 2013) and fulfilling ethical criteria to share research findings with participants, “active” participatory dissemination is regarded as a way of enabling the voices of children and young people to prioritize research findings and engage in policy dialogue (Coad and Evans 2008; Van Blerk and Ansell 2007; Cahill and Torre 2007). This may be a source of empowerment, enabling young people to see how their contribution to the research process can help to inform policy, practice, and future research. Participatory dissemination may also lead to other longer-term societal impacts, such as the provision of social support services (Evans 2016a).

While the potential and limitations of participatory methodologies have been widely debated (Kindon et al. 2007; mrs kinpaisby 2008), including their use with children and young people Christensen and James 2000; Kellett et al. 2004; Porter and Abane 2008), much less attention has been paid to processes of *participatory dissemination* (Coad and Evans 2008; Evans 2016a). Few researchers to date have written about the process of translating research findings into societal impacts that improve young people’s lives in the longer term.

In this chapter, I discuss the potential benefits of participatory dissemination processes that use creative methods and video to coproduce research messages with young people and community members. I critically reflect on the ethical dilemmas and methodological issues raised, drawing on my experiences of leading three research projects in East and West Africa. The first study investigated sibling caring relations among orphaned young people living in child- and youth-headed households in rural and urban Tanzania and Uganda (the research was funded by a small grant from the RGS-IBG and the University of Reading) (Evans 2011, 2012a). The second study explored asset inheritance, poverty, and family relations among the Serer ethnic group in rural and urban Senegal (the research was funded by the University of Reading and Walker Institute) (Evans 2014, 2016b). The third study examined the shift toward increased cashew cultivation in rural Ghana and how it perpetuates gendered and generational inequalities in land access (this collaborative research project led by Ruth Evans, Simon Mariwah and Kwabena Barima Antwi was funded by the University of Reading and Walker Institute. The accompanying video is available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqZLmwkN3LM&feature=youtu.be>) (Evans et al. 2015). In all three studies, I brought participants together for a series of participatory dissemination workshops. The findings and video-recorded messages were then discussed further with strategic stakeholders at a range of spatial scales.

This chapter first discusses the available literature relating to participatory dissemination with young people, including participatory video practice. The chapter then gives a brief overview of the approach to dissemination adopted in the three studies. The chapter discusses the potential benefits and then critically reflects on the “messy” process of participatory dissemination, particularly the ethical and methodological issues raised.

2 Participatory Action Research, Participatory Video, and Dissemination

Despite the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and recognition of the importance of children’s participation in many contexts, research that actively involves young people as peer researchers and collaborators is still relatively rare in both the global North and South (Alderson 2001; Porter and Abane 2008). Judgments about competence and adult-child power imbalances are key barriers to involving children as active researchers (Alderson 2001; Kellett et al. 2004). However, when adult researchers and facilitators are able to facilitate the development of young people’s research skills and enable them to conduct child- and youth-led research in an empowering way, as well as to collaborate with key adult actors, young people’s meaningful participation in all stages of the research process, including dissemination, is possible.

Participatory methodologies that involve children as active researchers and engage them in collaborative visual ethnography and participatory video (PV) may enable young people to have greater control over the representation of their lives

(Pink 2013; Cahill and Torre 2007; Porter and Abane 2008). Participatory geographies have drawn attention to issues of scale and the embedded political nature of participation in particular places and spaces (mrs kinpaisby 2008, p. 293; Pain et al. 2007). In much of the literature, however, *dissemination* is often only mentioned in passing, despite the importance of this stage of the research process in translating findings into action and social change.

The literature that does discuss the dissemination process notes that research reports by young researchers may range from long typed reports to simple posters, a wall newspaper, video, or photographic exhibition, with reports and drawings produced by the whole team or by smaller groups (Alderson 2001). Findings may also be presented through other creative outputs such as youth-led dramas, dance, rap songs, or other performances (as discussed in this chapter) or through designing stickers, websites, apps, digital maps, or other technology products. Cahill and Torre (2007, p. 199) argue that participatory action research creates a critical space for self-representation. Members of the Fed-up Honeys, a group of young urban women of color in New York City, for example, sought to communicate their findings to “insiders” and “outsiders” through developing stereotype stickers to confront their peers and the wider public, thereby undermining such stereotypes and motivating young women (ibid). Such performances and other visual outputs created by young people are often “memorable” (Alderson 2001) and may arouse greater interest and engagement from key adult professionals, which may enhance the potential “impact” of the findings (Evans 2016a).

Key adult policymakers and practitioners may participate in a consultative or advisory group from the outset of child- or youth-led projects, which may help to ensure that the research messages are heard by decision-makers. In Porter and Abane’s (2008) study, Ghanaian, Indian, and South African children presented their findings at the stakeholder dissemination meeting at the end of the project. The authors found that Ghanaian government representatives and local stakeholders listened carefully and responded with a range of relevant comments and questions, despite a wider cultural context that is “strongly adult-focused and in which many children are subservient” (ibid, p. 161). Understanding the sociocultural context and paying careful attention to power dynamics are thus crucially important when involving young people in dissemination.

Reflecting its origins in participatory action research, the literature on participatory video (PV) often focuses on ideal forms developed by NGOs and practitioners when working with communities in the Majority World (Benest n.d.; Walker and Arrighi 2013). Researchers are increasingly engaging with communities through PV processes (Garrett 2010; Velez-Torres 2013), and PV is regarded as a means of empowering communities who, following training, develop the skills to “document and create their own narratives with minimal outside support” (Walker and Arrighi 2013, p. 416). The literature on PV (Blazek, ► Chap. 12, “Participatory Video with Children and Young People”, this volume) and participatory documentary tends to foreground the reflective learning process of coproducing the video and seeks to “limit the intervention of academic ‘outsiders’ by enabling young people and adults

to represent their community” (Velez-Torres 2013). Kindon (2003, p. 143) argues that PV may offer:

a feminist practice of looking, which actively works to engage with and challenge conventional relationships of power associated with the gaze in geographical research, and results in more equitable outcomes and/or transformation for research participants (emphasis in original).

Through a “feminist practice of looking,” knowledge is produced both for and by the participants through a collaborative PV process, which may help to break down the usual researcher-researched hierarchy and achieve social transformation (Kindon 2003; Pink 2013).

While making a difference and improving the lives of participants are often explicit goals and motivations for developing PV (Mistry et al. 2014; Velez-Torres 2013), in common with participatory action research more broadly, it is curious that so little space is devoted to discussing how video end products are used to generate discussion with decision-makers for advocacy or how they may lead to other societal impacts. While Blazek and Hraňová (2012) suggest that ethnography of a PV process is crucial for researchers, they also argue that the “video-as-a-product” should not be underestimated. The video produced by the young women as part of a community youth work project in Bratislava, Slovakia, was posted on YouTube and shown in a meeting with council representatives, which the young women and community members attended, amplifying their message (Blazek et al. 2015). This led to negotiations between the youth practitioner and the local council which eventually led to the building of a new playground in the neighborhood. Central to the project were “entangled on-going relations of research-practice-collaboration” within an ethics of care which valued the “unexpected, contingent and non-linear outcomes and effects of engagement” beyond the academy (ibid, p. 46).

In a different example of the use of the video end product, Haynes and Tanner (2015) describe how young people who participated in a PV project in the Philippines were empowered to research, document and raise awareness of disaster risk, and use screening events to mobilize and advocate for risk reduction measures in their communities. Following the screening, young people were actively engaged in local actions stimulated by the process (tree-planting campaigns, discussions with teachers, and dialogue with community leaders). Nevertheless, the authors acknowledge the wider critique of participation in failing to challenge existing power relations beyond the local scale.

Several authors have called for a more critical approach to PV practice and politics (Mistry et al. 2014; Walsh 2014). Walsh calls for more attention to be paid to how PV outputs are used and to explore how to facilitate more radical change beyond merely voicing concerns to those in power. This chapter seeks to respond to these critiques and the scarcity of literature on dissemination through a discussion of the benefits of participatory dissemination and critically reflect on the language issues, power relations, and ethical dilemmas raised by the process.

3 Participatory Dissemination and Coproduction of Research Messages in East and West Africa

My approach to participatory dissemination in the three studies reported here was underpinned by a feminist ethic of care (Tronto 1993; Pain et al. 2007; Blazek et al. 2015) and sense of responsibility to engage in dialogue with participants, community members, policymakers, and practitioners in order to improve the lives of those in similar situations in future. While youth-led and participatory action research methodologies may build beneficial social impacts into projects from the start through the process of reflective learning, the studies discussed in this chapter adopted a conventional (less participatory), qualitative methodology and used a more action-oriented approach as part of the dissemination phase.

While perhaps not viewed as “best practice” or an ideal form of participatory action research, this approach nevertheless offered a means of facilitating young people’s involvement in the shaping of research outputs and enabled them to actively identify priorities for action resulting from research findings, which may lead to beneficial societal impacts (Evans 2016a). As Porter and Abane (2008) note, it is difficult for academic researchers to facilitate successful child-led research projects in the global South without close collaboration with locally based, child-focused NGOs fully committed to a child-centered approach and with access to a core team of well-trained field staff to facilitate children’s involvement as researchers. Grant observes that there are many occasions when a “full scale meta method” of participatory action research is not possible, often as a result of the messy, complex social reality in which the research is based. An approach of flexibility, adaptability, and openness is instead required, alongside a recognition that engaging in what may be regarded as “lesser” forms of participation does not necessarily limit the potential of the research to achieve social change and transformation (ibid; Evans 2016a).

The three projects reported here were exploratory studies supported by a series of small grants, and as a university lecturer, I had very limited time and resources to support the involvement of local NGO workers to engage in participatory child- or youth-led action research over a longer time frame. In this chapter, I adopt a reflexive approach that acknowledges the power imbalances between researchers and participants and the challenges of achieving meaningful participation and societal impacts through cross-cultural, cross-language research in resource-limited contexts in Africa. Below I briefly describe the participatory dissemination process in each study.

In the first study in Tanzania and Uganda, following preliminary analysis of qualitative transcripts, young people who had participated in interviews or focus groups were invited to participate in a workshop with one or more of their younger siblings in the three research locations a year after the initial fieldwork. An accessible summary report was produced in Kiswahili and Luganda, with copies provided to all participants. The workshops presented the key findings and used participatory diagramming (Kesby 2000) and creative methods to coproduce a range of outputs (art posters, video-recorded drama sketches, and a rap song). In workshops in each locality the following day, I presented initial findings, workshop diagrams, young

people's art posters, and video-recorded messages and discussed these further with NGO workers, local leaders and community members. Analysis of workshop discussions and creative outputs were included in the final open access report and presented at a range of policy workshops in the UK and internationally and used in my undergraduate teaching.

In the second study in Senegal, following analysis of the qualitative data and writing a policy report (translated into French), participants who had been interviewed were invited to participate in workshops 6 months later to discuss the findings and identify key messages for a short video to be shared with policymakers and practitioners. Separate and joint discussions were held with adults and young people, and participants' messages were filmed in each of the three main research locations. Further workshops were held with participants to screen the first edit of the video in each of the research locations and make any further changes. The findings and video were presented and discussed further in two stakeholder workshops (in Dakar and in one of the rural locations).

The third study in Ghana developed as a collaborative project with colleagues at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. Following analysis of the qualitative data and producing a written report of preliminary findings, we held participatory workshops with young people and middle and older generation men and women in the rural community to discuss the findings and develop a video of key messages for policymakers and practitioners. A policy workshop was held in Accra with international and national stakeholders, Government representatives and NGOs, who also contributed to the video. Final edits were made, and my Ghanaian colleagues and I presented the key findings and video in a plenary session at a UK conference, when they were published online and discussed by an INGO policy advisor and academics.

Although the research focus of each study differed, my overall approach to participatory dissemination and the use of video was common to all three projects. I sought to reflect on the methods and approaches used and incorporate learning from each study into subsequent work, in line with the "meta-methodology" of participatory action research.

4 Benefits of Participatory Dissemination

In this section, I discuss the benefits of participatory dissemination practice with young people and community members. It is important to note that the benefits and motivations of PV and other participatory action research projects, including participatory dissemination, are diverse among different actors (Mistry et al. 2014). Blazek and Hraňová (2012) note that some benefits come from individual motivations, while others develop from the collaborative nature of participatory activities. I would add that some benefits also relate to the ethical positions of researchers and methodological considerations, as I discuss below. I draw, where appropriate, on evaluation feedback from participants about their experiences of the process.

4.1 Ethical Importance of Feeding Back Findings and Engaging Participants in Policy Dialogue

Given the researcher's position of power often in analyzing and interpreting the experiences of "the researched" (Allred 1998; Pink 2013) and the potential influence researchers may have on policymakers and practitioners (Meth and Williams 2010), adopting appropriate dissemination strategies can be regarded as an ethical responsibility. Kirby's (2004) guidelines on involving young people in research highlight the importance of ensuring that research participants – including young people who are the subjects of research and those undertaking or advising research – see the outcomes of their input. As a minimum, this includes giving young people summaries and easy access to full research reports if they wish, written in accessible language and/or access to other outputs such as videos or posters which detail the research findings. The guidelines state it is also important to include information on how the research is being disseminated, how the findings are being used to improve things for young people and what changes have been achieved to date, or the reasons for why no change has happened (*ibid*).

Although not originally built into the research design, I regarded sharing the findings with participants and discussing improvements to policy and practice as an important ethical consideration of working with young people and community members in Africa. This was particularly pertinent given the "conventional" (less participatory) methodological approach adopted in the first phase of the studies and the difficulty of maintaining ongoing relations of collaboration and regular communication with participants due to my geographical distance from the "field." In the East African and Senegal studies, participants expressed how much they valued the fact that I had returned from the UK to provide an opportunity to identify their needs and priorities for policymaker and practitioner audiences. When asked for their views of the participatory workshop process, participants from Guédiawaye, Senegal, commented:

"What made the biggest impression on me was the professional side, the fact that she came back from England to follow up; I thank her first of all that she had this idea, because it's a first for me, so it's a first, because people are in need, you come to talk to them about their problems and you take it up."

Participatory dissemination can thereby foster a sense of respect, value, and greater agency, as participants become more active in the research (Baylor et al. 2013) and see how their input helps to shape policy and practice recommendations, even if other stages of the research are less participatory. Indeed, while adopting a participatory approach from the outset may be the ideal of participatory geographies and action research, it is important not to overlook other ways that more conventional research designs can involve participants in dissemination and the prioritization of policy and practice recommendations.

4.2 Enabling the Voices of Young People to Be Heard by Local, National, and International Stakeholders and Achieving “Impact”

Using a participatory process to coproduce research messages can enable young people to engage in some level of dialogue with strategic professionals and others in positions of power locally, nationally, or internationally (Van Blerk and Ansell 2007). As noted earlier, young people may contribute to the coproduction of a range of nontraditional research outputs or “products,” including leaflets, posters, videos, drawings, photography exhibitions, websites, online games, and apps. Visual representations of participants’ experiences and creative outputs coproduced in workshops can help to reinforce findings for policy and practice audiences, members of the public, and participants (Cahill and Torre 2007). As Cahill and Torre (2007, p. 205) observe, it is crucial to develop partnerships and collaborations with participants in order to coproduce diverse and relevant “nonacademic products” and build on existing community-based assets to support action agendas. This can be difficult to do in the dissemination phase if earlier phases of the research did not adopt a participatory, collaborative approach.

In the East African study, quantitative data about young people’s caring activities gathered through a bean time-use diagram could be quickly collated, presented, and discussed with NGO staff and community leaders in the workshop the following day (Evans 2012a, 2016a). The quantitative evidence (albeit with a small sample) about the mean number of hours of care work that young people engaged in per week, disaggregated according to gender and position within the household, gave greater weight to my findings about the types of caring activities young people undertook. This helped to emphasize the significance of this work for practitioners and community leaders (Evans 2016a).

In addition, the poster of ranked priorities provided a striking visual representation of the support needs young people saw as most important (see Fig. 1). The list of priorities collated from the three workshops with young people was discussed further in the final open access report (Evans 2010), which was disseminated to NGOs, the UNICEF Better Care website, and Regional Inter agency Task Team on children and AIDS in Eastern and Southern Africa, among others. The importance young people placed on food above other priorities helped to inform the development of a school-feeding program developed by one of the participating NGOs (Evans 2016a, see also REF 2014 Impact Case Study: <http://results.ref.ac.uk/Submissions/Impact/1617>).

Creative methods used with young people also helped to articulate their priorities for action for local leaders, NGO staff, and policymaker audiences. The art posters young people painted and wrote on provided a colorful visual representation of the difficulties as well as positive aspects of living in sibling-headed households (see Figs. 2 and 3; also Evans 2011).

The video-recorded drama sketches and rap song coproduced in Tanzania and Uganda focused on the problems orphaned young people may experience when

Fig. 1 Young woman sticking young people's collectively ranked priorities on a poster, Mbeya workshop, Tanzania. Food [*chakula* in Kiswahili] was their number one priority



Fig. 2 Young people making their art poster, Mbeya workshop, Tanzania

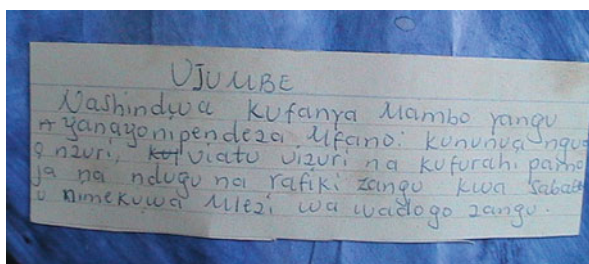


Fig. 3 One of the messages written in Kiswahili on young people's poster, Mbeya workshop, Tanzania. Translation: "Message: I'm not able to do the things I would like to, for example, buying good clothes, good shoes and having fun with my family and friends because I am the guardian of my younger brothers and sisters"

relatives or neighbors tried to appropriate their inherited home and land and how they wanted the community to respect them and safeguard their inheritance rights (Evans 2012b). The immediacy of a short film can be an effective means of conveying participants' messages rather than simply relying on researchers' own communication. Alongside my interpretation of the findings, the videos enabled children's own voices to be heard directly by community members, local leaders, and NGO staff in each locality, in addition to being presented in policy and research seminars and conferences in the UK. According to evaluation feedback, young people in Tanzania and Uganda valued the opportunity to raise awareness about their experiences: "I liked doing the drama because it's short but it can be easily understood and teaches people." As Haynes and Tanner (2015) observe, young people, with the aid of video, may be better able to communicate messages to decision-makers than adults. Similarly, Gregorius (► Chap. 14, "Combining Multiple Qualitative Methods in Research on Young Disabled People in the Global South", this volume) suggests that PV conducted with disabled young people helped to raise awareness about their competencies, challenges, and needs and was used as an advocacy tool, with parts of the video shown on national television.

4.3 Enhancing Research Rigor and Validity

The rigor of the research methods and analysis and the validity of the findings represent key criteria for assessing the quality of qualitative social research (Bryman 2008). Participatory dissemination offers an opportunity for researchers to verify preliminary interpretations with participants and to clarify issues, confirm, validate, and triangulate the findings. While involving young people in the data analysis and write up may be particularly challenging (Coad and Evans 2008), since it may be perceived as "technical, time-consuming, difficult and boring" (Kirby 2004, p. 11), young people may want to have some input into interpreting the data and commenting on researchers' analysis.

This does not mean, however, that researchers should limit their interpretations to those shared by participants. In his discussion of a peer research project, France (2000) notes that there may be tensions between accepting young people's own analysis and locating findings within wider social and economic factors. Adult researchers saw themselves as "responsible to young people" rather than as consultants and advisors, which ultimately may have limited theory building (France 2000, p. 31). In participatory data analysis and dissemination processes, as in more conventional methodologies, adult researchers can (and perhaps should) use their skills to link the findings to theoretical perspectives and the wider literature, secondary data, or research experience elsewhere in order to influence policy and practice (Coad and Evans 2008).

In the East African study, workshops enabled me to explore differences between the care work of young people heading households and that of their younger siblings who had not participated in the original interviews. Using participatory diagramming (Kesby 2000), I could explore the differences between younger and older siblings'

and girls' and boys' paid and unpaid work in an informal setting. Young people confirmed the relevance of the different dimensions of care work that I presented, and their use of the categories enabled me to refine my initial categorization, which was discussed in later publications (Evans 2012a).

Participatory dissemination processes may also enable researchers to engage with a wider range of community leaders and stakeholders than were involved in the original research. In Senegal, the rural workshop enabled me to present my initial findings about women's and girls' land inheritance and discuss these issues collectively with participants and members of the rural council and other village elders who had not participated in the first stage of the research. This participatory process provided valuable insights into how microscale shifts in gendered attitudes may take place within such participatory spaces (Evans 2016b).

These examples demonstrate how research rigor can be enhanced by researchers actively feeding back findings to participants, clarifying issues, and discussing the findings among a wider group of stakeholders. This can enhance the validity of researchers' interpretations and provide a more nuanced and accurate representation of the findings (Van Blerk and Ansell 2007). A note of caution is needed here, however. The extent to which verification strategies can facilitate the full engagement of young people in the interpretation of data is debatable; the danger is that young people are only consulted to validate adult researchers' interpretations, and it does not change the balance of power between adults and children in decision-making processes (Coad and Evans 2008).

4.4 Fostering Empowerment and the Development of Peer Support

Blazek and Hraňová's (2012, p. 164) PV project undertaken over several months enabled young people to gain a wide range of personal and social skills, including "reflexivity, frustration management, changes in personal relationships and dispositions, emotional intelligences, reflecting on everyday life in the neighbourhood and ways of change." Despite the short timescales involved in the participatory workshops in the studies reported here, participants reported gaining from the process on a personal and social level.

Although this did not constitute one of the original aims of the participatory dissemination process, I found that bringing young people and adults together in a safe space with their peers to discuss their shared experiences could be experienced as fun and empowering. Providing feedback about the research findings in a group setting may enable participants to see how their own experiences relate to those of others in similar situations. Furthermore, participatory activities in such safe spaces may help to foster the development of collective identities and raise consciousness of people's commonalities and shared oppression as a marginalized group (Evans and Evans 2004; Madoerin 2008).

In Tanzania and Uganda, young people appeared to value the opportunity to share their experiences with their peers. In the evaluation feedback, they commented:

“I have had fun with different friends, like sharing ideas, music, dancing and drama” (Kampala).

“I liked the good explanations and cheerfulness of the facilitators, good food and soda, solving or talking about the problems I face in my life” (Nshamba, Kagera region).

This highlights the importance of researchers and facilitators creating a safe, respectful atmosphere where young people (and adults) feel able to contribute and share their experiences with peers they may not have met before.

In Senegal, Serer widows, widowers, and orphaned young people living in Dakar valued the opportunity to meet others in similar situations and expressed their wish to remain in contact after the research:

“This is an opening for us, it’s an opening, because some are originally from Dioffior, me, I’m from Fimela [Serer rural communities] and we didn’t know each other before, so it’s an opportunity for us to reaffirm our ties, really I thank her and hope that this will lead to something.”

Bringing participants together in safe spaces to share their experiences may help to facilitate the development of social ties, collective identities, and peer support that may be sustained after researchers leave the “field.” In this way, participants may gain personally from the participatory process beyond contributing to the coproduction and dissemination of research outputs. As Kesby et al. caution, however, the empowering effects of participatory action research are embedded in place, and “participants may find it difficult to perform in empowered ways once they leave participatory arenas and return to spaces governed by resources that effect normalcy” (2007, p. 25).

Furthermore, the development of peer support and personal empowerment is often not defined as “impact” or included in institutional audits, despite often being highly valued by participants (Evans 2016a). For the purposes of the UK 2014 Research Excellence Framework, impact was defined by the Higher Education Funding Council for England as “an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia” (REF 2011, 48). As Macpherson et al. (2014, p. 29) point out:

The REF [UK Research Excellence Framework] criteria for impact place an emphasis on reach and significance but how, for example, do we compare an exhibition seen by thousands to a project that significantly changes the lifecourse of five disadvantaged young people? There are also other impacts which are unlikely to leave a clear audit trail; such as tiny shifts in an individual young person’s life which may ultimately turn out to have been a turning point, or arts methodologies that have flattened power hierarchies and enabled communication between less verbal participants.

Such qualitative changes may be particularly important in the lives of marginalized young people. Rather than relying on narrow neoliberal definitions, there is thus a need to broaden understandings of “impact” to include “depth” and benefits that may be achieved through participatory practice with smaller numbers of individuals and local community groups, rather than relying only on quantitative measures of

“reach” and “significance” (Macpherson et al. 2014; Evans 2016a; Blazek et al. 2015).

5 The “Messiness” of Participatory Dissemination Praxis

Having highlighted the benefits, this section explores the “messiness” of participatory dissemination practice, focusing on the challenges and ethical issues raised in cross-cultural, cross-language settings. I critically analyze my own positionality in the coproduction of research messages and discuss, power relations in filming and editing the videos, anonymity, managing participants’ expectations, and the challenges of engaging with policymakers and practitioners to achieve impact.

5.1 Positionality and Language Issues

My own positionality as a relatively privileged academic based in the global North, my skills, experience, and language proficiency, among other factors, had a crucial influence on my interactions with research participants, the extent to which participatory research outputs were coproduced and the level of engagement achieved with policymakers and practitioners. As Scheyvens and Leslie (2000) note, the researcher’s skills, experience, awareness of the sociocultural and political context, sensitivity, and empathy are more important considerations for the research than essentialized characteristics such as gender or nationality.

Language issues are often glossed over in final outputs but play an important role in “researcher-researched” relations, especially in cross-cultural research (Evans et al. 2017; Watson 2004; Caretta 2015). In the first study, I was able to engage with Tanzanian participants at a deeper level than with participants in Uganda, due to my relative fluency in spoken Kiswahili, developed through volunteer work in Tanzania. Due to limited funding and few contacts in Uganda, where I had not previously worked, I had to rely on NGO staff to provide English-Luganda interpretation in interviews. These language barriers meant that much was lost in translation and my understanding of young people’s situations was more limited. Recognizing this, during the dissemination phase, I secured funds for interpretation for the workshop with young people in Kampala and made contact with a local facilitator to provide English-Luganda interpretation.

As Blazek and Hraňová (2012) comment, PV (and other participatory projects) is produced in a complex set of relationships between different actors, of which the researcher-participant relationship is only one and may not be the most significant. The Ugandan interpreter’s experience and skills in working with children helped to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere (see Figs. 4 and 5). She worked with the young people to develop their drama sketch, which they rehearsed several times before I video-recorded it and afterward provided a translated transcript of the video so that I could add English subtitles.



Fig. 4 Ice-breaker activity led by facilitator at the beginning of the Kampala workshop with young people



Fig. 5 Group photo at end of Kampala workshop with young participants and facilitator

In the second study, my prior background in French studies motivated me to develop research in the francophone context of Senegal, where I had not previously worked. I employed an interpreter for French-Serer and Wolof interpretation in interviews and workshops, as it would have been difficult for me to learn Serer or

Wolof to an adequate level during 2 months of study leave. The interpreter's positionality as a Serer middle-aged man, who lived in Dakar and had a good level of education and fluency in Wolof and Serer, had a significant influence on my interactions with participants. His family maintained ties to their home village which I selected as one of the rural research locations. Due to his age, personality and Muslim religious affiliation, the interpreter was often able to put interviewees at ease, which was especially helpful in interview settings when I was particularly aware of the social distance between myself as a white woman of Christian heritage and older male Muslim elders and imams. My lack of proficiency in Serer and Wolof, however, inhibited informal conversations outside of interview settings, which I was particularly conscious of when the interpreter took a cigarette break or spent time with male friends and relatives. Meanwhile in "elite" settings in Senegal, I feel that my position as a white French-speaking academic based at a European university accorded me a privileged status and respect among professionals and facilitated my access to senior representatives of government ministries.

In the dissemination workshops in two of the research locations in Senegal, I worked with the interpreter and a research assistant to facilitate smaller group discussions with adults and youth concurrently. I found that the young people often gave short answers in French, with older, more educated young people tending to articulate their views more confidently, while others remained silent, despite being encouraged to contribute to the discussion in Serer or Wolof. With hindsight, I feel that communication was also inhibited by the lack of availability of a room at the school and insufficient chairs for participants, in addition to the interpreter's and research assistant's relative inexperience in working with young people (I was facilitating the adult discussion concurrently) (see Fig. 6).

In the third study in Ghana, collaboration with Ghanaian academics and research assistants greatly reduced language barriers. I conducted some of the interviews in English with a colleague or research assistant translating into the local language, Twi. My colleagues continued the remainder of the fieldwork directly in Twi, without a need for interpreters, enabling us to conduct more interviews than originally planned. Research assistants transcribed and translated interviews directly into English. During the participatory workshops, colleagues interpreted for me, but they also facilitated some discussions taking place concurrently with women and men directly in Twi. Though collaboration with Ghanaian partners reduced language barriers during data collection with community participants, my reduced involvement in strategic interviews, however, may have inhibited our access to "elite" participants. My colleagues struggled to secure interviews with key Government Ministry representatives, and in the interviews that were secured, responses were very brief and lacking in substance, suggesting perhaps that access to senior representatives had not been granted. This may be related to my colleagues' relatively marginal positioning within such "elite" government hierarchies, in addition to my underestimation of the time and effort needed to gain access to such networks.



Fig. 6 Discussion led by interpreter and research assistant with young people about their research messages in workshop in rural location, Senegal

5.2 Power Relations in Dissemination Workshops

Power differentials between policymakers, practitioners, and participants were particularly difficult to manage in the dissemination workshops in the East African and Senegal studies. Although children were invited to participate in the workshops with local leaders, community members, and NGO staff in their locality in Tanzania and Uganda (and their transport costs would have been refunded), none of the young people attended. In view of adult-child power relations and generational hierarchies in many African societies, I was aware that young people might have found it difficult to express their views in a workshop dominated by adults. Time to participate in workshops was also limited, since the young people struggled to combine their substantial caring responsibilities with school and/or earning a livelihood (Evans 2012a).

Showing the children's video-recorded dramas and song was intended to be a way of enabling their voices to be heard without them needing to be physically present. Working with practitioners to build young people's skills and confidence to participate with adults is another approach that could potentially facilitate their engagement in policy dialogue (Van Blerk and Ansell 2007), although this would require more time commitment from researchers, facilitators, and young people. Understanding the sociocultural context and power dynamics between participants, researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders, as well as within groups, is crucial (Porter and Abane 2008; Blazek and Hraňová 2012). It is also important to acknowledge time constraints and other practical considerations, which may lead to adaptations to participatory projects.

In the Senegal study, participants and a local facilitator traveled an hour by bus to the university from Guédiawaye, a large working-class suburb to attend the stakeholder workshop in Dakar. Participants explained they were keen to see the final version of the video compiled from the three research locations. Despite their presence, however, I found that young people and community members who had participated in the video were inhibited in speaking within this university context in which French dominated. This reluctance to speak was in part related to my lack of proficiency in Wolof and Serer and insufficient consideration of how to facilitate participants' involvement in this environment, alongside their unease at being unable to express themselves in French, given the prestige associated with showing that one is "instruit" [educated] in professional and university settings in Senegal. The only filmed young people and women who spoke in the workshop were those who had secondary level education and who could speak in French, despite the fact that the interpreter was available and participants were invited to speak in Wolof or Serer if they wished.

In the rural workshop with local leaders in which the interpreter provided French-Serer interpretation, the power dynamics and language barriers were reversed to some extent. A heated discussion developed (in Serer) among male elders and rural councilors about women's lack of land inheritance (one older female participant who was present only spoke when specifically invited to). The interpreter did not want to interrupt the discussion to interpret what was being said to me, which restricted the follow-up questions I could pose, and I needed to wait to receive the translated transcript to understand fully the issues they were discussing.

The last two sections have revealed the need for greater consideration of language issues in cross-cultural research (Caretta 2015) and for recognition of gendered, racialized, class- and age-related power dynamics which may facilitate or hinder participation, particularly when bringing differently positioned participants together in dissemination workshops and other participatory spaces. The next section explores power relations in coproducing video-recorded research messages with participants.

5.3 Power Relations in Filming and Editing Video Outputs

Limited time represents a major constraint facing academics wishing to engage in participatory dissemination and PV. The ideal PV process involves community members at every stage, from deciding the focus of the short film, gaining skills in filming and editing, through to producing and showing the final output (Benest n.d.). The literature has very little to say, however, about how research can draw on elements of PV practice over shorter time frames, which may be a more realistic way that academic researchers can involve participants. This is particularly pertinent when funding and time constraints do not permit longer-term engagement with young people, communities, and practitioners.

In the East African and Senegal research, as a university lecturer, I only had a short period of time available to conduct participatory workshops, which for each study were located in three geographically dispersed places. Such practical constraint meant that it was not possible to build the capacity of participants to use the

video camera and edit the video themselves. Although I had received no formal training at the time, I was familiar with using a video camera and basic video-editing software. I considered the main focus of the dissemination workshops to be the participatory process of discussing the findings and identifying key messages for policy and practice, rather than filming and editing a video output. While this may be regarded as a compromised PV process that does not shift the balance of power to participants, I consider that there is still value in this approach to coproduction, even if the technical skill and power to film and edit remains predominantly with the research team rather than with participants. This flexible approach is also consistent with the history of PV; “context-specific flexibility” and the freedom to innovate and develop one’s own ideas about PV practice are an important part of its tradition (Walker and Arrighi 2013, p. 410).

In Tanzania and Uganda, young people decided on the topic and content of the drama/rap song they developed, following some suggestions based on the findings. They rehearsed their drama sketches and rap song, while I gave some feedback about the length, mindful of producing a short video (under 5 min) to be most engaging for policymaker and practitioner audiences. I video-recorded a few versions of the song and drama sketches, which I roughly edited to show and discuss with community members and professionals in the locality the next day. I integrated the drama sketches from the different research locations into one video and added English subtitles and showed the video at a range of conferences and policy seminars in the UK, as well as using it in my undergraduate teaching.

In Senegal, following focus groups discussing the findings, I wanted participants to feel free to say what they wanted on camera with minimal intervention from researchers. Since the interpreter had some video experience, he filmed participants one by one and I was not present for filming. Most participants spoke confidently, while the interpreter prompted a few participants. The interpreter later transcribed and translated each clip and together we decided on the order and made some edits to avoid repetition and convey key points. We later added some photographs, titles, and French subtitles for the version of the video shown at the stakeholder workshop in Dakar.

By the time of the Ghana study, I had undertaken a 2-day training course, “Getting your message across in digital video,” which helped to improve my filming and editing skills. It also made me more aware of the role researchers could play in using their knowledge and skills of what makes a good video story to enhance participants’ messages and achieve greater impact. The dissemination workshops in Ghana were planned to coincide with the cashew harvest, and I was inspired by Cook et al.’s (2004) “follow the thing” methodological approach to tell the story of cashew, from being planted on family farms to growing into a tree which produced raw cashew nuts to the harvesting, processing, and export processes (see Fig. 7). The video therefore sought to combine a more documentary approach that was researcher-led and directed with a participatory process of coproducing key messages for policy and practice. Following initial edits, the video was screened in the rural community, attended by elders and key stakeholders, in addition to participants and community members (see Fig. 8).

When the video and key findings were discussed in the policy workshop in Accra, key stakeholders disagreed with community members’ views about the need for

Fig. 7 Ruth Evans filming a participant, with research assistant interpreting from Twi to English, on a cashew plantation in the rural study community (Brong-Ahafo Region, Ghana)



Fig. 8 Video screening and discussion in the rural community in Ghana

government intervention to guarantee cashew prices. They wanted to shift the emphasis to other aspects, such as the need to strengthen cashew farmers' associations, which they thought was more important in helping to improve small-scale farmers' incomes. We incorporated one strategic stakeholder's message into the video and some video cutaway shots of cashew nut processing that another key stakeholder made available for us to use in the final video that was published online. Making the final edits to the video therefore entailed balancing the priorities of differently positioned participants and reaching a compromise which we felt still

reflected community members' priorities while also revealing other facets of the issue that strategic stakeholders wished to prioritize. The final report presented the ranked priorities of men, women, and young people discussed in the workshops and allowed more in-depth discussion of the contrasting views of community members and strategic stakeholders (Evans et al. 2014).

"Coproduction" of the video outputs in these studies was thus defined by a participatory dissemination process to discuss research findings with participants and identify together key messages for policy and practice. These messages were recorded using digital video and other visual techniques in order to stimulate discussion about the needs and priorities of young people and community members with key stakeholders, who also contributed to understandings of how to tackle the issues presented. This differs from PV approaches that focus predominantly on the process of young people and community members producing a video output alongside researchers (Benest n.d.; Velez-Torres 2013; Blazek et al. 2015).

5.4 Anonymity in Video Outputs and Other Ethical Considerations

In research with young people and other "marginalized groups," ethical concerns focus on the need to balance the possible risks of harm and distress with the importance of conducting research with "hidden" or disadvantaged populations in order to document their experiences and raise awareness of their rights and support needs (Evans and Becker 2009). The use of video raises ethical concerns about anonymity, since it is a visual method of representation that identifies participants who may be considered "vulnerable" (see also Blazek, ► Chap. 12, "Participatory Video with Children and Young People", this volume).

In order to minimize this potential harm in the East African and Senegal study, I encouraged participants to talk about issues raised by the research in a more general way, rather than to talk about their own personal circumstances during the workshops. As part of the process of negotiating informed consent, I requested that confidentiality be respected within the group and explained that participants' names would not appear on the video. Participants in Senegal were given the option of recording their messages as an audio recording instead of on video camera if they wished, which an older widow and an older widower took up. I obtained written consent from all participants, which was a condition of institutional ethical approval. Time was taken to explain verbally in accessible language the written consent form in Kiswahili (Tanzania), Luganda/English (Uganda), or Wolof/Serer/French (Senegal). This included clear statements about the ways the video and photographs would be stored and used in publications, presentations, meetings, and workshops with a range of audiences, and all participants received a copy of the consent form in Kiswahili, English, or French, as appropriate in each country context.

In Senegal, I held a second workshop with participants in each locality following the initial edit of the video. This provided an opportunity to verify that participants were satisfied with their messages and with the editing and addition of photographs.

In Guédiawaye, an older widow wanted to withdraw the audio recording she had provided, since she did not want others to hear about the family inheritance disputes she had mentioned. This reveals the ethical importance of this stage of a PV process (Pink 2013; Benest n.d.). Screening and discussing the edited video with participants provides an opportunity for researchers to check that unwanted personal information has not been revealed and gives participants a veto on content, thereby reducing the potential harm that could be caused. This process also enables participants to have a limited role in editing, even if time constraints prevent greater involvement of participants in video production. Other than this example, participants did not make any further editing suggestions.

Participants' feedback during the screening workshops suggests that they were satisfied with the video produced:

"It's work well done. That no one feels harmed by what has been said, that it should not embarrass at all, in fact, everyone wanted to say what they felt from the bottom of their heart. We ask them [policymakers and practitioners] to take into account the needs which we have expressed here" (participant in Guédiawaye, Dakar).

"Really, I think that things have been done well, we all said the same thing, the same speeches, we can't say more than we have already said. We thank you, we congratulate you and we trust you" (participant in rural community in Fatick region).

In both the East African and Senegal studies, I explained to participants that I wished to show the video to policymakers, practitioners, members of the public, and university students in order to present the research findings. I decided not to post the video on the university's website, *YouTube*, or other Internet or social media sites in order to protect participants' anonymity and reduce any potential adverse consequences for participants that could not be anticipated at the time of research. It is difficult to anticipate and know the effects that our actions may have on young people and other marginalized groups after we have "left the field" (Meth and Williams 2010; Pink 2013). By showing the video in research or policy conferences, seminars, and educational settings, I maintained some control over who was able to view the video and how participants' messages were used. The decision not to post the video online, however, could be regarded as limiting its potential impact.

Recognizing this in the Ghana study, I proposed to participants to post the video online. Participants welcomed this and wanted their real names and the name of their rural community to appear on the video. They were aware of video recording and the Internet due to widespread access to smart phones in recent years and so I felt reassured that they were able to give a level of informed consent about this use of the video. As farmers in a rural community, participants were not regarded as particularly "vulnerable." I was therefore less concerned about the anonymity of participants being compromised and considered that posting the video online could help to raise awareness of the findings and increase the impact.

In a similar participatory dissemination process with young people in Zambia, Day and Evans (2015) decided to ask participants if they wanted the video of their key messages to be published online in order to increase the potential impact of the research (for more information about the research, see: <http://www.reading.ac>).

uk/geographyandenvironmentalscience/Research/HER/ges-RE-Zambia.aspx and for the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hNzXVb0NJg&feature=youtu.be>). As in the Ghana project, young people were aware of video recording and the Internet due to widespread access to smart phones in recent years and welcomed this, so we felt reassured that young people were able to give informed consent about this use of the video. Pink (2013) offers a note of caution, however, since participants may not understand the full implications of public exposure.

These experiences highlight the need for a context-specific, flexible approach (Walker and Arrighi 2013) to anonymity and other ethical considerations in PV and other visual methods, taking into account the particular focus of each study and the social status of participants.

Other ethical considerations apply just as much to participatory dissemination as to other stages of the research process. Participants received refreshments and a small expenses payment to compensate them for the time taken to participate. In the first study, participants received a short accessible summary of the research in Kiswahili, Luganda, or English. DVD copies of the video and report were provided for NGOs, representatives of Relevant Ministries, and other strategic stakeholders in the first two studies, and the report, policy briefing, and online video link were provided to strategic stakeholders in the third study.

5.5 Managing Participants' Expectations

A key ethical dilemma relates to who benefits from PV (Mistry et al. 2014; Walsh 2014) and participatory dissemination processes (Haynes and Tanner 2015). Despite efforts to manage participants' expectations, active participatory dissemination activities may inevitably raise participants' expectations that the research will lead to direct, tangible benefits for individuals, families and communities.

Although I felt that participants in Senegal had understood the limits of my role as a researcher, they expressed their hopes that the research would lead to action to improve their situation in the future: "Since yesterday, everyone gave their opinion, brought their contribution to the subject which we unites us. We are pleased with your presence and we base a lot of hope on this work" (participant in rural community in Diourbel region). Some participants in Tanzania and Uganda, including NGO staff, struggled to understand why the research would not lead directly to the development of support services. This appeared to be linked to perceptions of my position as an educated, privileged white person who was regarded as having access to donor funding and potential influence on policymakers and local authorities (Meth and Williams 2010).

In evaluation feedback following the workshops in Tanzania and Uganda, young people highlighted a need for more guidance on how to deal with difficulties in their lives and for their priorities and needs to be met by NGOs. This raises ethical questions about researchers' level of involvement in the lives of participants; while researchers may care and want to "help," they also need to be aware of the limits of their role. They may not be in a position to provide ongoing support and training or

to work with practitioners after research projects have ended. This is related at least in part to the “audit game” and the pressures placed on academics to publish in peer-reviewed journals and achieve other “esteem” indicators, rather than to engage in longer-term collaborative, participatory projects with communities that “do not count” (Pain et al. 2011; Evans 2016a).

The limits of the researcher’s role, however, may also relate to more pragmatic factors; researchers may lack the necessary skills, language proficiency, or experience to provide more intervention-focused support and guidance to marginalized groups, especially in cross-cultural contexts. I did not feel qualified, as a researcher, to provide advice and support to young people about how to solve problems they faced. Greater collaboration with participants and support workers in the codesign of the research from the outset would enable such reflective learning and/or follow-on support to be integrated into the research process.

As Meth and Williams acknowledge (2010), the question, “So what are you going to do about these problems and issues raised by the research?” is particularly difficult for academics doing research in the global South to reconcile with their own personal motivations and ethical values. Participants’ responses reinforced my sense of responsibility to disseminate the findings and messages to policymakers and practitioners who were in a position to provide support and influence policy in the future. I acknowledge, however, that I have probably benefited most from piloting these participatory dissemination methods in terms of my career and publications. Adopting a reflexive position, however, should not be seen as “an easy way out of the power dynamics within the encounter” (Walsh 2014, p. 4) and the question of who benefits most remains an unresolved “familiar discomfort” (Williams 2012) for me.

5.6 Challenges of Engaging in Dialogue with Policymakers and Practitioners

The extent to which beneficial societal impacts are achieved is often determined by the level of engagement of policymakers and practitioners with the research process, particularly dissemination. While the participatory workshops with young people and community members worked well in coproducing research messages in a range of formats, ensuring that professionals heard and acted upon these messages was much more difficult to achieve and to evidence. As Porter and Abane (2008) conclude, getting political and technical stakeholders on board is critical to the process of change. Establishing consultative or advisory groups may be an important means of engaging key adult actors from the outset of a research project. This may be more challenging in smaller scale studies, such as those reported here, where funding to develop research over longer timescales and to pay participants’ expenses may be limited. In such instances, busy professionals may not see any benefits in collaboration and may be reluctant to participate in dissemination processes.

In Senegal, I found it difficult to engage national strategic stakeholders and service providers in active dissemination. Despite sending invitation letters, emails,



Fig. 9 Screen shot of Senegal video. Message from one of the Dakar participants: “I am a widow, I have 9 children. We widows would like to be helped with housing, because to lose your husband and to have to take on the costs of the children’s schooling alone, the daily expenses and the rent, it’s really hard. We ask for assistance with housing. Housing is most important for us. If we have somewhere to live with our children without paying, we can manage the rest ourselves in order to secure their future”

and phoning professionals who had been interviewed, very few attended the workshop in Dakar, which significantly curtailed discussion of their responses to the messages presented. Similarly, in Ghana, no representatives of the Ministry for Food and Agriculture attended the Accra policy workshop, despite the fact that we had interviewed some government representatives with responsibility for cashew export crops and invited them to attend. Representatives of key international organizations, such as the African Cashew Alliance and the African Cashew Initiative, who had not previously participated in the research, however, made valuable comments, which fed into the final report and video.

The responses of academics and professionals who were present in the Dakar workshop in Senegal to the screened video of participants’ messages have made me question the usefulness of a video output for engaging in policy dialogue. The video emphasized the poverty that participants, especially widows, experienced and their support needs for housing, healthcare, and education for their children (see Fig. 9). This is perhaps not surprising, since meeting “practical gender needs” to improve women’s immediate material circumstances is often needed before “strategic gender needs” can be articulated (Moser 1989). Only a few participants referred to inheritance issues, despite the fact that this had been a key focus of the research and had been discussed extensively in the focus groups prior to filming. Some participants also portrayed themselves in a more desperate situation and lacking family support compared to the more balanced narrative of their lives produced in the in-depth interview.

Following the video screening, some professionals and academics thought the video was repetitive and questioned to whom these requests for support were directed. In the light of this criticism, the presence of participants from Guédiawaye in the workshop was helpful. Young people and women affirmed that I had been clear that the video was intended to inform the work of professionals, including

Government representatives with responsibility for families, and that they were speaking about their needs on behalf of other orphaned young people and widows in order to improve their situation in the future, rather than requesting individual assistance or expecting to gain personally through their participation.

In reflecting further on these experiences, I have questioned whether the video could be regarded as reinforcing uncritical notions of “vulnerability,” downplaying the agency of participants, and constructing particular groups as “passive victims” in need of support. Following the short training course I attended on digital video, I am more aware of the facilitation and technical skills that a researcher may bring to PV projects. Researchers can play more directive roles in framing good-quality shots, co-constructing participants’ messages, and editing footage in order to construct a narrative that conveys effectively research messages for particular audiences, which may have more impact in the longer term (the approach I took in the Ghana project as discussed earlier). My ethical stance with participants in Senegal, however, was informed by a desire to minimize my position of power and enable participants to speak freely and represent their messages as they wished, following our discussions, with as little intervention as possible from me in the filming process. This ethical position conflicted to some extent with the research objective of producing a video output that accurately reflected the findings and effectively communicated research messages. This highlights a particularly difficult tension that often emerges when academic researchers facilitate PV (Mistry et al. 2014; Walsh 2014).

6 Conclusion

Perhaps now more than at any time previously, participatory action-oriented research is becoming recognized as of value in the UK and elsewhere internationally (Pain et al. 2011; Kindon et al. 2007). Yet little is written about dissemination and the process of translating research findings into beneficial societal impacts. This chapter has demonstrated the usefulness of participatory dissemination processes involving the coproduction of video-recorded research messages. While perhaps not an ideal form of PV or of action research methodologies, participatory dissemination nevertheless offers a means of engaging young people, community members, policymakers, and practitioners in dialogue, which in turn may lead to societal impacts (Evans 2016a). The benefits include (but are not limited to):

- The ethical importance of feeding back findings and engaging young people in policy dialogue
- Enabling the voices of young people to be heard by local, national, and international stakeholders and achieving “impact”
- Enhancing research rigor and validation of findings
- Fostering empowerment and the development of peer support.

This chapter therefore calls for a critical engagement with participatory dissemination and the “impact” agenda in order to bring about greater recognition and funding for more transformatory approaches that aim to coproduce knowledge with young people, foster empowerment and peer support, and achieve social change, even if this is within the context of neoliberalism (Pain et al. 2011; Evans 2016a).

While there are clear benefits, this chapter has also highlighted some of the challenges and ethical dilemmas that may emerge through participatory dissemination processes. These include tensions between academic researchers’ goals and objectives that need to be achieved within a specific project time frame to comply with disciplinary audit (Walsh 2012; Pain et al. 2011; Williams 2012), our own ethical stance and motivations, and the wider aspirations of participants with whom we are working on participatory projects (Mistry et al. 2014; Blazek and Hraňová 2012). Achieving a fully participatory approach from the outset may not be feasible or possible, given the need often for longer-term collaboration with child- and youth-focused NGOs, which have core field-based support workers available to facilitate child- and youth-led research (Porter and Abane 2008).

Participatory dissemination offers a means of engaging young people and community members in the interpretation of the findings and coproduction of research messages for different audiences. However, ethical issues about power relations, language barriers, and the level of participation that can be achieved when working with marginalized young people and adults in spaces which may be dominated by powerful adult professionals need to be carefully considered. The use of video and other visual methods raises ethical dilemmas about the time, resources, and skills involved in coproducing research messages with young people and community members and the extent to which the power to film, edit, and to present remains with researchers or participants. Concerns about anonymity and decisions about online publishing and/or the dissemination of videos to different audiences are particularly pertinent when working with marginalized young people considered “vulnerable.”

Feminist ways of listening, looking, walking together, knowing, and showing (Kindon 2003; Pain 2014; Pink 2013) draw attention to power relations and suggest the need for “slow geographies” (longer-term engagement) at multiple scales in order to address urgent issues and achieve meaningful social change (Mrs Kinpaibsy 2008). The often exploratory, participatory nature of such research engagements and sustained collaborations over time may facilitate unanticipated and serendipitous impacts that are most relevant to the participants and communities with whom we work with (Blazek et al. 2015; Macpherson et al. 2014). Alongside such approaches, critically engaging with and contesting the meanings of coproduction, dissemination, and “impact” are a vital means of ensuring social and ethical accountability for research (Pain et al. 2011), concerns which are often center stage when “doing” geographies of children and young people.

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Beyond Passive Participation: From Research on to Research by Children

5

Christina Ergler

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Abstract

Many children’s geographers seek to work *with* children instead of on their behalf. Conducting participatory research with children for an improved understanding of their lived experiences has become the norm. While many papers reflect on the value of co-constructed knowledge, power issues, and ethical aspects, it appears that the research community is still struggling to understand what it actually means to include primary school-age children as active participants or co-researchers in research projects. Participation remains largely piecemeal and even “child-led” participatory research continues to be adult controlled. It is often argued that a way out of this dilemma is to employ children as researchers. This chapter aims to provide a critical reflection on the practical obligations, challenges, and tensions present in employing primary school-age

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children as researchers. It draws on a collaborative research project on “water and play”. While children’s participation in research projects as researchers can be viewed as the ultimate goal on the ladder of participation, the author proposes a more realistic and meaningful approach that speaks to children’s interests and capabilities. Rather than achieving the last rung of ladder of participation as a moral obligation, this chapter argues for a more flexible approach in which child and adult researchers constantly negotiate their role and inclusion in a research project. Ideally, child researchers are not simply mini-clones of an adult researcher but active participants. To achieve this, projects need to be more attuned to children’s everyday life and their terms of participation negotiated better. A child may choose to become a researcher who is involved in all stages of a project or a participant who is only involved in the data collection.

Keywords

Child-led research • Children as researcher • Co-constructed knowledge • Co-research • Child-friendly methods • Child researcher • Hart’s ladder of participation • Participation • Participatory research • Researcher role

1 Introduction

The term “children’s environments” encompasses not only the physical environment in which children grow up but also the diverse institutions, norms, and rules that structure childhoods in many different ways (Holloway and Valentine 2000; Horton and Kraftl 2006; Leverett 2011). Childhood consists of multiple, overlapping, and diverging realities as children are not a homogenous group (Smith and Ansell 2009; Skelton 2009; Katz 2009). To discover, unpack, and understand these many “messy” realities, the majority of the research community turned to “participatory geographies” (Pain and Kindon 2007; Beazley et al. 2009; van Blerk and Kesby 2013). These methods speak to the self-imposed impetus of children’s geographers to work *with* rather than on behalf of young participants and in doing so reveal and improve children’s “lived experiences”.

While many researchers reflect on the value of co-constructed knowledge, power issues, and ethical aspects (Porter et al. 2012; van Blerk and Kesby 2013; Morrow 2008; Cahill et al. 2007), it appears that the field of children’s geographies is still struggling to understand what it actually means to include children as active participants or co-researchers in research projects. Participation remains largely piecemeal and even “child-led” participatory research continues to be adult censored (Ergler and Wood 2015). Participation often involves sharing (creatively) perspectives and experiences with the adult researcher and which is often limited to the data collection period; the adult “extracts” information through various methods from the child participant, while the child participant “has fun” engaging in the tasks (Hadfield-Hill and Horton 2013; Punch 2001; Barker and Weller 2003a). This chapter labels these types of participation *passive participation* as the participants’ opportunities to shape the outcomes are limited to the data collection process.

In contrast, *active participation* involves a complex set of negotiations between adult and child researchers across the different research stages. Researchers have begun increasingly to call for the integration of children as active co-researchers at all research stages (Kellett 2004; Cairns 2001). Such research, although not without critique (Gallacher and Gallagher 2008; Alderson 2012), strives to be ethically and morally superior to passive participation research because it is viewed as more enabling for participants (Sinclair 2004; Alderson 2000; Punch 2002) and produces, according to Thomas (2007), “better” data. Hence, employing children as researchers has become an obligation for many (Kellett 2011). Rather than following this line of argument and calling for the integration of children in the research process by all means, this chapter aims to provide a critical reflection on the practical obligations, challenges, and tensions in employing primary school-age children as researchers on a collaborative research project on “water and play.” In doing so, the chapter argues for a realistic and meaningful approach and explores the practicality of Hart’s (1997) ladder of participation.

Roger Hart’s (1997) “ladder of participation from tokenism to citizenship” was originally developed for children sharing decisions affecting their life or the life of their community and are meant to foster more democratic processes (Skelton 2007). The concept is often used to describe and discuss the different levels of children’s involvement in (research) projects. Although not intended by Hart, his simplistic ladder of participation is mainly interpreted as a linear process with the highest possible participation outcome at the top. Hart placed more emphasis on meaningful, genuine, and authentic participation that requires a shift in adult’s social attitudes and behaviors toward children (Hörschelmann and Van Blerk 2012). Children should choose their level of engagement appropriate to their interest, time, and capabilities. However, in reality studies are judged by whether they achieve the highest possible participation outcome set out by Hart. Therefore, children’s involvement has often disguised the fact that children are mainly passive participants. Adults have a clear vision of how children’s participation should look and censor their participation. “Real” participation according to Hart (1997) only starts with the fourth rung of “assigned but informed” participation and climbs from there to “consulted and informed,” “adult-initiated, shared decisions with children,” “child-initiated and directed,” and “child-initiated, shared decision with adults.”

The ultimate goal of the last rung is what Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) call the tyranny of child-initiated participation as moral policing is occurring when researchers are not able to get to this stage or include the last rung as their aim for their research design (see also Cooke and Kothari 2001). However, is the last rung the one we always need to achieve or a utopian adultist vision? Can and do children always want to climb up to the last rung? Or are there more productive ways than this anticipated linear process – an alternative in which children and adults support each other, taking elements from different rungs of the ladder? In the following sections this chapter will provide the basis for the argument of how a more flexible, meaningful, and realistic approach that is more attuned to children’s desires, capabilities, interests, and their manageability can provide a more meaningful and less simplistic and linear “ladder” of participation as shown in Fig. 1.

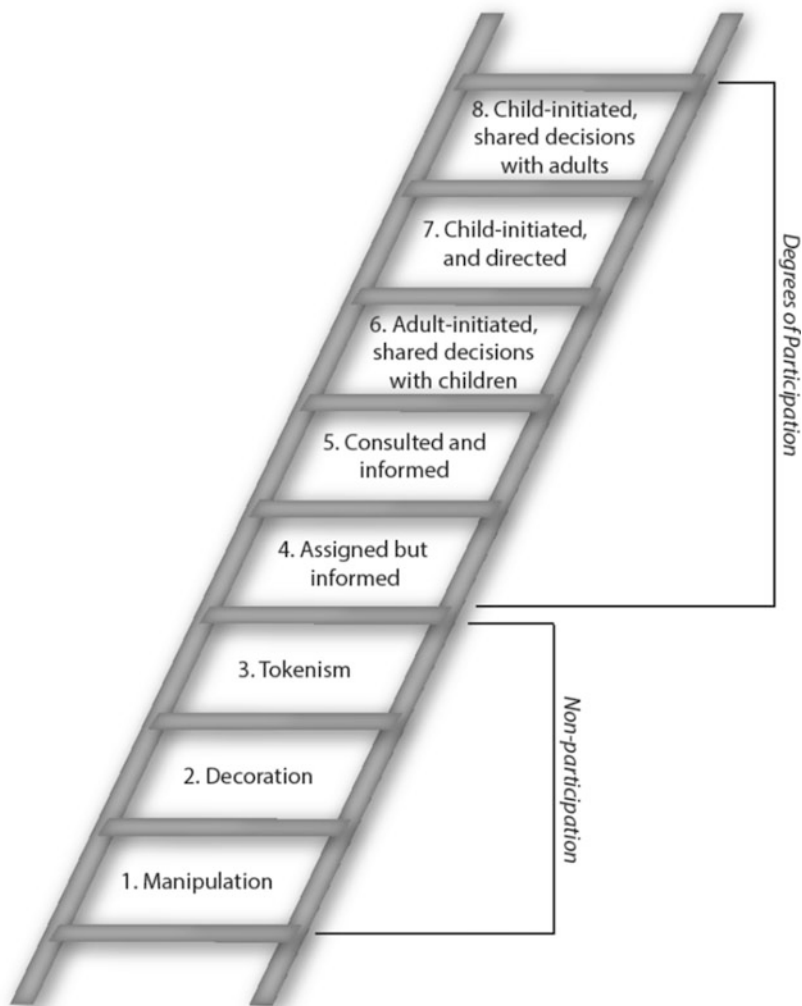


Fig. 1 Hart's ladder of participation (Adapted from Hart 1997)

The aim is to open a different way of thinking about participatory research and in particular research which involves children as researchers, an alternative in which children can easily move between being an active researcher and passive participant and which is more attuned to the reality of children's participation. The author critically reflects on a research project in which children designed, carried out, and presented their findings on a research theme set in conjunction with the adult researcher. Rather than forcing children into one role or the other, the chapter proposes a different pathway. It suggests that a reciprocal relationship between an adult and a child researcher can enrich the research project when participation is viewed as a process of negotiation and co-learning or, in Freire's words,

“a dialogical encounter with people” (Freire 2001). It aims to connect the adult and child researcher’s mundane everyday experiences and desires, their agendas, and their motives for participation with a flexible, realistic, and meaningful research environment.

This chapter begins with a reflection on the rise of participatory methods in children’s geographies in relation to the broader societal shifts that increasingly recognizes children’s rights to be heard. Employing children as researchers is expected to lead to the most authentic voice, but children’s involvement as researchers varies in different projects. The next section, therefore, reflects on selected studies that employed children and young people as researchers in different stages of a research project in order to tease out the areas to which less attention has been paid. The empirical parts of the chapter address these gaps and discuss findings from children and researchers’ motivations and agendas as well as the fluid roles they embodied in the project “water and play.” The chapter closes with a proposal for a more flexible, realistic, and meaningful approach when employing children as researchers.

2 From Research on to Research by Children: Unpacking the Journey to Moving Beyond Passive Participation

The different ways in which geographers have tried to explore the variety of children’s environments reflects shifts in geography more generally: from geography as a positivistic spatial science to geography as a *social* science emphasizing subjectivity, experience, and the meaning of places. Two studies in the 1970s (Bunge 1973; Blaut and Stea 1971) paved the way for further development of “children’s geographies” as a research field and influenced the methodologies in the years to come. While studies by Blaut and colleagues put children on geographers’ research agenda, these were influenced by positivistic ideas in seeking to explore and quantify children’s experiences and mapping skills (Blaut 1987; Blaut and Stea 1971; Matthews 1985). In contrast, and inspired by the emerging social turn in geography, Bunge’s (1977) “[g]eographical expeditions” applied participant observation techniques to reveal children’s well-being in an urban environment and to highlight inequalities in children’s everyday geographies in deprived areas. These early studies were descriptive in origin and provided in-depth perspectives on children’s environments. Nonetheless, children were (unintentionally) objectified in the research process. For instance, Bunge describes observing children’s behavior as “similar to bird watching” (Bunge 1973). Research was dominated by the “doing research on children” positioning, children mainly as *objects* of research.

Objectification was acknowledged at the beginning of the 1990s when researchers informed by postmodern and feminist theories increasingly highlighted children as experts on their own lives. Children quickly became the *subjects* of and *participants* in research. Discussions positioned children as competent, knowledgeable “beings in the here and now” rather than simply as incompetent and “becoming adults” (Christensen 2000; Holloway and Valentine 2000; James et al. 1998).

Consequently, children and (individual) childhoods could then be studied and understood historically and socially in their own right rather than being subordinate to family or adulthood studies or a prerequisite for understanding the adult world (Philo 2000; Smith and Ansell 2009). These imperatives fostered a further shift toward promoting research *for* and *with* children instead of on their behalf (Cele 2005; Driskell 2001; Holloway and Valentine 2000). Children were positioned as *participants* and co-researchers (Barker and Weller 2003a; Hemming 2008; Christensen 2004). Some studies even explored the potential of children *as researchers* (Alderson 2000; Porter 2008; Ergler 2011) to overcome the (unintentional) objectification of children through the choice of methodology with some researchers such as Kellett (2005) seeming to encourage children to become “mini-clone researchers,” where they can develop researcher identities but within the constraints of established research practice and norms. Consequently, participatory, child-centered or so called “child-friendly” methods (e.g., storytelling, photo-voice, elicited drawings, radio shows) were developed, refined, and further explored during this period and tailored to the needs and capabilities of participants (Christensen 2000; Alderson 1995; Morrow and Richards 1996; van Blerk and Kesby 2013). The aim was a deeper understanding of children’s environments and the struggles they face (Barker and Weller 2003b; Cope 2008; Punch 2001). In these early days, researchers explicitly justified their choice of a participatory methodology to capture children’s “authentic” voice in an environment that has marginalized their participation in research and society, but with the rights-based research framework gaining momentum, it has become an unquestioned agenda and an implicit imperative of how studies working with children should be designed (Gallagher 2013).

3 The Value and Aims of Participatory Research: A Right to Voice

The shift from *passive participation* to *active participation* has not emerged in a vacuum and reflects broader concerns and paradigm shifts including but not limited to rights of voice, social inclusion, equity, and justice (Lundy and McEvoy 2012; Alderson 2012; Skelton 2007; Kindon et al. 2007; Freire 2001). Thus, when charting the journey of children to becoming active research participants, it is also important to keep in mind wider societal changes such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The convention fostered the empowerment of children to participate as capable current and not just future citizens in political, social, and economic life (UNICEF 1995); it put children on the political agenda and required bureaucrats and researchers to consult children on decisions that might affect their lives. These changes infiltrated policies, programs and contexts of children’s lives providing a quasi-legal obligation to conduct “research” *with* children (MacNaughton and Smith 2008; James and Prout 1997). It also fostered the development of rights-based approaches to research influencing methodologies and methods. For example, researchers began to develop methods that

helped children to articulate their opinions, experiences, and perspectives (Beazley et al. 2009; Young and Barrett 2001) based on the premise that they have the freedom to seek, receive, and voice ideas and information through the means they choose as they are competent meaning makers and social actors in their own right (Skelton 2007; Powell et al. 2012). Hart's ladder of participation is a direct reflection of this debate and a measure for "good" and "best" practice of power sharing between adults and children, but it implies a hierarchy and distinction of empowerment afforded to children (Sinclair 2004). An underlying premise of all rungs is that children must not be harmed, abused, or exploited through their participation in research; the best interest of the child is at the heart of any investigation and children's privacy and protection needs to be at the forefront during the research and dissemination process (Alderson 2012). Consequently, investigators must be aware of and reflect on the limitations of their work by ensuring a meaningful engagement in a (research) project for children (Freeman et al. 1999).

Although a large body of literature emerged and nearly every method section reflects on the participatory research process, less attention has been paid to what "a meaningful engagement means," such as the different agendas researchers and participants pursue and what being an active participant connotes for children (Fleming and Boeck 2012; Porter et al. 2010) which are at the heart of this chapter. Rather, it has been assumed that the last rung is the most meaningful outcome leading to an often unreflective call to employ children as researchers as the ultimate materialization of a right to voice, social inclusion, equity, and justice.

4 Passive or Active Participation? Research by Children

Children have taken on different roles in projects labeled "with" or "by" children/young people as researchers. They have helped to design studies and have been involved in the data collection and analysis of findings and their dissemination at various scales. Although there is a growing body of literature on children as researchers more generally, research which explicitly relates to and was critically reflective about including children in all stages of the research process is still limited (McLaughlin 2005; Holland et al. 2010; Gallagher 2013). Further the majority of researchers work with older children, teenagers, or young adults when children become researchers in the academic sense (Porter et al. 2010; Cahill 2004; Nairn et al. 2007). Employing children under the age of 10 "as researchers" in studies and talking about such a practice has been for a long time the exception (Kellett 2005; Hart 1997). Although inquiry-based learning in schools or community sector organizations is common, it is not widely acknowledged as "research by children" (Alderson 2001).

Most studies which fall under the umbrella of "children as researchers" experiment with employing children or more dominantly young people to collect data from peers or younger participants based on the premise that they are closer to the cohort researched (Schäfer and Yarwood 2013; Carroll et al. 2013; Alderson 2000).

For example, Marsh (2012) successfully invited primary school-age children to collect data from their peers using digital video, interviews, and notebook reflections to record and understand the everyday playground games and rhymes in the digital age. However, the children were not involved at any stage in the analysis indicating a common research practice in which adults set the participatory research agenda and direct its interpretations; at best children and young people verify results or provide feedback on early reports (Wood 2012; Kirby 1999). In Marsh's case the data she collected corroborated, supplemented, and/or contradicted her own findings leading her to conclude that a more careful consideration between knowledge gained from adult or child researchers needs to be applied, rather than assuming children necessarily produce "better" data per se. A way out of this dilemma could be to include children in the analysis.

Fewer studies invite children and young people to actively participate in the analysis of raw data (Coad and Evans 2008), but in a minimalistic way due to the difficulties of training young children properly money-wise, time-wise, and skill-wise (Fleming 2012; Sharpe 2012). Thus, being involved in the analysis is an area where "children's contributions are easily marginalized" (Jones 2004). The scope of children's involvement can range from reflecting and commenting on the research process, coding, and building themes in anonymized transcripts or interpreting data individually and as a team according to a cooperatively developed coding frame (Kirby 1999; Coad 2012; Ergler 2011; Thomas and O'Kane 1998). For example, in Coad's (2012) study on health beliefs, four teenagers led two analysis workshops in a photo-voice exercise with 102 young people aged 13–17 years. Their workshops were distinctively different from the adult-led ones in terms of participants' engagement and co-analysis, and these findings were treated as a separate data set, thus, censored by the adult researcher. Young people's analyses are measured – although often unintentionally – according to the academy's standards with varying outcomes. Researchers celebrate their achievements and capabilities but may disguise the quality of data gathered (Ergler and Kearns 2013) undermining a full collaboration or equal valuation when distinctions are made between "their and our" findings as in Coad's study. To overcome this issue, Holland et al. (2010) advocate adjusting the analysis stage to fit children's "cultures of communication" and interests as well as to avoid ethical issues around intimate information and confidentiality, which implies that adultist measures might be out of place for such a collaboration. Although Fleming and Boeck's (2012) recent edited collection on "involving children in research" touches upon the issues of training and data quality between the lines, which is also closely related to the motives of adult researchers to work with young people, it is an aspect which remains to be solved and more openly discussed in research outputs (McLaughlin 2005).

Only a few studies have worked with children throughout the entire cycle of a project (Kellett 2011; McLaughlin 2005; Cahill 2004). The majority train a small number of children or young people (often on a one-on-one basis) to become effective researchers before embarking on their individual study or a small group project. Adults co-designing a research project with a larger group of children has

been less popular. The most extensive research with children as researchers comes from the Children's Research Centre at the Open University in the United Kingdom established by Mary Kellett. The center is known for empowering and supporting child researchers as it has been founded to "raise the profile of child-led research and help children and young people to disseminate their research in ways that have impact" (Kellett 2011, p. 206). It started out with four studies in which 7, 9, and 10-year-olds worked in pairs and individually from the design to dissemination of findings in an academic article and at various local and national platforms (e.g., London in 2003, National Union teacher's conference) (Kellett et al. 2004). These studies – although they have not been the first (see, e.g., Boocock 1981; Oldfather 1995; Alderson 2001) – have contributed to the popularization of studies in which children are involved as researchers. The majority of studies remain small scale or employ a well selected number of children as gatekeepers or knowledge brokers.

It appears that children's geographers are still struggling to understand what it actually means to include children as active participants or co-researchers in research projects. Participation remains largely piecemeal, and even "child-led" participatory research continues to be adult censored or depends on the good will of an adult researcher. Research is a messy process and not every study can be neatly categorized as one that fully or even partially embraces the idea of children as researchers, often moving from passive to active participation. Even with the best intentions, employing children as researchers may not work out as planned. New or unexpected opportunities can arise when adult researchers are attuned to children's desires and what funding might permit (Coad 2012; Ergler 2011) as the following section will exemplify.

5 Agendas and Aims for Involving and Being Involved as a "Child Researcher": Bringing Multiple Motives Together

This chapter proposes a more flexible, reciprocal way of thinking about Hart's (1997) ladder of participation by moving away from the so far dominant view of a linear process of participation to a more flexible, meaningful appropriate collaboration suitable for the stage of the project and children's needs and desires. In turn, this means that the agendas and motives for employing or signing up to be a researcher need to be unveiled. The reasons for engagement in research projects are multiple and are continuously evaluated and renegotiated.

The author's positive experiences in an earlier project on seasonal play in which children became accidentally researchers (Ergler 2011) inspired her to introduce ten primary school-age children to the "nitty-gritty" of designing and conducting research on a project they choose on the overarching theme "water and play." Adult and child researchers met biweekly during one school term. Research activities designed and carried out by the children involved playing at the beach followed by a poster reflection, a map of "fun things to do at the beach" and ten brief videos "about what [they] like doing at the beach and why." The project

finished with an evening during which children presented their findings and videos to parents, teachers, local politicians, and other community members.

The motives to embark on this research were threefold. First, thematically the author was interested in the role blue-scapes play for New Zealand children's well-being. Second, she aimed to follow her own call for researchers to give up power over the researcher process and trust more in the fruits of children acting less as participants and more as collaborators. Third, and most importantly, inspired by the right-based research framework, the author aimed for a meaningful collaboration entailing democratic processes of dialogue and negotiations, of "contesting research" (Cahill et al. 2007) between adult and child researchers in which everyone's voice is heard and considered (and not just the high or low achievers (Nairn et al. 2006)). The author's aim was to make informed decisions as a group in which all involved parties have equal rights and responsibilities. The empowerment of participants to voice their views was not her intention, rather the creation of a meaningful and respectful relationship in which anybody's capabilities and creativity can be unleashed to their best potential and to ensure participation is fun and children's expectations to be an active participant were met.

The project also explicitly asked children about what they wanted to get out of their research club sessions. Children's participation was mainly driven by the fact that they "love" water. But they also expected to learn a few skills along the way be it through "reading" more, using the "computers," and "finding things out" to be "smarter in the end" (see Fig. 2). Children viewed their participation as a way to embark on a "once-in-a-lifetime experience," an "adventure" which implied for

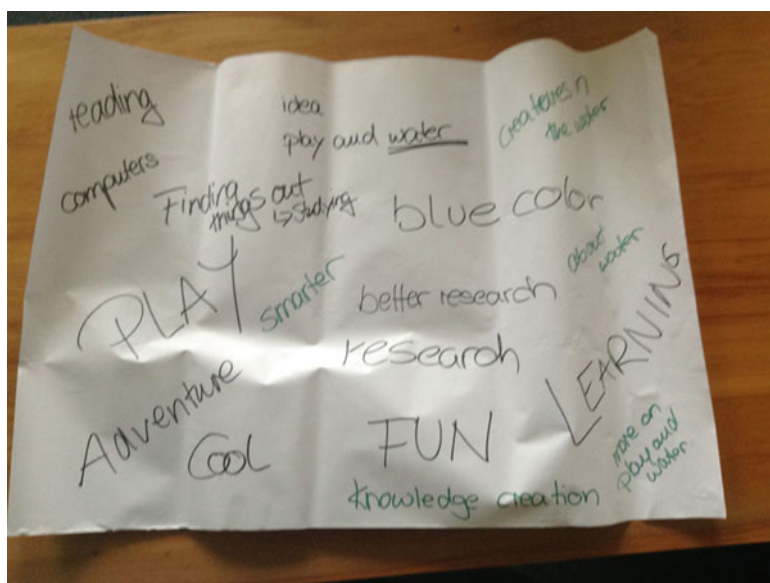


Fig. 2 Children's brainstorming activity to understand their means of participation as active participants

them having heaps of “playtime” and “fun” while learning and finding out “more about play and water.” The author and field assistants tried to support ways for children’s motivations to participate in the project. However, some of the children’s agendas changed during the project and at times their initial incentives got buried in the myriad of activities the group engaged in to get their project up and running. On reflection at the end of the project it was apparent that despite all of the adult researchers’ efforts, children felt lost at some stages of the project. It was difficult for them to imagine how all the small components they worked on would come together and what the outcome would look like. While the author tried to find ways to minimize children’s concerns and account for their struggles throughout the project, it was not always possible and two children canceled their participation a few weeks into the project. The following excerpt reflects on these difficulties and details two boys’ (pseudonyms) motivation to commit to the project as well as their struggles during the project to exemplify the complexities of meaningful participation for primary school-age children:

Samson: Ah, like we didn’t know much at the start and we didn’t do much research at the start, we just put down what we knew. . .

Tiki: I thought it was a good idea writing what we knew first and then researching new things.

Christina: So, you think sometimes I should have told you a bit more about what to do?

Samson: Yeah. . .But it would be cooler at the end like knowing that we’ve done most of the work instead of you helping us most of the time.

Christina: So you’re feeling about the project changed a bit?

Samson: It felt quite hard at the start. . .and lots of people quit. . .because like they might have just thought it was just going to be a short like 6 days of 2 h. . .they didn’t stay long enough for, like ‘cos it was really fun at the end like making documentaries.

Christina: Do you think you would have been prepared to go down to the beach on do all the stuff without having the introduction and reflections beforehand?

Samson: The talks at the start were quite helpful actually. . .and like they told us more about research because we didn’t really know much about research at the start. . .Like we could use them like if we went to university we’d already have prior knowledge about like researching and how to do it. . .I wanted to do it because it’s a really interesting idea and I might not get the chance to again and the reason I didn’t give up is because I don’t really like giving up on things and I wouldn’t get to do it again.

Tiki: Yeah, and it is probably the only research project we’d do at school.

Children were apprehensive about how much time was needed to finish the project, but in the end “it was really cool to see it pay off.” They were proud of their “end product,” a video about “all the fun things we do at the local beach” and happily presented it to the community. For others the time demand of the project exceeded what was initially negotiated or they were asked to participate in aspects of the research project (e.g., dissemination) they were not prepared, willing, or

interested in (see also Broad and Saunders 1998; Smith et al. 2002). In turn this put pressure on children to either participate or produce an outcome they did not want or they felt that they needed to explain their retreat from research projects. Only two boys out of ten participants volunteered to be part of writing this chapter and decided half way through that an interview would have to do, which the author could use to inform her reflection about the project. Although they were interested in getting to know the “nitty-gritty” of academic dissemination at the beginning, the process was boring and did not speak to their interests. In their eyes, the presentation of their video earlier was enough.

These examples highlight that a research project that achieves the aims of the fourth rung, “child- initiated, shared decisions with adult,” is not always desirable and feasible. Rather, children wished for a more cooperative and flexible approach. They would have loved to climb and up down the ladder of participation as needed instead of trying to negotiate the highest rungs for the entire duration of the project. At times more guidance was desired in order not to feel lost in the task and to be able to move on; in retrospect, this group of children wanted more reassurance. At other times less guidance than provided would have been appreciated to truly feel it was (still) their project, although this was always the author’s intention.

6 Moving In and Out of the Researcher Role: Fluid Moments of Being a Researcher and Playing Around

In one part of the project, children set out with the aim of creating a universal map of play inspirations for nonlocal children visiting the sandy and rocky beach. They wanted to create a GPS-based map of the best location to engage in different activities such as playing cricket, collecting shells, or building sandcastles. Once the group arrived at the beach, everyone was excited. Children could not wait to run off and get started marking their favorite play locations. The activity lasted for 3 min. Although children were well equipped for and confident to carry out the GPS activity, it did not work out as the children intended. In contrast to their initial idea that a GPS location will be sufficient to represent a possible beach activity, once they were out in the field the idea was quickly discarded. Just one dot on the map was in their eyes not suitable to cover the complexity of their play. For example, Tim highlighted the dilemma by questioning “how can we cover that playing cricket only makes sense on the hard part of the beach and not the soft bit; it is impossible to cover the entire area just with one dot; it just doesn’t work.” Looking later at their GPS locations revealed that the majority of children had only one or two locations marked. Although children intended to fully take on the researcher role before they moved to a more comfortable and familiar activity: playing at the beach and building a “crab hotel”. For almost two hours children were immersed in building the hotel with rocks they found on the beach as well as looking for suitable shells as beds, seaweed as curtains, and crabs to stay in their hotel. They worked together as teams, helped each other finding the needed “furniture” and made suggestions on how to improve the current building stage. Although building the

“crab hotels” was not intended, the activity had a lasting impression on the children. The activity featured prominently in the presentation to the community during which children vividly recollected their experiences, which was further illustrated by one boy’s script for the video the children created.

The example demonstrates two points the author wants to make for moving toward a more realistic and meaningful frame for children than the dominant reading of the ladder of participation suggests. First, being a researcher is not a straightforward and distinguishable process for children. Playing and conducting research are not two different things. Children moved quickly from one role into the other and back. Playing and researching conflated; children consciously and unconsciously reflected on their activities and experiences throughout the project. Hence, it could be argued that becoming a mini-clone of an adult researcher (as in, e.g., the work of Kellett 2004) does not coincide with children’s actions in these two projects. Rather, it seems an ideal adult researchers envision but which is less meaningful for children who define their role as a researcher in less orthodox ways than following an exact research protocol (co)designed in the beginning. Second, conducting research is not a linear process. Although children initiated and shared decisions with adults (rung 4) it was a less straightforward process once “out in the field”. Within minutes children could climb up and down the different rungs and still define themselves as researchers. It seems less meaningful for children to just take one role on, rather it was more meaningful for children to move between playing and researching, to move between active and passive participation. A more realistic and meaningful frame for children in research projects may entail providing simple pockets of freedom in which children can explore and carry out their own interests.

7 Conclusion

This chapter provided insights into the challenges and tensions occurring when primary school-age children became researchers. Being an active participant and collaborator is more complex than the term child researcher suggests. Children moved easily between being an active child researcher and passive participant. While the child researchers in the “water and play” project designed, carried out the data collection, analyzed and presented their findings to their local community, they did not always operate as active participants in the cycle of the project. At times, children privileged play over research. Moreover, children came to the project with their own agendas and intentions that shaped their experiences and the project. Even with the best intentions and while attempting to support children as researchers without hijacking their project, the examples discussed in this chapter indicate that we need more flexibility when involving children as researchers in all stages of the research project. We need to acknowledge that involving children as researchers is also a process of negotiation rather than just utilizing children’s capabilities blindly for adult researchers’ agendas. In other words, for child researchers in the project, their participation encompassed more than “just” being

a researcher and operating on a predefined rung on the ladder of participation. We should therefore be careful not to follow uncritically participation norms outlined by Hart and others writing about children's geographies (Hart 1997; van Blerk and Kesby 2013; Alderson 2004; Christensen 2000).

The linear application of the ladder of participation can be misleading. Children did not fully develop their own research project by sharing decisions with the adult researcher in the "water and play" project nor did they want to. They did not sit on the last rung ("child-initiated, shared decision with adults") throughout the entire process as the author anticipated before embarking on the project. While the ladder of participation might be helpful when children are not visible in political or academic agendas in showcasing the potential value their input can have, the linearity of the rungs do not reflect how all situations play out in reality. Employing children as researchers does not necessarily increase their participation and citizenship nor is it helpful to continuously insist that child-led research is morally and ethically better than other types of (participatory) research practices. Rather, it is important to reflect on the experiences, expectations, and interests of adult and child researchers and then cooperatively decide which way forward is the best at the start of and during any research process.

Important questions such as whether every child is willing to commit to being a researcher for the entire duration of a research project are not usually asked, rather they are assumed. Is it feasible for every child to become a researcher or should researchers limit themselves to small self-selected groups as it requires time and commitment to co-create an ethical practice between collaborators. This approach, however, runs the risk of working only with the most able and committed participants. Researchers need to ask "For whom are they actually employing children as researchers?" For themselves as a moral obligation, to benefit the child researcher through skill acquisition, or for gaining different insights into children's everyday life? When researchers really do intend to walk down the path of making children a partner in research projects, when they really want to work side by side with children when carrying out research together, the ladder of participation has limits as a guiding framework.

Participation should be seen as both a lived experience and a learning process, rather than as a rung, even the highest one, on Hart's ladder. In other words, participation is not a performance; rather it is a dialogical encounter between adult and child researcher (Freire 2001; Weil 1999). A more flexible approach to children as researchers should take this into account. Acknowledging that not everyone has the same agenda for participation might be a first step in critically reflecting on whether it is necessary to include all children in all stages of a research project or whether it is better to negotiate with child researchers about which parts of the project are most meaningful for them and speak best to their interests and capabilities. It means adult researchers need to make an effort to connect to children's experiences more effectively and view participation as a social learning experience for all parties involved.

The complex challenge of negotiating participation in a project should be central to its formation so that a helping hand can be given where required while at other times child researchers can run off and explore or engage in other activities. Instead of privileging the adult or child researchers' view, a more collaborative approach in which everyone co-learns and co-constructs knowledge rather than leaving adult or child researchers solely in charge of a task can work better. The figure of holding hands might be more realistic, flexible, and meaningful for children rather than being forced to climb up a ladder with declining adult support and losing touch with the ground. The study indicated that at times children wanted to be held tight, be supported in their decisions, and learn about conducting research, while at other times they did not need the hand of the adult researcher at all. Sometimes, fingertip contacts were enough for children to feel confident enough to carry out the project. However, it seemed important that they never felt alone, that they could decide how much of the adult researcher's hand they wanted to hold both individually and as a group. When they were supported negotiating a tricky situation, they then felt comfortable running off in their own direction. Thus Fig. 3, which provides a glimpse into the many different potential pathways participation can take, might speak better to Hart's initial intention to lobby for children's meaningful, authentic, and genuine participation than a rigid adherence to a linear ladder of participation.

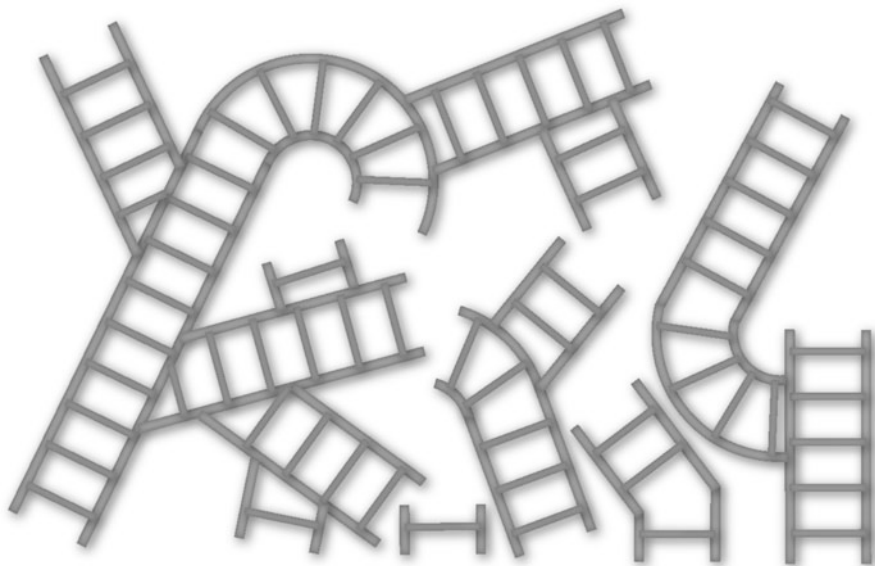


Fig. 3 An alternative view on Hart's ladder on participation. Rungs can be climbed if wished up and down, backward, and sideward; sometimes rungs are not necessary as it is a smoother cooperative learning process than climbing a rung. Different participation levels can be negotiated simultaneously

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Ethical Complexities of Mobile Interviews with Young People

6

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Abstract

Recently, movement-inspired methods have become more popular among researchers examining the relationships between space, children, and young people. In particular, some have seen mobile interviewing as a suitable method to provide insights into participants' everyday lives and involve them in the production of research material. While there is great potential in this method, the difficulties that come along with this are less discussed. This chapter suggests that doing interviews in movement involves ethical complexities that may not be evident in "sedentary" methods. In particular, the chapter discusses the difficulties that emerge in the research project when interviews are conducted in movement, by taking a look at (a) the dilemmas that movement brings, and (b) the problematic encounters that may take place during mobile interviews. It seems that when interviewing is mobile, the research setting is less controllable and ethical problems may develop. This chapter evaluates how movement influences the interaction and discusses how a researcher can deal with difficult

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situations. This chapter explores ethical problems and their possible solutions through four illustrations from research practice and a research diary.

Keywords

Mobile methods • Children and young people • Research practice • Research ethics • Movement • Encounters

1 Introduction

In recent years, researchers investigating the relationship between individual, daily environments, and everyday life have started to use variable methods. At the same time, researchers have started to think how their methods could take into account the mobile character of everyday life. As a result, interest in mobile interviewing methods has increased (e.g., Kusenbach 2003, 2012; Anderson 2004; Carpiano 2009; Hall 2009; Porter et al. 2010b; Evans and Jones 2011). Along with these researchers, children's and young people's geographers have started to apply movement-inspired methods in their research (e.g., Cele 2006; Ross et al. 2009; Porter et al. 2010b; Trell and Van Hoven 2010; Ergler 2012).

Mobile interviewing is a data collection technique whereby researchers move alongside participants, as Kusenbach (2012), one of the early contributors to the method of go-along interviews, defines it. She understands mobile methods as glimpses into individual experiences and the ways in which people navigate not only built and natural environments but also symbolic and personal landscapes. Generally speaking, mobile interviewing could be defined as a “variation on qualitative interviewing techniques that has great utility (either alone or in conjunction with other methods) for exploring – and subsequently improving understanding of – people's experiences of their local residential context” (Carpiano 2009, p. 263). Researchers have used different names to describe their methods, including for instance go-along interviews (Kusenbach 2003, 2012; Carpiano 2009), conversations in place (Anderson 2004), guided tours (Cele 2006), mobile interviews (Porter et al. 2010b), and walking interviews (Evans and Jones 2011). Many of these studies have applied a methodological approach whereby participant(s) have the freedom to decide on the route to be roamed, which can be called “natural” go-along interviewing (Kusenbach 2003, p. 463).

Even if there is no single definition for such go-along methods, it seems that previous studies have commonly combined movement-inspired methods with other methods. Some have even defined go-along interviewing method as a fusion of participant observation and interviewing (see Kusenbach 2003; Carpiano 2009). Others have, for instance, conducted mobile narratives that accompany a participant from home to school (Porter et al. 2010b); used participatory photomapping of movement as a research method (Dennis Jr. et al. 2009); mixed different methods, such as walking, interviews, drawings, photography, and video (Trell and Van Hoven 2010); combined guided tours, interviewing, photographing, and drawing

methods (Cele 2006); and combined ethnographic methods with photography with children in movement (Kullman 2010, 2012). Two characteristics connect the aforementioned studies: ethical responsibility and a participatory approach, which are often recognized as primary issues in research with children and young people. This chapter pays special attention on the former.

In earlier research, many have discussed the advantages and disadvantages related to movement-inspired methods. The use of mobile methods may provide glimpses into individual experiences and the ways in which people navigate built and natural environments as well as symbolic and personal landscapes (Kusenbach 2003). When compared to “traditional” interviewing, mobile interviewing can be a more “place-sensitive” and dynamic method (Kusenbach 2012, p. 254) than conventional research methods. Mobile interviewing allows a researcher to explore participants’ narratives “in place” while seeing directly how research participant(s) capture(s) and interpret(s) multi-sensual and multilayered place experiences (Holton and Riley 2014, p. 59). Mobile methods may help a researcher to take on a more equal role with research participants (Cele 2006, p. 129; Porter et al. 2010b). Also, the roles of interviewee/interviewer may become less fixed (Brown and Durrheim 2009) and the flow of the conversation is more flexible compared to “sedentary” interviews (Cele 2006, p. 129; Porter et al. 2010b). It also seems that the objects that the participants encounter become part of the research projects which may help to generate research material; these encounters may act as prompts to discuss certain topics (Trell and Van Hoven 2010; Pyyry 2015). As the research project in Helsinki discussed in this chapter found, go-along interviewing may also help to understand embodied meanings of daily places, for instance, in cases where a researcher and participant(s) physically travel together, feel the weather, and share the feelings of waiting together.

However, there seems to be little discussion about ethical issues related to mobile interviews. This chapter focuses on the question of how movement influences the interview setting. It also explores what kind of ethical dilemmas may arise from conducting an interview in movement. This chapter thus concentrates on two topics: ethical issues related to movements in space and ethical issues related to unexpected encounters during mobile interviews. By doing this, the chapter aims to widen the conversation regarding the ethics of mobile interviewing methods, providing also possible ways of managing for these dilemmas. The examples discussed here are based on a doctoral research project investigating young people’s (15–20-year-olds) experiences of daily places and social encounters in urban space in the Helsinki capital region.

2 Using Mobile Methods: A Perspective into Ethical Questions

The idea of conducting interviews in movement partly results from changes in social science thinking. Researchers have started to pay attention to the mobile character of individuals, materials, and ideas. The mobilities paradigm has been

greatly influenced by Sheller and Urry's (2006, also Urry 2007) and Hannam and colleagues' (2006) critique of social sciences for being stagnant rather than understanding the flows of people, goods, ideas, and communications which are in movement. As part of this turn, children's and young people's mobilities have become a topic of interest among geographers. Despite the vibrant and burgeoning interest in children's and young people's mobilities, some have suggested that theoretical and empirical openings could be more widespread (Barker et al. 2009; see Buliung et al. 2012). It also seems that ethical dilemmas related to mobile methods are not well discussed in the literature to date.

Why do ethical issues related to movement-inspired methods differ from "traditional" methods (e.g., interviews)? One of the central reasons is that when a researcher and participants are "on the move," the research setting also becomes more flexible and less controllable much because participant reactions to encounters with certain places and people cannot be fully predicted. This flexibility surely may help participants to get involved with the research project (Cele 2006; Trell and Van Hoven 2010) and may provide insights into daily practices of encountering friends and neighbors (Kusenbach 2003, p. 476). Also, different kinds of unpredictable encounters and "inconveniences" may urge participants to discuss topics which otherwise would not have been relevant for the conversation (see Pyry 2015). However, a researcher cannot decide which individuals will accidentally become involved with a research project. For instance, in Porter and colleagues' (2010a) research (conducted in Malawi, South Africa and Ghana), young mobile interview participants often discussed the social and physical dangers they had encountered during their journeys in their earlier lives. The participants were afraid of meeting certain kinds of individuals. Also, Carpiano (2009) was forced to interview some participants via "sedentary" interviews because of participants' concerns of safety and protection as well as a fear of being harmed which prevented walking outside. As these papers suggest, mobile interviewing is a technique where encounters between different kinds of individuals become more likely.

Many of these ethical concerns are familiar for researchers using ethnographic methods and participant observation. They are methods where movement is part of the research practice (see, e.g., Marcus 1995), suggesting that the users of these methods encounter similar ethical dilemmas than researchers applying mobile interviewing. Already in the mid-1990s, ethnographic methods had become mobile and "multisited" (Marcus 1995, p. 95), where a researcher is more prone to random encounters and unexpected events as described above. In this sense, there are similarities between go-along interviewing and ethnography. However, there are also differences. While ethnography and participant observation can be time-consuming methods (see, e.g., Langevang 2007), mobile interviews can be more effective. Mobile interviewing methods is different in that it does not produce as intensive research material as ethnographic methods or participant observation might do. Second, ethnographic and participant observation methods build understanding of research participants' personal lives but try to understand social relations and build mutual trust (see Langevang 2007). Go-along interviewing is (in general) more focused on the perspective of certain individual(s), suggesting

that the relationship between a researcher and participant may be less intensive than in ethnographic research where the researcher spends time with participants on prolonged periods. In go-along interviews, mutual trust does not necessarily become that as deep. On the other hand, when the interviews are conducted in a form where a researcher and participant(s) are walking and talking informally, it may be difficult to find a “natural” ending point for walking. Due to unbalanced power relations, a young person may struggle with the question of “how to end the interview.” If a researcher does not note these signals, interviewing may last longer than the participant(s) had thought. Some researchers have written about these subtle signals and their personal reactions to them. For instance, Eldén (2013) writes about a situation in which she realized that a child participant had started to change the topic of discussion. Eldén noted the participant’s uneasiness about the research project and decided to end the interview. However, the child was still willing to play with her. As a solution, Eldén decided to stop the interview and started to play with him. Similarly, Pyry (2015) noted that one of her young research participants started to feel uncomfortable about the topic they were discussing. As a solution, Pyry simply changed the topic and did not ask any further questions related to theme. There are somewhat similar dilemmas related to mobile interviews; a participant may experience feelings of distress and uneasiness. However, when interviewing “on the move,” reacting to these situations can be sometimes difficult. For instance, if a participant wants to finish the interview in a locale where they both have to wait for a bus together, it may be difficult to quit the interaction. In these moments, it is the researcher who has to find an ethical solution for these situations by making quick decisions in situ.

In such “ethical moments,” a researcher must quickly decide how to react to a participant’s reaction in a way that respects the participant (Guillemin and Gillam 2004). In other words, researchers have to find a solution that suits the context best (Bushin 2007). One possible solution is suggested by Bachman (2011), who was conducting research under political turmoil. In extreme research circumstances, Bachman tried to adapt to the new situation, engage with the complexities and entanglements, as well as continue with his research and, maybe most importantly, write about his research and his experiences. Although reflexivity encounters some complexities (e.g., England 1994), it can be a helpful tool to unravel ethical dilemmas and consider how to handle the question of how ethical practice in research can be achieved (Guillemin and Gillam 2004).

3 Reflections on the Research Project: The Case of Young People’s Everyday Life Places in Helsinki, Finland

The fieldwork took place in the capital region of Helsinki, Finland, during 2011 and lasted 10 months. The participants, who were 15–20-year-old students, were recruited from three upper secondary schools located on the outskirts of Helsinki. The aim of the research was to investigate young people’s place experiences and encounters in their daily places. In practice, mobile interviews in general took place

in the suburbs of the Helsinki region, including street space, shopping malls, public transportation vehicles, residential areas, and sports facilities. Therefore, various individuals and spaces became involved in the research. There are a few reasons which led to the decision to conduct interviews on movement. As the aim of the study was to understand the changing nature of young people's place experiences, the mobile interviewing method seemed to be suitable for this purpose since mobile interviews provide more place-specific research material compared to more "static" methods (Evans and Jones 2011, p. 856–857). As place experiences are composed in mobile contexts (e.g., Edensor 2014), mobile research methods are potentially advantageous in capturing these experiences.

Here, the fieldwork began with a perusal of research ethics. Youth research includes complexities, such as ethical questions, and dilemmas of emancipation and participation. After a long process, the author decided not to require written permission from participants' guardians to participate in the research. There are several reasons for this standpoint. First, based on the examples from earlier research, it seems that at least some Finnish youth and childhood researchers investigating individuals aged over 15 years of age have decided not to ask for written permission for the research. It also seems that many cultural and social youth researchers draw upon the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which impels researchers to consider young people as independent actors. One reason for this is that Finnish legislation does not have clear regulations for social research conducted with children. Furthermore, some have felt that asking for parental permission to participate in the research would have broken the mutual trust (Tani 2014, p. 363). Moreover, some have suggested that participants would not have assented to obtaining written consent from their parents (Raevaara 2010). These aspects and the decision of the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics in Finland that the present research does not need a more in-depth ethical evaluation since the participants are aged over 15 years and that the research does not carry medical interests, confirmed the decision to let the participants decide whether they wanted to inform their parents or not.

In her paper, Sime (2008) explores her experiences of the ethical issues of negotiating access and consent with participants. As she states, children are controlled by adults, including councils, school management, and parents (see also Holt 2004). This was evident in the study in Helsinki too when starting to cooperate with teachers and their students. A number of messages had to be sent before the potential participants were met. Before meeting young people, a pilot interview was carried out with an adult volunteer to test the research setting. To meet the participants, the author started to visit the classes mainly during geography lessons. Since the idea was to research young people's personal experiences of places and social encounters, the author usually presented herself important places for her and the research project in general. There were also discussions of the research project talking about the range of the methods that could be used.

The project aspires to research place experiences while supporting participation to respect the participants and their "voices." Thus, the author's aim was to adopt a "least-adult's role" as someone who is between children and adults (Holt 2004,

p. 19–20). To achieve this, the research applies multiple method approach composed of (a) semi-structured mobile interviews, including the possibility of using GPS tracking, photography, and video, and/or (b) an independent assignment with an open-ended questionnaire, where the participants were asked to describe their daily places and locate them on the map provided. The idea of independent assignments was that the participants would travel their routes independently and reply to the questions related to the places of their choice (e.g., what kind of atmosphere your chosen place has). The participants usually decided to travel their routes physically alone or with friend(s) and some decided to stay at school. Unfortunately, the author was not able to design the project completely with young people since she was the only (academic) researcher working on this doctoral research project without any assistants or other practitioners which limited the time that could be spent on the project.

This chapter draws upon the data gathered in the mobile interviews for a detailed examination and reflective analysis. The idea behind the mobile interviews was that the participant(s) and researcher would physically travel in their daily environment, meaning that they left the school environment. The participants could decide whether to participate alone or as a group (for the differences between individual and group interviews, see Punch 2002). Following other researchers' examples (Cele 2006, p. 77) and my own experiences, the number of the participants was limited to three people to be able to give adequate attention to the situation. In keeping with ethical research practices relating to the unbalanced power relations between the researcher and the participants, the students had the freedom to comment on and criticize the research at any time. They were also aware that they could refuse to participate in any part of the research project whenever they wished.

In total, the author worked with 47 interview participants from three schools and carried out 26 mobile interviews. None of the students canceled any of the interviews due to the weather conditions although the weather varied from warm spring days (+24 °C) to cold winter weather (−10 °C). The participants were 15–20-year-olds, female (26 participants) and male (21 participants), enrolled in upper secondary education. The journeys began from one of the schools (except for one interview which started from the nearby train station). Commonly, the participants followed a route in their everyday lives, for instance, the journey to school including walking and variable means of transport. The participants often wanted to travel to places that they felt to be important, which may be called “natural” go-alongs or trails (Kusenbach 2012). Sometimes the route changed while in progress; sometimes the journey was more planned. The mobile interviews can be conducted while walking, as well as during “ride-alongs” while driving or traveling in various vehicles (Kusenbach 2003). This research project included both walking and, in addition, traveling in local and metro trains, buses, trams, and private cars driven by young people themselves. Typically, the interviews lasted from 20 min up to 1.5 h which was also the length of the journey. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed with the permission of the participants. The aim was to encourage free-flowing conversation and I asked questions

mainly to facilitate discussion. Therefore, my target was to be a listener rather than a commentator.

In retrospect, the cooperation with schools was an effective method for recruiting the participants, although some students (of course) were not interested in participating in the project. Using the multiple methods approach to enable different levels of participation was successful but also challenging. What was learned is that the depth of interaction was not stable, but changed along with the personalities and situations as well as locales. It also became clear that the research method means that researchers cannot fully decide which individuals will join in the research project. The next two sections will turn to the ethical dilemmas related to mobile interviews. All the names are pseudonyms, and the quotes are translated from Finnish.

4 Mobile Interviews in Action: Ethical Dilemmas of Movements in Spaces

In participatory research, it is essential to ensure that participants understand the meaning of involvement and that the voluntary nature of the research is emphasized. A researcher should also inform the participants about their right to withdraw at any point without any negative outcomes (Sime 2008). Despite these procedures, the problem of the balance of power nevertheless always exists when doing research with children and young people. Gallagher (2008) remarks that the power relations in participatory youth research may be balanced through multiple strategies and tactics rather than as a capacity that researchers can “give” to children. Keeping the aforementioned points in mind, the author tried to avoid an authoritative position, instead endeavoring to encourage the empowerment of the participants. She tried her best to explain to participants their rights and commitments regarding the research project to reduce any misunderstandings. Despite these intentions, there were difficult situations, and the author, as a researcher, struggled with ethical dilemmas.

Drawing on the examples of this research, it seems that communication in this situation is not inert, but calls for (and also allows) the constant (re)negotiation of roles. As Brown and Durrheim (2009, p. 925) incisively note, the mobile interview is “a strange blending and stretching of roles for researcher/participant and participant/leader,” and it is not always clear who is in a position of “authority.” In this research, movement during the walks had a great impact on the interview setting since movement seems to add an additional dimension of increased unpredictability. One of the most problematic issues was related to the ending of the interviews and journeys. Based on the journeys traveled in this research, it seems that mobile interviews do not necessarily have a clear “end point.”

The following incident with Jussi and his friend illustrates how the participants were willing potentially to finish the interview earlier than what happened in reality:

At the beginning of the interview, three 16–17-year-old male participants decided to direct our journey to Jussi's home, to which we walked and travelled by bus. The participants' teacher allowed them to participate during the geography lesson. They quickly arrived at Jussi's home street where there was a view of his home. Jussi said, "So, we're here. Maybe I won't invite you for a visit" setting a limit on what he was willing to exclude from the research project. By this, he was negotiating the limits of what he was willing to do and he was what not. Another participant urged him to tell more, "Maybe you should reflect some experiences now", with a pinch of irony in his voice. The third participant asked, "Do we go back now?" The participants were signaling that they wanted to return to the starting point and not continue the interview. Since the participants and researcher were in a quiet residential area, they had to wait for the bus together to return. (Author's research diary, 25th of October, 2011)

In retrospect, this episode raises a series of unpleasant questions. I filled my research diary with several questions, pondering how much of their participation was based on the fact that their teacher allowed them to skip class for the interview. These notes were written immediately after the journey, suggesting that she had noted the boys' uneasiness already during the interview. In this case, the interview was carried out during lessons, which meant that the participants had to return to school in 90 min. The journey in the interview led the participants and author to a quiet, residential area which felt private to the participants, but which was unknown to the researcher. The participants may have felt that they needed to meet their teacher's (and perhaps also the researcher's) expectations concerning participation. Along with these details, the nature of this interviewing technique can be considered problematic, particularly the movement in it. Since the participants and researcher were in a sleepy residential area, the participants may have felt that they could not leave the researcher alone. In addition, they were far away from school, to which they eventually wanted to return by bus, as each of them knew. Although there is no certainty about this, these aspects may have compelled the participants to continue their participation. As Langevang (2007) suggests, a researcher may occasionally feel vulnerable and "out of place" during research project. Here, I also felt like an invader, but also like an authority. The research diary confirms this claim. My aim to adopt the "least-adult's role" (Holt 2004) failed. Despite the profound intent to do ethically acceptable research and the goal of reinforcing young people's active agency, the question of "have I done it right" is relevant (see Robson et al. 2009).

Although a researcher's feelings of guilt, fear, and apprehension are legitimate (Punch 2012), cooperation with participants requires the ability to adapt to unexpected situations (e.g., Gallagher 2008; Bachman 2011; Kullman 2012). As a solution to this dilemma, I decided to withdraw and change her mindset more to participant observation than interviewing (Bachman 2011). This seemed to be a functional stance since the atmosphere was different later when approaching the school and I felt like more of a participant again.

Along with my active response, it was also the place (the bus stop) and action (waiting) that helped to bring back the "feeling of togetherness." The embodied action of leaving Jussi's home street and waiting for a bus pushed the participants and researcher together again as a group. The bus stop, as a more neutral and public place, worked as an embodied impulse to connect us more – there was little else to

do besides waiting. While Jussi was inclined to talk about his experiences of home, the embodied visit there reveals that Jussi's place experience was very personal and intense, even if the visit was slightly difficult. This also suggests that places that become part of mobile interviews are not neutral in their meanings (see, e.g., Holton and Riley 2014). Here, the method helped the researcher to see the glimpses of the complexity of place experience (see Kusenbach 2003, p. 455) which would not necessarily have become apparent in "sedentary" interviews.

The second example emphasizes another dilemma related to movement and ending the interview. Siiri, Tilda, and Pete were 17-year-old participants who were friends and fellow students:

The journey with Siiri and Tilda lasted almost 40 minutes. Pete went his home after 20 minutes, and the researcher and girls continued the journey. They had been walking around a shopping centre and were now standing in the middle of the quadrangle. While Tilda was a very talkative girl, Siiri was more quiet, and mostly agreeing with Tilda. By the end of the interview, Tilda said that she needs to leave soon since she was going to see an ice hockey game. Siiri said somewhat nervously "I also need to go. I realized that I have. . . football trainings". Siiri seemingly wanted to avoid a situation where she had to continue talking and walking alone with the researcher. (Author's research diary, 20th of October, 2011)

It was only at the transcribing phase when I realized that Siiri was possibly telling a white lie to be able to leave the interview. It is possible that her shyness and politeness prevented her from saying that she also wanted to end the interview, after her friends had already left. Despite the careful discussion of consent before interviewing, some participants may have found it hard to express that they did not want to continue interviewing. Again, this event raises unpleasant questions. The following questions were listed on my research diary in the transcribing phase: "Was Siiri interested in the research project at all? Did she have a feeling that she could not "run away" because I would have followed her? Did she only join in the research project because of her friends?" The author had noted that Siiri was very interested in photographing, which was one of the research methods. Maybe she was willing to take a part in the research with her friends (see Punch 2002, p. 49), when she did not need to talk much. In retrospect, it seems that walking and talking were not the most enjoyable research method for Siiri. With the benefit of hindsight, it could have been wise to remind her once again that she also could end the interview anytime.

This situation raises the question of whether I (unintentionally) misused my position as an adult researcher. Was the research setting designed in a way that it was difficult for participants to mention when they wanted to finish the interview? The adoption of qualitative or ethnographic methods and notions of doing research "with" and "for" rather than "about" does not release the researcher from exploitative relations (McDowell 1992), and recognizing or even being sensitive to power relations does not remove them (England 1994).

The example indicates that the participants' emotions and personalities while participating in research could have better taken into account. Hadfield-Hill and

Horton (2014) note that participants' emotions during the fieldwork are often overlooked. Based on their own research, they found that interviews seemed to cause nervousness and anxiety among the participants since it was difficult to control the situation and to know "what will happen next" (Hadfield-Hill and Horton 2014). As the scene indicates, mobile interviews may cause ethically demanding situations since it is difficult to define when the interview begins and when it ends, especially when there is a possibility that a researcher does not pick up on participants' subtle signals and wish to end the interview.

The interview process is not, however, only dependent on a researcher or applied methods. Here, the embodied presence of friends clearly encouraged Siiri to join the research project (see also Kusenbach 2003, p. 464). Even if the event was ethically complex, it provides important insights into friendships and place experiences. When walking as a group, Siiri seemed to be actively participating in the journey with her friends and the researcher. By doing this, the group together created an atmosphere in which Siiri was willing to join. However, as her friend was about to leave, Siiri's experience of place and the situation associated with place suddenly changed and she did not want to continue this situation with a researcher. For me, this event implied that friends are important for participation but also for place experience.

These two examples have indicated that there are ethical questions related to the mobile interviewing technique. Movement may push participants to continue walking with a researcher even if they would prefer to end the interview. For instance, it may be difficult for shy (or polite) individuals to say that they want to end the interview. To handle these situations, a researcher could try to read and understand the verbal and embodied messages that the participants send. Thus, a researcher has to remain open for small hints and nonverbal signals that suggest that a participant may not be willing to continue an interview. At the same time, a researcher can learn from these situations and try to understand how young people's place experiences are composed. Most of all, however, a researcher needs to explicitly check with participants if they would prefer to end the journey and not make assumptions if there seems to be a risk that the participant(s) are not willing to end the journey.

5 Ethical Encounters? Encountering Friends and Acquaintances

One of the advantages of mobile interviews is that encountering personal landmarks and familiar people may help participants to discuss their feelings of identification and belonging to particular places (Kusenbach 2003, p. 472). On the other hand, encounters with unwanted individuals may be a trigger to discuss encounters which the participant considers dangerous (see Porter et al. 2010a). Based on this research project, it also seems that encounters with certain individuals may lead not only to feelings of "outsiderness" and embarrassment but also to events which provide insight into the diversity of young people's experiences. The chapter discusses two

illustrations from the research, in which unpredictable encounters with known and familiar individuals caused ethically problematic situations.

In this research, I ended up in encounters and events where my position (female, 26 years of age) as a young researcher resulted in ethically demanding situations. A researcher's position always influences the final outcome of the research and is a constant part of the process of balancing power. Thus, a researcher needs to acknowledge the fluidity of one's position. As a one way to handle ethical dilemmas, poststructural and feminist theories suggest appropriately reflexive ways of knowing that highlight our position and situatedness as researchers (Aitken 2001). The following illustrations discuss ethical dilemmas related to encounters and the author's positionality.

At the beginning on the research projects, the author decided to carry out the interviews in a twin role as a participant and a researcher. With the benefit of hindsight, it could be said that my identity was constantly fluctuating, including roles such as "female," "young researcher," "postgraduate student," and "visitor in schools." Most of all, the author negotiated a role between a participant, a young person, and a researcher. Jansson (2010) voices his experiences of conducting research with right-wing movement members, stating that his positionality as a white male may have worked to his advantage. In a similar way, it could be said that particularly the author's age (and perhaps gender too) was undoubtedly worked to my benefit as a youth researcher. In retrospect, my age not only contributed to but also caused ethically demanding situations when individuals we encountered thought of me as a friend of participant(s). For example, in an interview with Saara, a 19-year-old female participant, we suddenly met Saara's friend:

Saara and I were talking about her memories of childhood. Suddenly, her friend approached us and started to talk about last Friday, when they had had a party at Saara's parents' place. The researcher soon learned that the party had included binge drinking. Her friend started to recall the previous Friday using swear words, telling Saara about his argument with his girlfriend. Saara got slightly embarrassed, avoided eye-contact and was laughing unsurely. The whole situation was over in three minutes, and Saara's friend seemed to assume that I was Saara's friend. (Author's research diary, 19th of September, 2011)

Saara's friend was obviously not aware about the interview since he did not pay any special attention to me or ask what we were doing. Since meetings in Finnish culture can be very informal, we did not introduce ourselves. This ostensibly minor occurrence raises many difficult questions, which I wrote about in my research diary, soon after the interview: "Was this incident emotionally demanding for Saara? Did Saara's friend say something that he would not have said otherwise? Did Saara feel upset or angry towards him for making her embarrassed?" As Langevang (2007) notes, it is evident that discussing sensitive topics and memories may be distressing for young people. However, these topics would not have become a part of the interview without Saara's friend. Thus, it was not Saara's decision to talk about the party. It can be assumed that this scene took place because we were walking in the public realm in her residential area. The consequences of mobility, therefore, not only surprised Saara but surprised me as well. Did Saara understand the consequences of

an interview in movement when she decided to become involved in this research project? This event indicates that moving in the public realm increases interactions, not only with the unknown but also with friends or acquaintances as a part of mundane performances. While go-along interview may provide glimpses into a participant's daily life (see Kusenbach 2003), some of these glimpses are not necessarily meant for a researcher. The occasional encounters with "nonparticipants" (see Garcia et al. 2012, p. 1399–1400) may not be that neutral when the individuals (whether with friends of a researcher or participant) who are participating without a predefined plan take an active role and become part of the interviewing situation.

At the moment of performing "ethics in practice," as Guillemin and Gillam (2004, 264) call it, the researcher must decide how to respond to what the participant has said and how to interact with her or him in a humane, nonexploiting way while at the same time understanding one's role as a researcher. Moreover, Kullman (2012) notes that a skilled researcher is characterized by open-mindedness and a willingness to adapt to unexpected events. When noting that Saara seemed embarrassed, I did not have much time to reflect on the encounter. In retrospect, it seems that I responded to Saara as I would have replied to a friend – with my emotional reaction. While the influence of the researcher's positionality is widely discussed in the social sciences and humanities, the effects of the researcher's personality and emotional intelligence on research results are not well understood (Moser 2008). Along with my emotional reaction, I also maintained my mindset of a researcher. Finally, my reaction was also based on my cultural knowledge. In Finnish culture, a calm silence is generally an appropriate and compassionate way of empathizing with someone who is embarrassed. Based on the combination of this knowledge, I let Saara decide whether she wanted to talk about the event or not.

After we had been walking and driving in the car for a while, Saara decided to return to the encounter. The encounter with a friend was an impulse to discuss her belonging to place (see Pyry 2015). Saara said that "like the case [of encounter] indicates. I want to get out of here. I just can't stand the relationships between these people, I kinda need... new, fresh air." Even if the encounter first seemed to be uncomfortable, it eventually worked as a push for her to discuss about her relationship with place – Saara did not want to associate with her locality as she used to do. Here, a combination of emotional knowledge, careful reading of subtle signs, and the encounter with a friend influenced the interviewing process and led Saara to reflect on her belonging to place. Along with encountering participants' friends, a researcher's own acquaintances may become involved in the research project. For instance, when my telephone suddenly starts to ring or when we met someone who I knew during the research journey, it becomes evident that one cannot exclude her or his personal social sphere from the research. For a researcher, these encounters may feel somewhat confusing and awkward. Although sometimes ignored, emotions are inseparable from the process of fieldwork (Jansson 2010; Hadfield-Hill and Horton 2014).

The following scene illustrates a meeting in a metro carriage:

Elena wanted to go to her home station, and we were travelling there by metro. It was a rush hour and the metro carriage was full of passengers. We were discussing Elena's home and

her relationship with her siblings and parents. Suddenly I noted a someone I knew among the passengers. Even though I was slightly confused, I tried to keep focused on Elena and her story. At the same time, I was prepared to greet him. However, he did not notice me. (Author's research diary, 8th of September, 2011)

As this scene indicates, encounters with known individuals may become an unforeseen part of the research project. My research diary, written immediately after the interview, includes the following text: "I saw Jouni's friend in a metro train, which was slightly awkward. As soon as I noted him, I caught myself thinking 'Please don't see me'." I also avoided eye contact, without reasoning this behavior much. While this encounter did not have an impact on Elena's story, I started to feel uncomfortable causing also distraction on attention. What if he, similarly to Saara's friend, had thought that Elena was a friend of an author and had said something similar to what Saara's friend had? How would that have changed the atmosphere of the interview? At the very least, Elena's possibility to participate in the research anonymously would have been broken.

Hadfield-Hill and Horton (2014) suggest that a researcher's emotions experienced during a research project are rarely just "emotions about research" since we are never just researchers who only do research. However, emotions which become part of fieldwork are usually discreet and expressed through processes, incidents, and encounters. While "ethical behavior" is not easily defined, a researcher has to decide a suitable stance for a research project, where the research context is taken into account (Bushin 2007, p. 248; see Skelton 2008). In retrospect, it could be said that the encounter could have an impact on power relationships between me and Elena. It is possible that the encounter with my friend could have possibly increased our mutual trust. In this context, tolerating feelings of insecurity and awkwardness may help a researcher to become more confident and flexible (see Kullman 2012).

The encounter described here was relatively modest and subtle but had an impact on the researcher who had to leave her "comfort zone." However, random encounters may evoke feelings for a researcher which may help to understand the position of a research participant. The encounter described above provided the researcher with a glimpse of how Saara may have experienced the meeting with her friend. This kind of information is valuable when trying to understand how young people experience the research process.

As these two encounters here have indicated, the emotions which are part of the fieldwork may be often quite low-key. However, as the practices related to the research project (e.g., nervous laughing, avoiding eye contact) indicate, emotions cannot be avoided. These practices may reveal "ethically problematic moments" where a research participant feels herself or himself out of place. It also seems that research encounters may give rise to awkward and confusing feelings for researchers and participants. Even if these feelings may be difficult, they may provide valuable insights into young people's position and experiences during the research process. They also may work as an impulse to discuss topics that otherwise would not have emerged.

6 Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how the mobile interviewing method presented here allows the young participants to choose an embodied, individual time-space path that the participant and the researcher share. There are several benefits related to mobile interviewing method. First, the method may help a researcher to understand young people's daily positions better since the roles of researcher and participant are less fixed (Cele 2006, p. 129; Brown and Durrheim 2009; Porter et al. 2010b). One reason for this is that the interviewing does not need to be conducted in places where the presence of "adult authorities" (e.g., teachers and parents) would influence on the atmosphere of interviews. Instead, young people encounter individuals who are not participating the research project per se (e.g., fellow passengers, salespersons, etc.) more "naturally" (see also Kusenbach 2003) which may help the researcher to understand young people's experiences from their positions.

Second, go-along interviewing not only helps to explore individual experiences and habits (see Kusenbach 2003, 2012) but also provides a researcher with an insight into the spatial context where young people live their daily lives. For instance, traveling together by bus or feeling the weather together may help a researcher to understand the spatial context and embodied elements which compose the everyday environment of young people's lives. This is valuable research material for a researcher who studies, for instance, daily practices and place experiences.

Third, random encounters during go-along interviews may encourage the researcher and participants to discuss and reflect on topics which otherwise would not have emerged (see, e.g., Pyry 2015). Along with topics of discussion, the embodied reactions to certain kinds of encounters become obvious. As illustrated above, the participants' and one's own embodied reactions may help a researcher to understand the complexity of place experiences. For instance, young people's embodied reactions during journeys may clash with their verbal narratives. As the participant(s) and researchers roam their journey together, the researcher may understand these reactions better by observing her or his own reactions and experiences during the event. These contradictory responses may help to understand the complexity of young people's place experiences and the contexts of daily lives.

Along with the benefits, the method includes certain ethical dilemmas which become an inseparable part of the research project. First, when conducting interviews on the move, the participant can decide the location of the interview and the length of the cooperation. However, based on examples from this research, it seems that the end point of interactions may be difficult to define because of the informal nature of the interview. For instance, participants who have a shy personality may have particular difficulties here because such "walking and talking" methods usually do not have clear ending points. Instead, the method requires a participant to say "I would like to finish the interview now" at some point. This has to be made clear not only when negotiating informed consent to participate but also during the interview process. Here, a researcher must observe embodied and nonverbal signs to observe possible discomfort. A second question relates to the unpredictability of

encounters during research journeys. Places which become part of go-along interviews are not meaningless “blank canvases” but have certain power relations (see, e.g., Holton and Riley 2014). Since the interviews are conducted in movement, participants and a researcher may need to interact with known individuals as part of their journeys. When walking and traveling in the public realm, the author and research participants encountered unknown and known people. Some social interactions were unexpected, and some even unwanted. Unlike certain meetings during a research process (see Garcia et al. 2012, p. 1399–1400), the encounters here were not neutral but instead may be stressful for the research participants. This is a difference when compared to ethnographic methods and participant observation where there is more time to reflect unwanted encounters. In mobile interviews, a researcher and research participant may have less possibilities for reflection as the interviews and journeys are not necessarily very long. To summarize, movement-inspired methods may provide more opportunities for the agency of young people (e.g., the participants can choose the traveled route), but the consequences are more unpredictable when the interviewing place is less fixed. Hence, movement is a possibility, but presumes the ability to adapt to unexpected occasion on the part of both the participant and the researcher. Drawing on this experience, it would be ethically wise to make clear to participants these aspects when negotiating informed consent to participate in the study. Again, a researcher should also remain aware of body language and embodied signals.

It seems, therefore, that mobile discussions are a versatile participatory technique that may help to develop understanding about young people and their place experiences. Mobile interviewing, however, includes ethical dilemmas which are not easily controlled because the movement increases the level of flexibility and need for adaptability. Thus, the onus is on the researcher to negotiate ethical solutions in difficult situations, taking into account the context and the knowledge of the research participants (Bushin 2007). Acknowledging the researcher’s position and personality may play an even more important role compared with “sedentary” methods. The researcher has to take into consideration and to reflect on the meaning of one’s own embodiment; the researcher is a visitor sharing and performing the participant’s daily environment as an embodied guest. Along with verbal communication, one possible solution is to try to read participants’ embodied messages which are an inseparable part of mobile interviews. Researchers may note these nonverbal messages, try to react to and respond to them, and, therefore, avoid ethically problematic situations. Researchers therefore not only experience the daily life and place with participants through speech, discussions, and emotions but also through shared embodied journeys.

To avoid the precarious assumption that mobile interviews are intrinsically emancipatory, the researcher must acknowledge the constant fluidity of power dynamics between researchers and participant and carefully and continuously read the interview situation. As demonstrated here, the question of how to create an atmosphere, in which a participant feels a sense of trust and empowerment, is difficult. Since the mobility of human life can be researched with mobile methods, putting aside these questions is shortsighted. Keeping these aspects in mind, mobile

methods have a great potential to produce knowledge in a way that respects participants and provides more possibilities to understand mobile everyday life.

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Challenging Barriers to Participation: Doing Research with Migrant Children and Young People

7

Daniela Sime

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Abstract

The methodological and ethical aspects of conducting research with children and young people have been a significant area of debate across disciplines over the last few decades, with two broad issues emerging in relation to children's involvement in the research process: (i) children should be seen as competent agents, who have the right to participate in research at all stages; (ii) researchers must ensure that children's participation is fair, inclusive, and ethical and use appropriate techniques for children to be able to contribute. Drawing on recent studies with first-generation migrant children for whom English is a second language and the more general literature on conducting research with children and young people, this chapter examines the ethical and methodological challenges one needs to consider when aiming to include migrant children in research, with a focus on Eastern European groups. The chapter explores questions such as: What are the main practical

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challenges in getting access to migrant children and securing informed consent? What are the advantages and disadvantages of existing methods and techniques in eliciting migrant children's views? How important is ethnic and language matching between the researchers, interpreters, and families, and how do spaces such as children's homes or schools affect the research process? The chapter reflects upon the way in which the researchers' structural position, in terms of age, ethnicity, and class, can influence power relationships in the research process and affect issues of access, consent, data collection, analysis, and dissemination. It concludes with the observation that child-centered, qualitative research has clear advantages in giving migrant children a voice and in informing current policy, practice, and debates on global migration and social justice. However, researchers need to be mindful of migrant children's position within their families and society overall and think of their participation as often hedged around by constraints and controls.

Keywords

Migrant children • Ethics • Methodological issues • Children's rights • Children's voice • Consent • Research spaces • Ethnic and language matching • Using interpreters in research • Ethnic minorities • Data analysis

1 Introduction

Over the past two decades, research with children has seen a significant shift, with an emphasis on the "competent child" now prevalent, as inspired by the new sociology of childhood (James et al. 1998; Corsaro 2011). Researchers are now expected to consider children's rights to participate in research that affects them, reflecting more substantial shifts in international policy and practice, such as family legal procedures or consultation with children on public places and services they access. Prout (2001) argued that taking notice of children's voices should be a matter of priority because "it speaks to questions of flexibility and responsiveness in welfare and service provision and to debates about young people's engagement with key institutions such as schools" (p. 193). Children's rights to participate have been enshrined in the United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) for almost three decades now; however, it is only recently that children's views have been acknowledged as valid in their own right. This shift is often attributed to developments in the rise of constructivist and interpretive theoretical perspectives in sociology (James et al. 1998; Prout 2005), which aimed to reframe views of childhood as experienced, debated, and defined in processes of social action which have children as central actors.

Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC explicitly address the right of children to be informed, involved, and consulted in decisions that affect their lives, although the rights are expressed with several caveats, which have been criticized for the difficulties they pose for implementation (Bell 2008; Spyrou 2011). For example, Article 12 limits the right of participation to children who are "capable of forming their own view," putting the responsibility on adults to decide on individual children's capability. This

logically leads to questions around how capability should be established and by what measures and puts again adults in a position of power, as they make the judgment. In terms of research and consultation, although Article 12 makes clear the adults' responsibility to include children's views, it gives very little guidance on how this could be achieved. Similarly, Article 3, which discusses the best interest of the child as a key priority in any matters involving children, implies that adults need to prioritize children's protection and well-being. Nevertheless, these statements are not straightforward in their application, as adults need clearer mechanisms to identify children who might be vulnerable and consider the ways in which ideas such as right to participation, protection, and vulnerability are constructed across times, social groups, and cultures (Rogoff 2003). Despite these caveats, the Convention provides a critical framework and a mechanism for empowering children in research, and the shift in childhood studies has also been matched by a shift in wider policies toward the inclusion of children's voice in governance at various levels. In the UK, for example, recent policies such as the *Children and Families Bill 2013* in England (Department of Education 2013), and the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill 2013* (Scottish Parliament 2013), in line with the provisions of the Convention, emphasize the importance of giving children an active role in decisions which concern their lives, for example, through contributing to the improvement of local services, and place responsibility on services to create opportunities for consultation.

This chapter explores the ways in which current developments in policy and practice in relation to including children's voices have direct relevance for research with migrant children, with a particular focus on Eastern European groups in a Western context. The chapter discusses the implications for the whole research process, from initial access to methods which encourage genuine participation and involvement of children in analysis and dissemination. It starts by giving an overview of current views of the child and childhood and makes an argument for children's rights to participate in research, especially when they belong to marginalized groups. It then considers the complexities associated with issues such as access and consent, before reflecting on the value of some popular research methods in research with newly migrated children. The chapter pays particular attention to the conditions under which children are more likely to engage with the researcher on a more equal basis, for example, when being visited at home or when sharing their language and culture. It also discusses the dilemmas around the researcher's own positionality in work with migrant groups and the ethics of dissemination of data. The argument evolves by drawing on the author's own experiences in the field and current evidence from relevant studies.

2 Views of the Child and Their Influence on Research with Migrant Children

Societies over time and across cultures differ in their perceptions of childhood and children's place in them. These perceptions are not static; they undergo constant changes and are subject to a range of global influences. The interest in children as

social actors and their socialization has been seen by some as sociology's "rediscovery of childhood" (Corsaro 2011). Early theories of childhood, which adopted a deterministic model, often reflected an appropriation of children by society, seen as mainly passive, and who would eventually become competent participants through internalizing adults' input. These views were based on biological and philosophical theories of the nineteenth century, assuming a sequence of ordered stages through which all children progress with age. The linking of stage development to age (wrongly attributed to Piaget) helped promote the vision of children as "incomplete" biological creatures, with little intentionality or agency. These views meant that for many children, across various cultures, the dominant feature of childhood had been, and in many respects still remains, their powerlessness and lack of control over things that happen to them.

More recent theoretical angles on childhood have adopted a sociological perspective of children's development, which regards socialization as not just a process of adoption and internalization of adults' knowledge and understandings. Social theories of childhood (Jenks 1996; James et al. 1998; James and Prout 1997) conceptualize children as social actors, active in their engagement with adults, institutions, and ideologies, which they interpret, reproduce, reinvent, or negotiate in their own ways. Corsaro calls this process "interpretive reproduction" (2011, p. 21), to reflect the creative aspects of children's participation in society and their active contribution to cultural production and change. This approach has prompted researchers to think of the "competent child" (James et al. 1998), whose perspective on society, although possibly different from that of adults, needs to be heard and considered in equal manner. Many authors have argued that children's voice cannot genuinely be heard unless adults change the ways in which they see children and their competence. In this sense, Punch (2002) concludes that research with children is potentially different from research with adults because of children's marginalized position in society, rather than because children are inherently different from adults. As research with children moves into new realms which tackle the long-standing issues around children's lack of representation and power, childhood remains a highly contentious topic, as different historical, spatial, social, political, and moral positions are conjured to discuss it.

Research with migrant children has also been significantly influenced by developments in the sociology of childhood. Earlier studies often framed migrant children as vulnerable victims of migration in need of protection and victims of exploitation, without significant agency or competence to contribute to the migration process or their families' lives post-migration. Studies have thus highlighted the significant hardship experienced by migrant children facing detention or deportation due to illegal border crossing (Watters 2008) or human trafficking (Rigby 2011). Substantial research with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children has also been conducted to highlight their significant needs (Crawley 2009; Rutter 2003, 2006; Kohli 2006) and campaign for policies and practice to address the injustices that unaccompanied minors suffer due to punitive laws, which deny them basic rights and reinforce their marginalization. While the discourse of vulnerability has been adopted by some of these studies, in order to make the case stronger in arguing for more

humanitarian treatment of children (Eastmond and Ascher 2011), a new, emerging discourse has centered around migrant children's resilience even during extreme hardship, such as detention and deportation (Hess and Shandy 2008; Watters 2008).

The need for a shift in migration research with children to a more in-depth understanding of the competent child and their views of the migration experience has now been stressed by research across disciplines, beginning to fill the gap. This has been done by studies which explore children's agency in a range of migrant situations, such as return migration (Knörr 2005; Ni Laoire et al. 2011), transnational migration (Parreñas 2005; Punch 2012; Tyrell et al. 2013), children migrating in search of work (Yaqub 2007), and/or as part of the family unit (Bushin 2009; Sime and Fox 2014a, b). Two special issues in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (*Transnational Migration and Childhood*, 2011, issue 37, and *Transnational Migration and the Study of Children*, 2012, issue 38) have also showcased some of the recent developments in investigating children as active agents in the global political economy. Many of these recent studies look at children's own engagement in places and spaces they access, configuring thus new interests in theorizing migration in relation to locality, as well as focusing on children's own views. These current trends in research on childhood and migration clearly see children as active agents in the processes of global migration, with their own experiences and views which need to be explored further in order to enhance current understandings of children's role in contemporary societies.

3 Involving Eastern European Migrant Children in Research

Research on postwar migrants to Western Europe has mainly constructed the adult, male migrant as the prototype, with women and children rarely acknowledged or merely mentioned as dependants. Migrant children have traditionally been portrayed as "luggage" in migration research (Orellana 2009), as victimized by the significant structures of inequality which force them to follow their parents abroad, and as part of adult-dominated relations within their families and communities. As migration has become now a global phenomenon, issues of integration, social cohesion, and national identity have moved to the fore of current policy debates. The emphasis in current policies on integration is on communities, locality, and interactions between cultures, participation, and identity of migrants, although the responsibility for this agenda seems to be particularly on migrants to adapt, rather than receiving societies to facilitate their integration (Penn and Lambert 2009; Spencer 2011). These structural factors contribute to migrant children's particular positioning, within an adult-focused international climate of regulating migration, as often marginalized or ignored by policies and provision aimed at the successful incorporation of migrants into their new societies.

Migrant parents however often say that children are central to their decisions to migrate and many leave their countries with the aim of giving their children a "better future" (Orellana 2009). Children's diverse active roles in family migration are also well documented, from influencing the timing of family migration to the

choice of a destination country and decisions to stay or return (Orellana 2009; Ryan and Sales 2011; White 2011). Despite this, there has been little research on migrant children's own experiences of migration. Family migration is a particularly difficult matter for children. Existing research has acknowledged the significant challenges they have to cope with, including disrupted relationships with friends (Haikkola 2011; Reynolds 2007; Sime and Fox 2015a), changed family structures after migration (Salazar Parreñas 2005; White 2011), hostility and segregation at school (Devine 2009), as well as challenges to identity and sense of belonging (Ni Laoire et al. 2011). Migrant children's educational attainment is poorer than that of "indigenous" groups (OECD 2012a, b), and differences in academic performance, as well as access to good-quality services, are strongly associated with socioeconomic disadvantage and geographical segregation (Sime and Fox 2015b). Nevertheless, in the last decade, research on migrant children has concentrated on challenging assumptions of migrant children as problematic and permanently "trapped in a miserable structural conflict of living between two cultures" (Mannitz 2005, p. 23) and has started to focus on their resilience, agency, and voice.

While research on migrant children coming from other continents to Europe has been more developed, research which focuses on European children has been rather more limited, perhaps because European children migrate with their parents and are not subject to strict migration controls. After the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, citizens from the so-called accession countries were given unrestricted access to work in many member states, which has made migration a major cause of family separation in Central and Eastern Europe since. The disintegration of the Communist regimes and the ongoing political transformations since the late 1980s brought new challenges in relation to social, economic, and family policies. Despite the establishment of major democratic freedoms, many families were faced with anxieties about their future, fuelled by economic turmoil and high unemployment (Robila 2010). Aspirations toward Western values and living standards have thus driven many families in Eastern Europe to migrate to the alluring "West".

One important aspect of planning research with Eastern European families is the researcher's own familiarity with the social, political, and economic contexts that migrants leave behind. Certain social and cultural aspects characteristic of family life during the Communist regimes, when people often relied on informal networks of support to access resources and to compensate for inadequate state provision, can translate into patterns of interaction between Eastern European families and individuals and institutions they come in contact with post-migration. As a result of state violations and abuses of rights in the ex-Communist countries, family and friendship networks were highly trusted, while representatives of the state institutions and services were not (Bukowski 1996). In the post-Communist transition, lack of trust in state institutions, combined with high unemployment and perceived corruption and nepotism, has acted as a "push" factor, motivating many to leave in search of better opportunities. Studies have shown how years of reliance on informal networks have influenced people's strategies for migration, relying on friends who had already migrated to find jobs or accommodation (Ryan 2011) or on family networks,

to help with looking after children or older parents left behind. However, among those migrated, competition as well as collaboration was shown to affect diaspora relationships (Robila 2010), where conflicts between and among ethnic groups are not uncommon. There is little evidence on how Eastern Europeans' limited trust in state institutions affects their involvement with research. Although many migrant children were born in the post-Communist era, they are likely to have experienced poor access to resources available to their families' pre-migration and beliefs that the state and official institutions are not to be trusted. They may also be aware of cultural expectations of their parents to "keep the face" and present a favorable image of their family to "outsiders", such as researchers. Identity constructions of migrant children are likely thus to be mapped on to wider cultural and social conventions of talking to others about experience and collective identities.

This chapter aims to make a contribution to a shift in the methodological and theoretical underpinnings of research that values children's self-representations and views of their lives, by focusing on existing studies with Eastern European migrant children who have migrated within Europe, a group relatively under-researched. Involving ethnic minority children in research raises complex epistemological and ontological questions, about their position as individual subjects, members of their family and peer networks, and as collective subjects, members of particular ethnic, religious, and social class groups. Such attempts to give migrant children a voice in the current debates on migration and on children's rights are based on an epistemological shift that prioritizes children's knowledge, experiences, and understandings of their lives post-migration. Rather than privileging policy-driven, adult-centered approaches and deficit-based views of migrant children as unknowing and vulnerable, the chapter examines approaches to research which prioritize children's own perspectives. In this sense, the intersections between migrant children's aged, gendered, ethnicized, and classed positions are particularly significant when considering their involvement. When planning research, it is important to understand how migrant children's position is configured by aspects such as their influence within families, culture-specific understandings about the role of children in relationships with adults, and the constraints on the type of experiences they can share about their childhoods.

4 Issues of Access

One of the first challenges in doing research with migrant children is identifying them in the communities in which they live and securing access to involve them in research. Data on migrant groups is still scarce, and due to increasing mobility and repeat migration, families may be difficult to locate. Researchers often rely on national statistical data collected on adult migrants, such as data on registrations for work permits, National Insurance numbers, or migration statistics, which rarely include information on children. The national Census data or school-based statistics on children's home languages may give researchers a better source of information on local areas where migrants of various ethnicities settle. However, statistical

information on migrants is notoriously unreliable, due to limitations in data collection (surveys are often conducted in English and through written forms which may be inaccessible to some families) and delayed reporting of data by months or even years. At the same time, changes to local demographics are a constant feature of areas of high mobility, as new groups arrive or families move on to other areas in the same country or abroad.

A second issue of consideration in accessing migrant children is the issue of overpassing adult gatekeepers, such as teachers and parents. Masson (2004) points out that not all adult gatekeepers have a legal right to control children's decisions to participate, but they control the spaces that children access. This means that, initially, researchers interested need to negotiate access with adults at multiple levels (e.g., local authority, school management, teachers, parents) before they can discuss the research directly with children. This is clearly a reflection of the society's view of the "innocent child" (James et al. 1998) in need of protection and a denial of children's consent as valid in itself. Most researchers conducting work with European children have recruited participants through schools (e.g., Devine 2011; Sime and Fox 2015a,b), but also through more informal settings, like children's clubs or diaspora community organizations (Tereshchenko and Grau Cárdenas 2013). White and Tyrrell (► Chap. 9, "Research with Children Seeking Asylum in Ireland: Reflecting on Silences and Hushed Voices", this volume) report on research conducted with migrant children in an accommodation center for asylum-seeking families. Researchers can use existing geographical data as a general indicator of the areas in which migrant children are likely to reside in order to identify schools and services which may act as gatekeepers.

Negotiating access to migrant children is further complicated by discourses on migration, which are often negative and stigmatizing of migrants. A key aspect of the debate on migration is the added pressure migrants may put on local services, including schools (Spencer 2011). Service managers may feel uncomfortable in facilitating access to migrant children, either because of fear that their provision may come to scrutiny through the research or simply because migration is a controversial topic. Additionally, some may think that newly arrived children do not have the relevant language skills or understanding to take part (adopting the "incompetent child" view) or that participation in research may be too stressful or even damaging for the child (adopting the "innocent child, in need of protection" view). In planning to access migrants through schools, required permission from school managers thus results in an immediate selection of the children who can potentially take part. In the author's research (Sime and Fox 2015a,b), managers often decided that given the curriculum constraints and other activities, such as forthcoming inspections or school festivities, the research would add an extra strain on teachers and pupils, and they therefore refused access. Experience also shows that when schools give permission for research, often only a limited group of children are invited to participate, again based on decisions made by adults.

A second level of adult-controlled scrutiny takes place through children's parents, as schools and researchers often require parents' consent for children to

take part. Researchers need to consider the best ways of engaging parents, as well as children, and how to get them enthusiastic about the project. In our experience, materials presented in a simple, visual, and user-friendly leaflet, ideally translated into families' own home languages, are more successful in getting parents and children to talk about the research and consider their involvement. However, parents are not immune to negative discourses on migration, and given the historical aspects of Eastern Europeans' difficult relationships with statutory services and lack of trust, parents may resist requests to participate and actively forbid children to take part for fear of stigma or unpredictable consequences. Response rates among migrant parents can be as low as 10–20%, reflecting culturally different understandings of the value of research and what it entails or possible insecurities about engaging with research which might make their children “stand out”. Some Eastern European parents in the author's research (Sime and Fox 2015a,b), especially those of a Roma background (Sime et al. 2014), expressed fear of social workers and viewed requests for “interviewing” children as potentially threatening, due to families' precarious living conditions, low levels of literacy, and inherent cultural barriers, where interviewing is often associated with family assessment by social workers. Adopting a more direct, face-to-face or over-the-phone approach is often more successful when recruiting families, as parents have the chance to ask questions about required involvement and seek reassurances on aspects of concern. When phoning homes, mothers were most likely to make the decision about a child's participation, possibly reflecting the dominant involvement of mothers in children's education (Lopez-Rodriguez 2010). However, women often sought their husbands' permission to receive researchers at home, possibly reflecting more patriarchal Eastern European family structures when it comes to making domestic spaces accessible to others.

5 Issues of Consent

There has been extensive discussion in the research literature on children's consent and the best ways to elicit this (Alderson and Morrow 2011; Morrow 2008). Informed consent requires that children should decide on their participation in the full understanding of the nature of the study, expectations of their involvement, and any potential risks and do this voluntarily. Also, they should understand the purposes of the research, what will happen to the data, and how the results will be used. Hill (2005) observes that “having an opportunity to give consent is not only a right in relation to research which children share with adults, but also contributes to their well-being, through giving respect for their sense of control” (2005, p. 68). The fact that access to wider groups of children is considerably reduced by adult gatekeepers has direct implications for the ways in which researchers elicit consent from children. While introductions to families can be facilitated by trusted professionals, such as teachers or youth workers, if professionals decide against children's participation, researchers can do little to get in touch with the same children. Also, cultural and linguistic barriers may pose

additional challenges in interacting directly with parents and children when negotiating consent (Edwards 2013).

With migrant children, issues of consent might become problematic for several other reasons. Firstly, children and parents' unfamiliarity with the concept of "research" in a Western European context, especially if recently arrived, may require much more time in clarifying the issues for potential participants. Robila (2010) writes about Eastern European families' respect for the authority of teachers in schools and, equally, their lack of complete trust in services. While parents and children may feel an obligation to respond positively to requests coming from schools, they could be deeply suspicious of research which targets migrant children, especially in a social climate generally negative to migrants. In the author's research (Sime and Fox 2015a, b), parents often said they would not oppose children's participation, but they were concerned that participation might "single out" children or findings may be somehow detrimental to children, the school, or their ethnic group. In a study on Roma families (Sime et al. 2014), parents were concerned that any findings may be reported to social services, which would potentially put children at risk of being removed from their families. Giving parents time to voice these concerns and seek reassurance about the nature of the involvement expected, confidentiality, and anonymity plans and the expected use of data are steps that researchers can take to reassure parents. However, when parents do not respond or refuse consent, researchers can do very little to involve children, given parents' legal authority, even if children wish to participate.

Negotiating consent with Eastern European children has also its own challenges. Children will have various life experiences, depending on their age, education, and social and cultural background. It is likely though that Eastern European children's experiences of authority before migration will differ from Western European patterns, with many Eastern European cultures still perpetuating significant gender inequalities and patriarchal values (Shirayev and Gradskova 2005; Robila 2010; White 2011). As a result, children new to Western European cultures may feel an obligation to agree to take part, in order to please teachers, parents, or researchers, given an expectation in many Eastern European cultures that children will respond to adults' requests without asking questions or negotiating.

Equally, as research with children is not extensive in Eastern Europe and may not require informed consent, children may be unclear about the full meaning of concepts such as "consent", "confidentiality" and "right to withdraw". If the child and the researcher cannot converse in a shared mother tongue or second language, the researcher will also depend on the interpreter's skill to communicate effectively the meanings of these words and to reassure children that non-participation does not have repercussions. These complex issues require the researcher to plan additional time to clearly explain all relevant aspects to children and families and to ensure that children are not coerced or influenced by others in their decisions. While it is usually difficult to give children a sense of what participation will be like, especially if they have not been involved in research before, researchers can clearly outline expectations of participation, type of activities, plans for the use, and dissemination of data and give children

reassurances over anonymity and confidentiality. Although these processes may take significant time, they are a necessary step in ensuring children's and parents' meaningful informed consent.

6 The Importance of Social Contexts as Frames for Children's Participation

Research on childhood from various fields such as sociology, geography, anthropology, and education has offered valuable insights about the importance of space and place in children's everyday lives, with direct implications for using these spaces as locations for generating research data (Skelton and Valentine 1998). Schools, homes, and community spaces pose very different ethical and methodological challenges. Despite the fact that many spaces are populated by children and play a key role in children's development, generational issues and aspects of power underlie the complex dynamics that researchers need to be aware of when entering schools, homes, or communities with research in mind.

Schools have been traditionally used as research sites in work with children, including migrant groups, for ease of access and the relative flexibility they offer researchers to engage children of various ages, religions, ethnicities, and classes. However, in schools, children will react to the researcher's requests depending on issues such as where they meet in the school, their overall experiences of school, and other people present during the research interaction (Pyer and Campbell 2013). Researchers often have little choice in terms of spaces offered to them by the school staff, furniture arrangement, and time allocated for meeting with children, and these aspects add an additional layer of constraints. For migrant children, there might be cultural differences in terms of previous experiences of interacting with adults as authority figures in a school, where more restrictive rules of interaction would previously apply. As a result, migrant children may often appear inhibited or less willing to share their views in schools, especially when engaged individually. Nevertheless, schools are convenient settings for involving migrant children (Devine 2009; Ní Laoire et al. 2011; Nestor and Regan 2011), although researchers need to consider the significant power issues mentioned.

By contrast, research taking place in public places where young people spend time, such as youth clubs, streets, parks, or playgrounds, may make the adult researcher feel "out of place" and give children more control over the research exchange. Researching children's lives in communities has been a feature of many recent studies, encouraged also by policies aimed at making neighborhoods better places for children and families. Morrow (2008), among others, has emphasized the importance of taking a holistic approach to children's social relationships within different contexts. In research with migrant children, studies have shown the key role of social relationships in constructing a sense of community and belonging for children (Sime and Fox 2015a). Others have also shown how migrant children "infuse a place with identity" through their experienced social relationships, mainly through the presence of kin (Bak and Brömssen 2010). Research with migrant

children conducted in more public places has ranged from observing and interviewing children through diaspora organizations (Tereshchenko and Grau Cárdenas 2013), engaging them in community-based media-making projects (De Block and Buckingham 2010) or organizing neighborhood-based activities guided by children, such as walking tours or photographic activities (Christensen and O'Brien 2003).

Homes are complex spaces to study children, and they often offer a richness of information that participants might not express in words because of the normalized nature of their everyday lives. Very little has been written about the construction of home as a research site and the ethical and methodological implications that arise from this (see however Mayall 1994; Bushin 2007; Nilsen and Rogers 2005; Sime 2008). Carrying out research in children's homes has increased advantages in terms of empowering children, as the home may be perceived as a personal and familiar space where the researcher is a guest. However, although homes may offer a less formal setting, they are not free from ethical dilemmas. Children share their homes with siblings, parents, or carers and other adult relatives. Homes are thus shared spaces, where children often do not control access and have little power over others' roles during the research (Pyer and Campbell 2013). While some children have their own bedrooms as more separate and private spaces, other children share these with siblings and parents. Equally, entering children's bedrooms may be seen by parents as inappropriate for researchers and is often discouraged by ethical guidelines as a "risk" to researchers, who may find themselves accused of misconduct. Mitchell and Reid-Wash (2002) argue that children's bedrooms are more conducive sites, as these are spaces children have more control over and are often repositories of objects which reflect individual tastes, hobbies, and interests. In the author's research (Sime and Fox 2015a, b), families often invited the researcher to a more public space first, like the living room or the kitchen, and wanted to be present during the first visit. As trust developed over subsequent visits, researchers gained more access to children's spaces and were often allowed to engage with them without supervision. Home-based research also means that, by being regular visitors, researchers develop a close relationship not only with the child but also with the family. In the author's work, withdrawing from research relations became subsequently more difficult, as newly arrived migrant families, who often had limited ties with other people locally, relied on the researchers' visits for socializing and emotional support.

7 Choosing Between Methods in Research with Migrant Children

Given the increased interest in engaging children and young people in research, there is now a plethora of methods and techniques available to researchers doing work with migrant children. Punch (2002) suggests a combination of traditional "adult" methods, such as participant observation and interviews, with techniques that are more suitable for children, in order not to patronize children with special

“child-friendly” techniques. The advantages and disadvantages of a range of methods and techniques suitable for research with children and young people have been examined in detail by several authors (Lewis and Lindsay 2000; Greene and Hogan 2005; Christensen and James 2008; Tisdall et al. 2008; Thomson 2008; O’Reilly et al. 2013). Researchers have become interested in the potential that various methods offer to allow children, and in particular those from marginalized groups (Truman et al. 2000), to speak for themselves. Some have argued for involving children as coresearchers (Kellet 2005), in order to promote more balanced power relationships between researcher and researched. Although debates on whether there is scope for children and young people to become co-researchers are ongoing, Lather (2007) warns against the risks of romanticizing what research informants say and how they may realistically contribute to the research process and advocates for “complexity, partial truths, and multiple subjectivities”, in which children’s and adults’ voices combine to reflect on experiences. Given the specific characteristics of newly migrated children, mainly in terms of likely language and cultural barriers, this section aims to examine the advantages and disadvantages of various methods available and their relevance to research with this particular group.

- *Observational approaches*

Observational approaches involve the researcher spending considerable time with children in the “field”, in order to build rapport and establish trust first, before being accepted by them and becoming sensitive to the complexities of children’s everyday experiences (O’Reilly et al. 2013; White and Tyrrell. ► Chap. 9, “Research with Children Seeking Asylum in Ireland: Reflecting on Silences and Hushed Voices”, this volume). The data collected may include children’s behaviors, reactions to certain events, or interactions with others, as well as verbalizations. In research with newly arrived migrant children, researchers could observe children’s use of school/home spaces (Devine 2009, 2011), their interactions with other children in school or clubs, or multi-sited interactions with adults (Punch 2012). While providing the researcher with naturalistic evidence, the analysis of observational records requires a certain level of inference, which is minimized if children are asked to report directly on their experiences. Also, depending on cultural expectations, parents may not be comfortable with children being observed in schools or visited at home and consent needs to be an ongoing matter (Alderson and Morrow 2011). Observational approaches can also make use of modern technologies, for example, by videotaping interactions in homes between family members or when observing children’s interactions. This form of observation will require consent from all those involved and careful consideration on how data will be stored and used, as anonymity of participants cannot be assured if video material is showed in dissemination.

- *Group and individual interviews*

Group and individual interviews have been used extensively in research with migrant children. These involve the interviewer asking children questions

(standardized or for prompting) to gain children's views on the migration experience, from their involvement in family decisions to migrate (Bushin 2009) to their journey and experiences post-migration (Knörr 2005; Sime and Fox 2015a,b; White and Tyrrell, ► Chap. 9, "Research with Children Seeking Asylum in Ireland: Reflecting on Silences and Hushed Voices", this volume), in relation to schools (Devine 2009, 2011; Nestor and Regan 2011), services (Sime and Fox 2015b), involvement in friendships and other networks (Haikkola 2011; Sime and Fox 2015a), and sense of belonging (Bak and Brömssen 2010). Researchers have also combined interviewing with other methods, such as task-based activities for children. While interviews are considered useful in generating rich data, researchers need to be mindful of the significant power imbalance in adults interviewing children, increased when using an interpreter, and the impact of the research space and cultural rules of engagement with adults (as discussed above). Also, the analysis may require the researcher's extensive interpretation of children's input and a culturally competent researcher (see below).

- *Self-reports (diaries, vignettes, questionnaires, children's commentaries, etc.)*
Self-reporting methods, such as those involving children in writing or recording themselves in audio/video format to express views or feelings without the direct involvement of the researcher, have the advantage of offering children some control over the production of the data, in terms of where, when, and how much they say. Nevertheless, if these are materials produced for the purposes of the research, children will be aware that the researchers are the main "audience" and may aim for socially desirable responses (Greene and Hogan 2005). Written tasks such as asking children to comment on certain vignettes, complete sentences, or fill in short questionnaires (alone or helped by a researcher) may also elicit interesting data (Due et al. 2014), but their effectiveness will depend on children's writing skills in the language in which materials are presented to them, their age, and their interests.
- *Use of visual prompts (mapping, graphical methods, life story charts, dolls, toys, Lego, pictures, or videos as prompts)*
Given that many migrant children may have limited language skills in the official language of their destination country, using non-language-based methods can be a useful approach to engage them in research. Visual research methods (Pink 2007), such as asking children to draw images of their experiences or feelings, map an area, act out experiences through the use of dolls or toys, use toys such as Lego characters to illustrate a situation, etc., are not only suitable for a more child-centered research process, but they are a key route to overcoming literacy and language barriers. In the author's research, photographs and prompts were used to gain children's views on services (Sime and Fox 2015b). Visuals used in this way helped make abstract concepts more accessible. However, in White and Tyrrell's study (► Chap. 9, "Research with Children Seeking Asylum in Ireland: Reflecting on Silences and Hushed Voices", this

volume), children were not always willing to share the visuals they produced with the researchers, as the materials became precious personal possessions they wanted to protect.

- *Creative methods (drawing, painting, photographs, videos, films, drama, role-play)*

Methods which rely on children's imagination, to develop creative stories (told or written), as opposed to talking about real events or factual accounts of past experiences, have often been used with children who may have complex experiences of trauma, such as asylum-seeking children or children who have suffered abuse. Depending on the purpose of the research, engaging children in these can produce very revealing data (Veale 2005), although the researcher will be faced with the challenge of separating facts from fiction. Other visuals, such as photographs and videos taken by children (de Block and Buckingham 2010), children's drawings about their families or life story books (Evans 2011), or drama activities produced by children on a given theme, can be useful tools in giving children more agency and independence in the research process. Children can also be given cameras to take photographs or videos of the area in which they live (Orellana 2009), which can be then used as prompts for further conversations with the researcher or for dissemination, for example, through art exhibitions. Due et al. (2014) stress the need to ensure that aspects of the research design, such as the use of creative methods, are not minimized by children's desire to give socially acceptable responses, given that the researchers (and potentially other adults) see their final products. White and Tyrrell (► Chap. 9, "Research with Children Seeking Asylum in Ireland: Reflecting on Silences and Hushed Voices", this volume) have also emphasized the important role of children's silences when talking about visuals they produced, often reflecting children's position as marginalized.

Given the plethora of methods and techniques available, the researcher interested in migrant children's experiences is often faced with the dilemma of choosing between these. Hill (2005) summarizes the evidence on children's views about the main research methods. He concludes that children show a diversity of preferences, although they seem to choose methods that are fun and take up less of their time. However, children's decisions in taking part in research depended not only on their preference for methods, but also on the importance they gave to their collective input and impact, showing their social and moral commitment when taking part. In choosing between methods, researchers need therefore to prioritize aspects such as appropriateness to the nature and purpose of the research (i.e., "Will the methods produce the right data for the questions asked?") and the appropriateness of the methods or techniques chosen for those taking part (i.e., "Will the method/technique be suitable for the child's gender, age, language skills, interests, etc.?"). Some authors (Punch 2002; Due et al. 2014) have also suggested using a "toolkit" of approaches, which allows the researchers to give children options in terms of research activities, suit their preferred communication channels, engage them in diverse

ways and allow some comparisons between different sets of data. Evans (2011) warns researchers that not all children will show an interest in participatory methods and might prefer to take part in more conventional ways, such as talking about their experiences. Greene and Hogan (2005) emphasize that choice of methods is one of the many methodological considerations a researcher needs to make, such as sampling, replicability and reliability, and applicability of findings. Ultimately, rigor and credibility of the research should remain paramount, as in the case of research with adults.

8 Ethnic and Language Matching and Issues in Working with Interpreters

Assumptions are often made that a shared language and ethnic identity are desirable in research with ethnic minority groups, to allow the participants to share their experiences, feelings, and views with someone who understands their cultural background and stance. Ethnic matching (Grewal and Ritchie 2006), where the researcher and researched share factors such as homeland, cultural values, common language, and religion, may present advantages in terms of accessing participants and establishing rapport and providing cultural expertise for fieldwork and data analysis. A shared ethnicity may also make the researcher more sensitive to the best ways of engaging a community in research, with an assumed awareness of cultural aspects, customs, taboos, and subtleties in behavior and language during fieldwork, which can also make them more sensitive to details in the analysis (Edwards 2013). Equally, a shared language can be central to capturing complex issues and building rapport.

Ethnic and language matching should not be assumed however simply because the researcher and researched come from the same homeland. For example, Roma migrants may come from Slovakia, although their first language will likely be Romani, and they will often perceive non-Roma researchers speaking Slovak as “outsiders” and identify them with the oppressive majority in the societies they emigrated from. In such situations, aspects such as gender, class, and race are critical dimensions at play, with significant impact on rapport and trust. Papadopolous (2006) argues that ethnic and linguistic matching is rarely possible, due to practical issues, and a “culturally competent” researcher, who is culturally knowledgeable, sensitive, and reflexive of their own position, is a more realistic approach.

The author has highlighted elsewhere the useful perspective of the perceived “outsider” in research with children (Sime 2008). Adults do not have to share children’s experiences in order to be able to reflect them accurately, provided they show empathy and sensitivity to children’s views, and ensure accuracy in reporting. In the case of migrant children, children’s sense that a researcher might see them as representatives of a particular culture, somehow lacking originality or agency, may

put pressure on their self-representation. They may feel they represent their ethnic group first and foremost, before their own individuality and experiences. The researcher's emphasis on the non-judgmental nature of the research, as well as clarity over plans for data collection, dissemination, and issues of anonymity, is key to making children relaxed and willing to share their views, without any pressure of having to "do well" in terms of representing their family or community.

As ethnic and language matching is rarely possible, researchers working with migrant families should consider the use of interpreters, especially if participants have not reached advanced levels of competence in the majority language. Edwards (2013) discusses at length the complex power relationships involved between researcher-interpreter and interpreter-participants, where interpreters can be used as gatekeepers to identify participants as they are likely to be more trusted. This however means that researchers depend on the interpreter's own position within the community (in terms of their gender, social class, and ethnic and language matching) and the interpreter's skill in establishing rapport. Interpreters should be asked to interpret both ways in first-person direct speech, giving the full meaning of what was said and actively providing the researcher with guidance on culturally appropriate ways of interacting or asking questions. Researchers need to maintain control over the interaction, by keeping eye contact with the participant (not the interpreter) and addressing them directly, to ensure that the participant is fully engaged. In research with migrant children, interpreters must understand the central role of children as participants and asked to adapt their words and behavior to be supportive of children taking a lead in the interaction. Equally, the researcher needs to debrief interpreters on the purpose of the research, the ways in which they plan to conduct the interview/interaction with the children, and particular aspects of interest to explore. Researchers may notice incompatibilities between interpreters-interviewee by paying close attention to body language and children's enthusiasm in taking part. Issues of class clashes are common with marginalized groups, such as Roma, for example, where interpreters may be non-Roma, of a different social class, and have their own negative views about the communities researched.

The existing literature emphasizes the importance of the constructed nature of children's knowledge and voice, often coupled with an emphasis on the central importance of the researcher's reflexivity in the process. A reflexive approach in conducting research with migrant children recognizes the researcher's own subjectivity in the production and representation of the data elicited from children and young people. This includes an awareness of how elements such as researcher's gender, age, ethnicity, class, and race intersect to affect not only the research relationship, but also how the researcher empathizes with children's views and interprets their data. Pink (2007) writes that a researcher's own subjectivity could not and should not be avoided or eradicated, especially when conducting ethnographic work. Instead, this needs to be seen as a central aspect of the process of knowledge interpretation and representation.

9 Ethics of Data Analysis and Dissemination and Children's Involvement in These

So far, this chapter has discussed a range of ways that children and young people can become involved in and subsequently impact on the research findings through the experiences and views they share with the researchers. However, while techniques for involving children in research at the design and data collection stages have progressed, there is still considerable scope for further advances in the involvement of children in the processes of data analysis and dissemination. Interpreting data in ways that might not be in line with children's views or experiences is a significant risk in working with children, given adults' and children's different perspectives on the same experiences (Hill 2005). This section focuses on some of the options available to researchers who plan to involve children in research after the data collection has taken place.

When considering children's involvement in data analysis, challenges facing researchers relate to three issues: time, training, and resources. Coad and Evans (2008) suggest a pragmatic framework to facilitate the involvement of children in the data analysis process. They identify a scale from adult-only involvement in design, data collection, and analysis to partial involvement of children through advisory groups and helping to interpret the findings, and more child-centered approaches, such as involvement of children as peer or co-researchers and child- and young person-led research teams. These latter approaches involve children actively in data coding, verification, and interpretation, while adults provide training and guidance on an ongoing basis. Such approaches can go some way in reducing the power imbalance between adult researchers and children, but the time and resources to plan them effectively and allow children meaningful engagement are crucial. In research with migrant children, these may require, for example, additional funds to cover the costs of interpreters being present at training or when conducting the analysis.

A key part of the "politics" of researching with migrant children is the extent to which findings can be used to enable children's voices to be heard and to make their experiences valuable for other children's benefit and society overall. In research with migrant children, the issue of dissemination is given further weight by the controversial nature of the migration debate and migrants' position in society in an increasingly mobile world. Alderson and Morrow (2011) highlight the researcher's ethical responsibility when it comes to dissemination, by ensuring that children are not misrepresented or disadvantaged by the research findings. This includes protecting children from any negative impact that may result from dissemination. In the case of migrant children, a crucial aspect in dissemination is protection of children's anonymity, given the fact that many migrant communities can have relatively small numbers of families who know each other well. Equally, children's views may attract the interest of anti-immigrant groups or media outlets, which may misuse or misrepresent children. If these situations are anticipated, researchers may need to place a moratorium on the research for an agreed period of time or present findings with less detail than usual, to protect participants.

A key aspect of the dissemination process is ensuring that participating children and their families are kept informed of the project findings. Traditionally, this is done through research reports, often written a while after the data collection has taken place, to the point that children and their families lose interest in the project or almost forget they have taken part. A more practical and user-friendly approach involves an informal sharing of findings as they develop, through newsletters or through modern media, via blogs or websites, to give families a sense of ongoing achievement and valuable participation. In the case of migrant children, the considerations around data collection (in terms of linguistic and cultural barriers) need to be revisited in dissemination, for example, by ensuring that the materials are translated in participants' home language. Projects have also used arts and exhibitions to make research findings more accessible to wider groups. While co-presenting and co-authoring research reports with children are clearly effective approaches of involving children throughout the project, in practice, researchers need to balance aspects such as children's willingness to devote extensive time to the project and the need to protect their anonymity (and by extension, the anonymity of their communities) with the desire to involve children directly in dissemination.

10 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of some of the key ethical and methodological issues researchers are likely to encounter when doing research with migrant children and young people, with a focus on Eastern European migrants in Western Europe. By reviewing the existing methodological literature on research with children, including migrants, the chapter provides further evidence that child-centered, qualitative research has clear advantages in giving migrant children a voice and in informing current policy, practice, and debates on global migration and social justice. However, it is crucial that ethical and methodological issues are considered carefully throughout the research process and researchers consider the specific challenges that newly arrived migrant children and their families may need to overcome in order to take part.

Researchers need to be mindful of aspects such as cultural and linguistic barriers and how these might be overcome, but also of migrant children's position within their families and communities overall. Children's participation is often limited by constraints and controls imposed by adult gatekeepers, who may restrict children's participation out of their own sense of duty. The chapter has discussed the range of challenges that researchers may face in recruiting participants and deciding on research sites, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of various methods and techniques available. Researchers who have a "toolkit" of techniques at their disposal are more likely to ensure the meaningful participation of children and young people at the data collection stage. There are also practical ways in which researchers can ensure that young people are involved in analysis and dissemination, although issues around the protection of the participants need

to be carefully considered. Finally, we would like to suggest that it is crucial for researchers to consider critically their own position and power in research and how children and young people's past and current experiences of interacting with adults may impact on the process. By taking into account and reviewing regularly these methodological considerations, researchers should be better placed to include children and young people of migrant background in research in an ethical and meaningful way.

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Street Children as Researchers: Critical Reflections on a Participatory Methodological Process in the “Growing Up on the Streets” Research Project in Africa

8

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Abstract

This chapter explores the development of participatory research with street children and considers how to ensure that their voices are properly represented in research. Through an initial discussion of the emergence of children as active agents, the chapter explores the impact of including children more readily in research for street children. Their particular position offers a unique insight into children's lives, simply because of their more independent status, yet their position has also made it harder for researchers to access their lives. The importance of participation as a central methodological process is discussed before focusing on a new research initiative that seeks to challenge research

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boundaries by engaging street children as researchers and experts on their own lives. The remainder of the chapter introduces the “Growing Up on the Streets” research project and critically explores some of the practical and ethical challenges this process has presented. The chapter concludes by urging others to work more in partnership with young people, who may be excluded from traditional forms of research, adapting techniques to facilitate the greater involvement of street children and other marginalized young people, in expressing their views and representing themselves through their own stories in research arenas.

Keywords

Street children • Young researchers • Participation • Ethics • Agency • Africa

1 Introduction

Children's Geographies has very much been at the forefront of critically analyzing the way in which academics, and particularly social scientists, undertake research. The debate about children's agency and childhood as a social construction in the 1980s and 1990s (and beyond) holds significance for the ways in which we not only conceptualize childhood but how children are treated in the research process. The difficulties of reconciling notions of competency, agency, and the expert status of children as active agents shaping their own lives, with structural process of parenting, education, and general adult-child power relations, have opened up significant debate.

The explosion of research undertaken with children since the 1990s and the emergence of the New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC) at that time (James et al. 1998) resulted in discussion regarding how such research should be undertaken. The inclusion of children as active agents in their own lives, as a key principle of the NSSC, meant that it was no longer considered appropriate to only interview adults on children's behalf, as this was effectively excluding children from telling their own stories. The principle of “agency” outlined in the NSSC translated into the inclusion of children as active agents in the research process. This process of now including children in research about their lives opened up significant debate about the type of methods that should be used and the process by which they should be implemented. Notwithstanding the constraints placed on children by adult structures defined by society and their relative subordinate position to adults (Mayall 2012), researchers were now thinking critically about how to include children's voices in the research process. Interesting innovative approaches to “doing research differently” with children emerged that involved greater creativity, less technical writing and reading skills, and opportunities for more interaction between participants and researchers. The positioning of such methods was that they should be fun, take any pressure away from children regarding getting the “answers” right, and facilitate their open engagement. Sam Punch (2002), among others, moved the discussion on in the 2000s by critiquing the use of methods that are specifically designed for children suggesting that it is not

the method per se that needs adapting but rather the process of engagement. There has been a consistent move toward participatory research that gives “voice” to young people (e.g., Blazek and Hanrova 2012; Holt 2004), considering their emotions (Horton and Kraftl 2009; Hadfield-Hill and Horton 2014) and offering opportunities for empowerment and activism (Cahill 2004; Haynes and Tanner 2013). This participatory approach has roots within development studies through participatory rural appraisal (PAR) (Chambers 1994) and education with Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which states that the oppressed (marginalized) must take responsibility for themselves as active participants (Freire 1972). Yet, the power of participation has gained significant momentum within *Children’s Geographies*, and as such, these approaches are becoming more widespread and no longer simply seen as innovative but rather an important element in research with children.

This chapter explores these debates with respect to researching street children. The particular nature of street life, the complexities it pervades, and difficulties it presents for research not only highlight the importance of getting the research process right when working with children but demonstrate that researchers have more to learn. The following section outlines the emergence of methodologies for research with street children, which has followed similar lines as that of *Children’s Geographies* but highlights the special circumstances and difficulties that arise and how they have been reconciled, and highlights what changes to methodological process are still needed. The chapter then moves on to introduce the “Growing Up on the Streets” research project which attempts to overcome some of the remaining difficulties and challenges of developing an evidence base that speaks of the street from children’s perspectives and using their voices.

2 Researching with Street Children as Researchers

Street children, as perhaps one of the most visible signs of poverty and marginalization, are a key group to consider in thinking through researching with children because their more (often) independent status forces researchers to think critically about the process of involving them in research. Further, the complexity of their lives often highlights significant issues that make research difficult. In the 1980s Judith Ennew was at the forefront of campaigning for better research to understand the lived realities of (street) children’s lives and insisted that research be *with* not *on* children (Beazley et al. 2014). In particular Ennew advocated for children’s rights to be properly considered in research that brings together discussion of ethics and methods and methodology in a reflective process (Abebe and Bessell 2014; Beazley et al. 2009). This is particularly important for research with street children, because despite significant interventions and policy changes around children’s rights at both national and international levels, across the world, street children are consistently failed in terms of being able to access their rights (Poretti et al. 2014). For example, the United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 16/12 was the first on street children for over 20 years and was important because

despite the emergence of children's rights policies across many African countries in the 1990s, fuelled by the momentum behind the popularity of international standards and policies such as the CRC, street children seemed to have fallen through the net. Much of the international legislation was derived from western conceptualizations of childhood which prioritized protection of childhood innocence and placed children firmly within a family context. Street children, who often fell outside this understanding of the ideal childhood, were considered out of place on the streets and unable to access their rights. Therefore, there is a need to confront the labels given to street children.

2.1 The Problematic Nature of Research with Street Children

An inability to adequately define, and therefore understand, who street children are has placed them outside the arena of policy development for two reasons. Their lack of formal representation as a group makes them difficult to fit into targets and measures of success, while their independent status places them outside recognized channels of protection – by adults (Poretti et al. 2014; van Blerk 2014). This presents a significant difficulty in developing research with street children, particularly in relation to gaining consent and accessing guardianship permission for their voices to be heard. The idea of children in the street as being “out of place” (Connolly and Ennew 1996) and lacking agency because of their age (Bordonaro 2012) is far from new and has been widely critiqued, yet it still severely constrains the range of potential responses to the needs of street children to actions that are consistent with a child protection agenda.

While young people's safety should of course be a primary consideration, service provision tends to be geared toward countable outputs, and in our experience, funding is often based on particular global models of ideal childhood that position street children as “other” (Ennew and Swart-Kruger 2003). Further, there is a lack of clear evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of the current provision of such services and more needs to be done in this regard (Thomas de Benitez 2011), while the tailoring of provision directly to the needs of young people requires their involvement in the design process. The ideal of a nuclear family unit overwhelms service design driving delivery toward those young people that offer the possibility of being returned to family environments. While this can be a very positive step where fractured family relationships can be repaired, it can only ever benefit some children on the street (van Blerk 2012). Research to date highlights that street children have often run away from abuse, been orphaned, or been sent to the city due to poverty in the family household. However, poverty might be a necessary condition for children being on the streets, but it is not the only condition (Aptekar and Stoeklin 2014). Further, many children are connected to their families while on the streets; some live part-time on the street working or begging to supplement family income; others move between the street and their home communities to avoid becoming drawn into criminal or drug-related gangs, and others still are part of extended families that live permanently on streets or in informal settlements and

are therefore in that sense already at “home” (Beazley 2002; Young 2003; van Blerk 2012).

The impact of the complexity of family and social relationships on policy and practice is further increased by the discursive applications of “street” which is used both to describe the physical thoroughfare and also symbolically to denote an arena, and by extension a person, that is outside of society and without formal connection. Therefore, the problematic nature of the term “street children” is acknowledged: it locates children in the street (Hecht 1998), which is static, excluding the capacity of children to move between different social and spatial environments (Lucchini 1996), and it associates the negative characteristics of street environments to childhood (Conticini 2004). This has particular importance for research into the lives of street children as it underpins a simplistic binary where “on” the street represents danger and a departure from normative social behaviors and “off” the street is indicative of problems resolved and *counted* as a legitimate output from a service intervention. This approach emphasizes the “street” over “children.” Therefore, the labels of childhood and street contribute to how street children are conceptualized and frame the design of “legitimate” actions eligible for public and donor funding. For research, it is important to confront how life on the street is conceived and to create an evidence base to inform debate and overcome the hardened boundaries of what is an appropriate service intervention with children and youth living or working on the streets.

These labels have impacted research with street children also. Too much attention has, and to some extent still is, focused on the need to count street children, identifying their numbers and characteristics (Thomas de Benitez 2011). Although this may be an essential part of understanding who is on the streets, it has, rather unhelpfully, diverted attention away from the realities of street children’s lives: objectifying them rather than respecting them on the streets. Further, figures can be dubious because of this lack of clear definition of the “street children” label, and who is included in the figures varies extensively. For instance, as the definition shifts slightly and moves between street children, working children, and homeless children and/or abandoned children, this may result in some estimates focusing only on homeless children and others including those at risk of being on the streets. In addition, depending on who is doing the counting, the numbers can be exaggerated to increase feelings of insecurity and justify cleaning up the streets or underestimated to preserve the image of a humane (and prosperous) country (Aptekar and Stocklin 2014). Yet to research with street children effectively, it is also essential to collect data regarding their diverse experiences on their streets and to understand these experiences in relation to age, gender, and other defining characteristics. Collecting quantitative data must always be supplemented and, indeed as some would argue, preceded by in-depth qualitative research (Boyden and Ennew 1997). Understanding children’s experiences of the streets can have critical implications for policy regarding current and future well-being, and how best to protect their rights, particularly where they have been violated through the negative outcomes of street life.

In order to ensure we protect the rights of children living and/or working on the streets through the means by which data collection is undertaken with them, it is necessary to consider the special circumstances that many such young people are faced with. Sibley's (1991) statement that "appropriate research strategies, in both methodological and ethical senses need to be through very carefully" (p. 270) is especially pertinent for street children. This means that because children are active participants throughout the research process and their agency recognized, we should not overlook the complex ways in which their lives are shaped by events and situations beyond their control (Holloway and Valentine 2000). The numerous ways in which street life affects children's abilities to engage in particular types of data collection should be carefully considered. Rather than suggesting that we select methods for data collection that are "special methods for children," the aim here is to tailor methods that could be used for anyone (Punch 2002), but that are adapted to the particular needs and abilities of street children.

As already noted, street children's lives are complex and varied, and it is essential to note that children's right to have their voice heard provides us with an obligation to ensure that the data collection process enables them to express their views and experiences. For instance, factors such as drug use, which can reduce attention span and focus, may exclude certain methods that require long periods of concentration, while illiteracy or poor literacy and numeracy levels may make other forms of written data collection more difficult. In addition, negative relationships with authority figures and lack of trust of unfamiliar adults may make some methods such as one-to-one interviews intimidating. Hunger, lack of sleep, lack of available time, loss of earnings, and mobility are also issues, which require careful integration into the ways in which street-connected children engage in data collection. The timing and placing of data collection must therefore be on their terms. This may involve working at a variety of times and places in order to suit the needs of children, their daily work patterns, and their levels of mobility. For instance, some children may spend time in different towns or parts of the city on different days, and this should be accounted for, so as not to exclude them. Further, gender is an important consideration particularly where girls may find that they are severely restricted in their freedom to spend time engaged in research. However, remembering the context of street children's situation and the relationships they are part of can be helpful in negotiating time to participate in data collection when it is convenient for all parties.

A recent research mapping exercise undertaken by the Consortium for Street Children identifies that there are still significant gaps in knowledge around street children's lives and more in-depth qualitative research is required (Thomas de Benitez 2011). Employing a participatory approach to research with street children becomes crucial in order to ensure that children's rights are respected in the process. More often "experts" have carried out research from a programmatic, policy, or academic perspective: yet this cannot replace the voices of street young people themselves. Mark Connolly's (1990) sentiment is worth reinforcing here in relation to children living and/or working on the streets where he positions them as experts on their own lives highlighting that they alone know their concerns and imagined future life paths.

In general, participatory research entails researching *with* people, rather than extracting data *from* them, and treating them not as objects but active agents in their own lives (Beazley and Ennew 2006; Cahill 2004). This includes using a critical qualitative approach, which at best aims to increase participant awareness of their circumstances to effect change in their lives and transform the world through action and reflection (Pain and Francis 2003; Freire 1970). Participatory research is therefore a process involving commitment to ongoing information sharing, dialogue, trust, reflection, and action whereby participants lead and control the process from initiating research questions and aims through to analysis and presentation (O’Kane 2004). In practice, levels of participation vary greatly and the deepest levels of participation are rarely actualized. Hart’s (1997) “ladder of participation” describes a spectrum of ways of involving young people, and although the most basic may be tokenistic and even exploitative, participation at the highest level is not always considered universally desirable. Indeed, participants might not desire full participation; hence, it is most appropriate to work with children on their own terms (Kindon et al. 2007). However, engaging in data collection without significant discussion with street children of all aspects of the research process (aims, methods, level of involvement, dissemination, etc.) has been widely criticized and must be avoided (Boyden and Ennew 1997). Therefore, data collection needs to be considered holistically, both over the entire process of research and also over street children’s whole lives. In offering suggestions for improving the ways data is collected, this chapter contends that the unique and special circumstances of street children need to be considered and built into the data collection process. However, this should not be the end of involvement, and it is important to consider how children living and/or working on the streets can and should participate in the dissemination of research regarding their lives and how researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners have an ethical responsibility to ensure that no harm, and indeed, some potential for empowerment, is achieved through the voicing of their experiences.

The street researcher approach (see van Blerk 2013 and following Bemak 1996; Freire 1970) has been heavily drawn upon to ensure participation (see, e.g., van Blerk 2012; Blazek 2011) facilitating street children to be engaged throughout the research process, one which is reflexive, enabling a dynamic approach to research, and is sensitive to changing conditions (Barker and Smith 2001). The unique situation of the streets demands such adaptability when researching with street children (Ennew 2001; Young and Barrett 2001a). The “street researcher” concept redefines the role of researchers reconceptualizing them as “street researchers” in order that they may equip themselves with the required skills and abilities for engaging with street children. This involves intense ethnography where the street researcher, realizing that she/he is a novice in street life, learns the rules and norms of street life by relying on street children for cultural interpretation while developing trust, rapport, and new ways of communicating through active engagement with street children on their terms and in their territory. Ennew (2001), Hecht (1998), and Swart (1990) also used aspects of this street researcher approach successfully, finding that it increased children’s involvement and interest in their

research. Further, street researchers need to be sensitive to the temporal and spatial aspects of the street where research activities must be fluid taking place during the day or at night and in marginal locations where street children are comfortable such as parks or vacant land (Young and Barrett 2001b; Young 2003). Within this street researcher participatory approach, research with street children has more recently been associated with particular methods such as visual methods where produced images become the focus for discussion and collective analysis. However, it is not the methods themselves that make the research participatory but rather the way data is produced through the social relations that take place between participants and researchers both in the data production and analysis. Those researching with street children advocate participatory approaches, for both ethical and practical reasons. Participatory techniques are understood to shift power relations, giving children greater control over their involvement in the research. Moreover, children's insights into their own lives are said to be most readily expressed when they are facilitated through self-directed methods (Young and Barrett 2001a). Different children prefer or require different methods (Punch 2002), and so a multi-method approach enables most to contribute (Morrow 2008) and seeks to include the experiences of the hardest to reach groups, usually those whose rights have been violated the most. Participatory research is also likely to retain children's interests, enhancing the richness of the information they provide.

Although widely used and a highly effective means for engaging street children in research enabling their voices to come to the fore, this perspective still relies on researcher engagement in the field, which can only ever be temporary, gathering evidence as a snapshot in time or from defined periods in a sequence. Therefore, there remain unanswered questions regarding what it means to grow up on the streets and how to explore this longitudinally for impacting adult futures. The model of participation put forward by Hart (1997) highlights a series of stages on a ladder but rarely do young people participate as researchers doing the research themselves. Participation has mainly been in a collaborative form although some new examples of children as researchers are emerging in major studies (Porter et al. 2010) and research centers such as the Children's Research Centre at the Open University (Kellett 2011). Further, if young people on the streets are considered to be the experts on their own lives, then the most effective research has to be undertaken by street children themselves. The "Growing Up on the Streets" research project therefore challenges boundaries in research with street children by taking a longitudinal perspective to street life and by engaging street children as researchers, doing their own research.

2.2 Growing Up on the Streets: The Research Project

There is little data regarding street children's experiences over the life course, and if data is to be used to effectively support children living and/or working on the

streets, the data collection process cannot be confined to fleeting moments. Much can be gained from understanding what happens to street children as they grow up, and how their needs change, as well as understanding how early childhood experiences impact on street connectedness and the ways in which prevention strategies can be better implemented. Exploring street life in its entirety and examining the ages and stages of children could enrich the understanding of the process of street life and its impact on adulthood.

The “Growing Up on the Streets” research project explores the lives of young people living on the streets in three diverse African cities: Accra, Ghana; Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Harare, Zimbabwe. This collaborative longitudinal research project emerged as a response to unanswered questions regarding what happens to children who never leave the street. The aim of the research is to understand street children and youth’s capabilities on the street and to seek better ways of supporting them to have adult lives of value. To make the lives of street children knowable, the research draws on the work of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum on the “capability approach” enabling the research to see beyond the manifestations of poverty and life on the street to those aspects of life that the young people most have reason to value (Sen 1999; Naussbaum 2000). The approach has been tailored for street children, to explore the conditions that enable and constrain choice, and the freedoms they have to create a life they value (Shand 2014). Through participatory engagement with young people from the selected cities, ten capability statements were identified that reflected those aspects of life most important to the young people as they struggle to build adult lives (see Fig. 1). However, the capabilities identified by the participants do not represent individual and isolated aspects of life but are interwoven with each other. For example, preservation of health is affected by the availability of shelter; access to food is dependent on economic activity; and the ability to imagine and plan for the future is conditioned by the resilience in dealing with day-to-day problems. This already identifies the complex and relational nature of street life.

Further, taking a relational perspective to children’s street experiences is important as they interact with and engage in social relations with a variety of actors in their lives. Therefore, the data collection process regarding experiences of the street must not consider children in isolation. Even when seeking their views is the priority, we need to remember that they are integral to families, communities, and nations. They are not simply divorced from contact with adults and peers. An approach that takes this into account will try to understand street connectedness more holistically. There is currently little research that integrates children’s actual experiences with the relational and contextual background to these experiences. Data collection that seeks to promote and protect children’s rights must explore who are the significant others in their relationship network and how they interact with them. This must also include those working at policy and practical levels to ensure that children’s needs are being appropriately addressed.

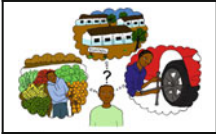
	• Through my work I can build assets for my future.
	• I frequently receive the support of friends.
	• I am able to realise my plans for the future.
	• I am resilient in the face of problems that affect me.
	• I usually have enough to eat.
	• I am able to behave in ways that protect my health and wellbeing.
	• I am able to earn enough money to meet my basic needs.
	• I am able to move freely and be safe in my local area.
	• I have enough time to play.
	• I have access to shelter.

Fig. 1 List of capabilities (with some of the accompanying visual representations)

2.3 Methodology: Involving Young People as Researchers

The project is constructed around the participation of young people who are both investigators and informants in the research, working with researchers to determine the most appropriate outcomes. The principle of participation is central to the whole process, and the high level of participation in this project is particularly innovative for work with street children. In order to create breadth to the research, 66 street children and youth (aged between 14 and 20 during the time of the research) in each city (including the six researchers) were invited to take part in the research, totaling 198 participants. Each research assistant works with a group of ten young people from their own networks. They are supported in the process by the locally based project managers, who engage with the wider research team, and an African peer network, made up of service providers, who offer support and advice to the project.

The young researchers (aged between 16 and 20 at the start of the process) were invited to opt in to the research through open information sessions on the research. This was followed by a period of intense training. Unlike employing researchers who have trained extensively in research skills through university education, there is an imperative to adequately equip young people with the technical tools they need to action the research and gather data. This would equally be the case if researchers were using new techniques or strategies. The method therefore began with specific training that sought to introduce and youth to street children and youth to research. Although some had come across research before, they had never been invited to actually undertake research, and so the purpose of these initial sessions was to ensure that those who opted in were fully cognizant with the objectives and requirements. Following this introduction, some chose not to continue, while others were unable to fully complete the training due to other ongoing commitments. They remain in the research as part of the networks. Very few dropped out completely at this stage. A second further set of ethnographic training workshops then took place with the remaining young people in each country. These training workshops equipped the young people with research skills based on the core principles of observation, questioning, and listening. Some of the young people coined the term “active listening” for their new research skills, preferring this to the more academic term “ethnography.” The relatively low levels of formal education among street children and youth in each of the three cities presented a barrier to undertaking research. In the academic manuals discussing how to do research, ethnography requires a certain level of academic skills that university researchers take for granted. Not being able to write well was likely to create problems for some around note-taking, yet, even for those who had relatively good academic skills (many in Accra and some in Harare and Bukavu), the issue of note-taking remained. Therefore, an innovative verbal approach to recording data was adopted, which will be returned to later in the chapter.

The research process follows a similar pattern in each site. First of all, the project managers, who have also trained in ethnographic questioning and listening skills, are in place to support the six young researchers in each of their own sites. These

young researchers spend time during their week engaging with their network of ten, although in practice as street life is highly relational, the research also captures the wider relationships and networks of each of the participants. They then record their ethnographic observations through weekly reflective interviews with the project managers centered around the ten capabilities. In addition, focus groups are held with each of the networks quarterly to facilitate the inclusion of the voices of a larger number of young people on specific capability themes and any additional issues emerging as the research progresses. The material is transcribed and translated locally by dedicated project transcribers and sent to the University of Dundee for coding and analysis. The aim is for these findings to then feed into policy and practice to impact street children's lives. In addition, a baseline survey of all 198 young people taking part in the project was conducted at the start of the data collection process and is repeated every year for the duration of the three-year project. This enables longitudinal data to be systematically collected and triangulated against the ethnographic interviews. It is our intention that as the analysis progresses, we will discuss the findings with the young people and project managers, also involving them in the analysis as a collaborative process.

The emerging analysis of the first year of data is highlighting the complexity of life and choices available to street children and youth. The rich and detailed descriptions are beginning to provide a unique insight into how young people cope with the difficulties of growing up on the street. However, the research is also highlighting the methodological significance of working with street children as researchers. The very experienced team of academics, practitioners, and street workers has realized that no matter how long they have been working or researching with street children, the dynamics and rhythms of street life are in constant flux, and therefore they have more to learn and understand regarding street life. It is only by constantly reengaging with young people and learning from street children on a regular basis through participating and listening that we will understand and be able to work toward investing for their future through utilizing the knowledge-based evidence to shape policy and practice. For example, one of the project managers, who has been working on the streets for over 20 years, highlighted that it was only through listening to the detail emerging in the ethnographic stories that he became aware that perhaps local practice needed to change. Like many organizations working with street children, his own NGO provides skills training and helps to establish young people in employment. For many this does not work well, yet the practice continues. Through the retelling of a research entry of one of the young female researchers, he realized why there was such a high rate of failure. Girls engaged in hairdressing seemed to enjoy the work and wished to set up their own business, yet many failed to do this. One girl in the network that week had been struggling and explained to her researcher that she could not continue to engage in hairdressing even although she had been trained and given some equipment, because she had nowhere to keep the equipment. For many the tools they are given are stolen or destroyed because of a lack of shelter and a safe place to keep them. The project manager realized that the young people had not previously really

been listened to regarding their actual needs. By stepping back and allowing the young researchers to take the lead, the street worker reflected that he had learned the value of participatory research. Therefore, in order that young people and project managers also participate in the analysis of data and its outcomes, workshops are held to discuss the emerging findings within and between countries. This also mitigates against any misinterpretation of data by project managers, who are the first receivers of information.

2.4 Practical and Ethical Considerations

The actual process of involving young people as researchers has highlighted a number of practical and ethical issues that are significantly more complex when including street children as researchers, than for other children (see Porter et al. 2010 for a comparison). In particular there are three key issues that emerged around “doing ethnography” that this chapter now addresses before considering some of the nuanced ethical challenges that are critical to street children’s participation. One of the first issues that emerged and is specific to street children is around the recording of ethnographic data. Street children, as previously noted, often have relatively few years of formal education resulting in low literacy levels. Although this may be true for other children in situations of poverty, for street children a further issue emerged. Even for those who could write well, note-taking was highlighted as problematic. Once thoughts have been written down, the complexity of keeping the notes safe was difficult. The young researchers, most of whom sleep in open and unsecured spaces, do not have safe places to store such sensitive material. This was a key consideration given our commitment to confidentiality of data and the safeguarding of all the young people involved in the research. Over discussion, perhaps imperfectly, the decision was to record material verbally. This has significantly increased the resources required to carry out the research, as transcribers are now needed to convert the spoken material into textual form that can be worked with, and unlike regular ethnographic data collection, notes could not be made when they were fresh in the memory of the researcher. The researchers therefore meet weekly with project managers who are providing support and guidance during the data collection. The researchers tell their story for the week to the project manager through an informal process, with the project managers occasionally asking for more details and clarification or inquiring about other street children. The presence of the project manager was merely to help to structure the verbal recording but only in so far as to encourage the researcher to provide lots of detail and to be thorough in his/her analysis of the events of the week. As verbal recordings could only be carried out weekly, perhaps this means some detail will be missed, a trade-off for enabling street children to fully participate in the process, but it has also allowed for deeper probing of specific issues through the engagement with the project managers. The longitudinal nature of the research and the collection of weekly stories over a three-year period will perhaps mitigate against any lost material.

A second practical issue that emerged early on was around the retention of street children researchers. It was never the intention that the research would act as a barrier to young people moving on from the street should their circumstances change: this is a necessary part of street life for many, and the precariousness of the situations most of the participants find themselves in means the project is designed to cope with this change. For some the move has been permanent: a girl in Accra dropped out soon after beginning the research because she received funding from a church to go to secondary school. She does however remain in the project as a network member and regularly engages in updating her situation. A different network member, who had been unable to complete the second training due to the birth of her baby, then received training and took over the role. Others have had more temporary changes in their circumstances, such as the researcher in Bukavu who ended up in prison for a number of months, the researcher in Harare who was persuaded to travel to South Africa in search of a better life, and the researcher in Accra who was not allowed by her new boyfriend to continue in the research. Both these young men and young woman returned after sometime and resumed as researchers. All gave very detailed accounts and descriptions of their time “away” from the streets, stories that are rarely captured, demonstrating the importance of capturing the fluidity of street life over time and space. However, it raised a problem with vacant periods in the research, and there was no easy response to filling the need. In Accra, another researcher worked double covering two networks until the girl was able to return. In Harare and Bukavu, another network member was able to step into the role for a temporary period, having completed the training previously. It could be argued that the “validity” of the research has been compromised by such changes, but instead this chapter argues that the nuances, complexities, and fluidities of street life are more accurately captured through it.

Finally, a relational issue had recently emerged that has a practical consideration. Within each site there are structures of support created to enable the street children researchers to carry out the role. This has resulted in significant engagement with each other as a research team and with project managers as “trusted adults” in their lives. Further there has been engagement with the project directors at every quarter around the time of the focus groups and with the other country project managers through yearly meetings that rotate between the cities, and so their presence is well known. Yet, it was not considered that the street children researchers would feel connected to the other sites and wish to learn about and know their fellow researchers in the other cities. The discussion of how they could know what it was like in other places and their desire for understanding was taken seriously although difficult to solve due to cost, lack of identity documents, and ethical considerations regarding taking young people out of their own country. A suggestion, by the street children themselves, has been implemented, and each researcher has made a short video clip about their lives and networks for internal use to introduce each other across the three cities.

The inclusion of street children as researchers has raised a number of significant ethical issues as well. This was a unique learning experience, but through

committing to both an ethics of care and an ethics of justice (Abebe and Bessell 2014), we worked through many of these issues with the young people. Payment for participating in research is one issue that has been regularly critiqued and questioned with the general ethical position of many being not to pay. However, as both Porter et al. (2010) and Abebe and Bessell (2014) highlight, when children are actually doing their own research, it is right that they are properly remunerated for their work – otherwise we enter the area of exploitation. With street children, the discussion also has to include issues of care and raise questions around: does providing payment keep children on the streets? Further, are we providing a duty of care if our young researchers buy alcohol or drugs with the money? Following an exploration of the issue with our researchers during their training, and consideration of child rights, we refund our researchers for their lost earnings equal to 2 days per week. This was a mutually agreeable sum (which varies slightly by country) based on the amount of work undertaken and the impact on earning potential. Although we discussed options for young researchers to be able to save some of the money earned (which some opted for), we did not make the payment conditional based on our respect for young people's abilities to make their own decisions around what they earn. In practice while some of their money may be spend on stimulants, it is also used to buy clean food, medicines, clothing, and entertainment as well as in some instances shelter provision. Further for some this employment enables them to engage in less risky forms of "work" for at least some of the time. Our duty of care here emerges in the form of project managers, who in addition to managing the research are on hand to guide, advise, and support the researchers and participants in their daily life and choices.

Safety in the research emerged as a related issue, partly to safe keeping of money but also in relation to the protection of young researchers. During the training session, one researcher in Accra noted that it is difficult to keep money due to a lack of safe places. This is especially problematic when sleeping as others will "cut your pockets" and take your money. Although young people have their own strategies for minimizing loss, such as dividing their money between pockets, a savings scheme was set up and offered to those that wanted to use it. Of great concern was the ability of the research to adequately protect the researchers during their involvement in the research. Although also an issue for Porter et al. (2010), this was mainly related to difficult questions from community members, which can be addressed through training. In reality street life is harsh, often illegal, violent, and abusive for many young people (van Blerk 2012). For this reason, very strict confidentiality agreements were developed and set up, and anyone coming into contact with the material (i.e., for translation purposes) was very heavily vetted. The researchers themselves were asked to adhere to the confidentiality agreement to protect those in their networks. In most instances, the research did not create difficulties as young people were researching their own social networks. However, sometimes relationships among network members did break down. One young female researcher, for example, had to give up her role for a significant period because her boyfriend, who regularly beat her, was refusing to allow her to participate. Although in the short term, the research seemed to create more difficulties for the researcher, through the

support of the project manager she has since been able to leave her boyfriend and resume her role as a young researcher. The research is creating a framework of trust that is enabling and supporting the researchers in their daily life choices.

This highlights a final ethical consideration that the project team is still grappling with around the legacy for the research for young researchers' future lives. Participating in research for street children can help to build confidence and self-esteem as well as develop more formal research skills. Training certificates that are endorsed by a university and perhaps letters of recommendation are elements of the capacity building and skills development portfolio that can open up opportunities for young people as will the acknowledgement on publications and reports of their active involvement in the research process (Porter et al. 2010); but again the particular challenges of street life do not make this an easy and straightforward process. Certificates tend to have more currency in formal employment situations, which, at least in the short term, may be less attainable for street children. Further, the sensitivity of the material collected and the promise of confidentiality make it very difficult to list young people as research collaborators or coauthors on publications. More careful consideration needs to be given by researchers to the outcomes and outputs of research as well as on how young researchers can participate in this process. By engaging in an *active* dissemination process with street children (van Blerk and Ansell 2007), the findings of research will be enhanced and research will be able to promote their voices more effectively. Promoting the voices of street children to others is an essential part of the process and one where their inclusion is pertinent. However, the question of scale is important here. At community level, it is important to disseminate to local audiences, who are actively engaged with the research participants and can impact their quality of life through how they treat street children. Street children can and should be part of this process, and it may be possible to explore with local communities through workshops or community meetings the problems faced through being on the streets and how their understanding can assist in developing potential solutions. It is often more difficult to promote the voices of street children at a policy level without their inclusion being tokenistic. Through dissemination, it is necessary to ensure that participants have the opportunity to consider what should be fed into policy dialogue in terms of what is required to address their needs. Yet, it is important to choose strategies that young people will feel comfortable with as a means to represent their views (Valentine 1999). Although an ideal scenario may be that street children and policy-makers sit together to work through recommendations or the implementation of solutions that support their rights more effectively into policy, this can have severe limitations and without proper training can be a daunting and difficult prospect for young people. It is important not to produce situations where children are merely "on show," uncomfortable in an unfamiliar context, and expected to speak to a formidable audience. Under such conditions, children's participation is heavily directed by adult researchers. To overcome this tension, in the "Growing Up on the Streets" research project, a potential outcome is to involve young people more directly in knowledge exchange that will include further training on the process and skills required to translate findings into key policy messages as well as equip young people with the

tools to impact their ideas effectively in situations where they may feel out of place or uncomfortable. This additional set of skills will also be useful for enabling young people to build future lives they value (Sen 1999): futures where they decide what is important amidst all the competing pressures they face on the streets. The support framework of the research, over a period of three-years, is an inevitable benefit but one that cannot be bluntly removed from the lives of young people who are struggling to meet basic needs at the same time as building futures that they judge to be of value. An exit strategy for the research will have to be thought through carefully and in participation with the young researchers themselves.

3 Conclusion

The difficulties for researchers of reaching those top rungs on Hart's (1997) ladder of participation mean that very few projects with street children have sought to include young people as researchers. Participatory video is one area that has seen some greater participation and inclusion of young researchers (Blazek and Hanrova 2012; Mistry et al. 2014; Haynes and Tanner 2013), but there has been less emphasis on active engagement in qualitative research. Further, despite calls for street children's participation to be taken seriously in research (Thomas de Benitez 2011), the complexity of the task has meant that this has not been achieved at the highest levels. Collaborative work with street children that results in participation in research has to be commended for representing street children and enabling their voices to be heard, but this cannot go beyond defined moments nor fully reach those instances when researchers are not "in the field." Further the harsh realities of street life make it difficult for researchers to fully become immersed in street children's experiences, over time, space, and relations. This chapter urges researchers to go beyond the boundaries of acceptable participation and strive to facilitate street children to do their own research. This will not only help to fill in the gaps in knowledge but can provide a richness of data that can challenge current thinking and practice. However, this chapter has also explored that doing this kind of research raises practical and ethical issues that need careful consideration but that by valuing children and respecting their rights in research, these challenges can be overcome and methods adapted to suit the needs of those taking part. "Growing Up on the Streets" research project is still in progress, but it is already revealing the significant capabilities of street children in their striving to create adult lives that they have reason to value.

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Research with Children Seeking Asylum in Ireland: Reflecting on Silences and Hushed Voices

9

Allen White and Naomi Tyrrell

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Abstract

“Giving voice” to research participants is generally seen as a positive thing to try to achieve, perhaps even a political and ethical priority. However “giving voice” should not be understood as an uncontested or uncomplicated process. The ways in which this priority measures up to the relative lack of agency children participating in research processes may have, and their possible inability and/or unwillingness to speak or want to find a voice in research, has not been the subject of significant debate. This chapter explores some of the issues around children’s active engagement with participatory research and the ways in which researcher may seek to “give voice” to children. Examples from research with children seeking asylum and living in Direct Provision Accommodation Centres in the Republic of Ireland are drawn upon during the discussion.

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1 Introduction

“Giving voice” to research participants, or enabling their voices to be heard, is generally seen as a positive thing to try to achieve when researching with children, perhaps even a political and ethical priority. This view has developed over the last 15 years or so within disciplines such as childhood studies, sociology, human geography, and education studies. It complements the shift from viewing children as objects to as subjects, as social actors, and as participants or co-participants in research and society more broadly (Alderson 2008; Christensen and Prout 2002; Christensen and James 2008). The significance and political importance of giving children a voice in research have been highlighted in research with children, prioritizing the significance of “what it feels like to be a child” (James 1993: 92 in Grover 2004) over an adultist construction of what it is like to be a child (see Grover 2004). This has led to many adult researchers prioritizing the active involvement of children as participants in research projects and/or involving children as coresearchers.

This chapter is a response to Lewis’ (2010) call for more recognizing, noting, responding to, interpreting, and reporting silence from children, and an examination of whether always accessing children’s voices is to be considered a positive achievement. The chapter explores ideas of active engagement and giving voice to children in the context of research with children seeking asylum in the Republic of Ireland, specifically children who were living in a Direct Provision Accommodation Centre. The authors spent a year carrying out fieldwork and interacting with children living in a Direct Provision Accommodation Centre on the outskirts of a city in the South of Ireland (the center has been given the pseudonym “Glengarry” in this chapter; all of the children’s names and places used in the chapter are pseudonyms) for families seeking asylum in the Republic of Ireland (hereafter Ireland). The Direct Provision and dispersal system were introduced in Ireland in 2000, weeks after the introduction of a similar system in the UK. On receipt of an asylum application in the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC), asylum seekers (whether single or as part of family groups) are placed in temporary accommodation in the greater Dublin area for a period of 14 days. After this period they are relocated (usually outside Dublin) to a Direct Provision Centre where accommodation, three daily meals, and a weekly cash payment (of €19.10 per adult and €9.50 per child) are provided. Asylum seekers are also entitled to a biannual exceptional need payment of €100. There are other welfare payments that, while theoretically available, are rarely paid to asylum seekers with children (Nasc 2008).

Direct Provision Centres are managed by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) which is located in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. RIA organizes and disperses residents to Direct Provision Centres. If asylum seekers are absent from a Direct Provision Centre for three consecutive nights, they are considered as not requiring assistance. Most centers do not permit asylum seekers to cook their own food and they are prohibited from gaining paid employment. Initially the Direct Provision System was established to provide shelter for asylum seekers for 6 months. However, there are now 34 Direct Provision Centres across Ireland (run by private contractors), and the average stay is 3 years and 8 months (O'Brien 2014). In 2014 there were 851 families (over 1,600 children and 1,200 adults) seeking asylum in Ireland who were housed in Direct Provision Accommodation Centres (O'Brien 2014). Some individuals and families have spent more than 7 years living in Direct Provision, with no right to work and no entitlement to social welfare, although children are entitled to attend local mainstream schools (O'Brien 2014). In recent years, the ways in which children and their families experience the Direct Provision System in Ireland has been subject to attention. The Irish State's Special Rapporteur on Child Protection, Ireland's Children's Ombudsman, the Irish Refugee Council, the High Court of Northern Ireland, and the United Nations all have raised concerns that children living in Direct Provision are being harmed by living in institutionalized accommodation without due attention being paid to their needs. Children and their families often are moved around the country, from one accommodation center to another; hence children may experience frequent ruptures in their social and educational networks. The Irish Refugee Council (2012) has criticized Direct Provision as being particularly inappropriate for asylum-seeking families with children citing Direct Provision Centres as unsafe, sometimes unhygienic environments for children, often with poor facilities, lacking appropriate food to meet the specific dietary needs of residents, and failing to provide a stable environment for children educational needs.

This chapter explores the possible issues and considerations that may arise when researching with children in relation to silences in interactions and exchanges, while acknowledging the particular circumstances of children seeking asylum and living in Direct Provision Accommodation Centres in Ireland. Children's agency and limitations to their agency are discussed in relation to ethical research processes, as is the possibility of children not wanting to speak or have a voice in children-focused research. The idea that the issues and experiences that *were not* mentioned or discussed by the child participants were just as important about their lives as anything they chose to talk about is explored.

2 Researching with Children Seeking Asylum in Ireland

In asylum-seeker accommodation systems, like Ireland's Direct Provision System, individuals and families seeking asylum are removed from any kinship or social networks that may prove beneficial for resettlement in the receiving

country and are separated out from the majority “host” population. As such they can be considered to live within a system of power (Paliwala 1995; White 2002) which exercises control over different groups of people simultaneously and at different times and in different places. As a relatively disempowered and marginalized group, asylum seekers (as well as those who are involved in research processes with asylum seekers – both as researchers and participants) cannot be considered to exist outside of these relations of power. This has been, perhaps surprisingly, an often unremarked and unacknowledged point. For example, Miller (2004) points to the absence of debate among refugee researchers about key elements of research with asylum seekers such as ways of gaining access to communities and participants as part of research projects. Mostly the debates have focused on methods, developing relationships of trust (or distrust) in research with asylum seekers, and the ways in which these relations of trust and distrust shape and structure the lived realities of asylum seekers in a variety of different interactions and institutional contexts (Begley et al. 1999; Cotter 2004; Daniel and Knudsen 1995; Feldman et al. 2002; Kohli 2006; Miller 2004; Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995; Smyth and Whyte 2005; Spicer 2008). For Hynes (2003), this may be structured around the institutional and social contexts within which the “refugee cycle” (before during and after flight from persecution, arrival into, and settling within a new society) plays out. Others demonstrate how negotiating trust is central in research encounters with refugees and asylum seekers. For Kohli (2006), the constraints of the asylum system mean that the accounts of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum need to elide issues and economize with the truth concentrating on extraordinary stories of suffering to produce “thin” narratives of victimhood. A prerequisite (or more properly an important dimension to) producing a “thick” narrative is for researchers and unaccompanied asylum seekers to develop relationships of trust (*ibid.*, 2006).

As with research with children more generally, research with children and young people who are seeking asylum can complicate some of the issues surrounding relations of trust and distrust that have been discussed in research with adult asylum seekers (see Doná 2007). Questions surrounding how to avoid exploiting research participants, whether or not to pay them, the level of commitment required (especially in terms of time), and the ownership (and use) of research materials and data are not exclusive to qualitative research with children. Many of the ethical and other dilemmas referred to above have been addressed in research with children via the development of “children-friendly” research methods. These reflect developments and changes in understandings of childhood, arising out of the “new” social studies of childhood which stress that children are social actors in their own right and are the subjects (rather than the objects) of research. For Doná (2007), achieving these ideas in research with children seeking asylum requires thinking about developing participatory strategies in research projects via relationships that develop between different actors (researchers, participants, gatekeepers, interpreters, funders) over the lifetime of a specific research project.

Elsewhere, the authors (Bushin and White 2010) outline how, following Kesby (2007), they sought to address the issues above via using certain research methods as resources for children's identity formation and articulation. The authors show how for some children (and adults), maximizing or mobilizing particular resources in order to form and articulate their subjectivities and identities can be quite a struggle and that participation in research can help achieve these ends. Particular research methods and fieldwork relations themselves can provide access to these key resources and materials. This is another way of talking about developing "trusting" relationships in research encounters – by identifying those moments within which key resources and materials become available for research participants (children seeking asylum) to develop and enhance their social and cultural identities. However, this is not a simple process of all-knowing, competent (adult) researchers winning the trust of suspicious (child) research participants and in the process "giving" them "voice." As Komulainen (2007) suggests, researchers need to reflect on what they hear and what they expect to hear, that it is possible for children to be both vulnerable and competent at the same time and that their positioning often relies on adults. As the discussion later in this chapter highlights, in many cases, children chose not to "use" this voice and to remain silent about certain aspects of their lives.

3 Listening to Silences in Research

There is a long tradition within human geography, and feminist geography in particular, that explores qualitative interview methodologies and concentrates on issues such as positionality, reflexivity, and power relations. For example, the seminal text by Anderson and Jack (1991) on using oral history as a means of exploring women's worlds offers a way of examining the ways in which silences and omissions arise in part as result of particular decisions and interactions in fieldwork but also how one can learn to listen in stereo during research interviews and also to recordings of those research interviews. They argue that particular silences surround many women's narratives because interviewers are effectively asking women to describe worlds and experiences which may conflict with or be at odds with hegemonic accounts. Thus women may struggle and have trouble expressing their lives in concepts, terms, and conventions that are familiar and publically acceptable. This is why interviewers must learn to listen in stereo – to hear and document the experiences that may lie outside the boundaries and borders of acceptability.

From the perspective of a female refugee interviewing fellow refugee women, Ghorashi (2007) points to the particular significance of the narrative life story interview (or the biographical approach – see Halfacree and Boyle 1993; Ni Laoire 2000, 2008) in allowing researchers to navigate layers of meaning that surround specific silences. Echoing Anderson and Jack (1991), Ghorashi (2007: 131) describes how the method of life story interviewing has proved to be elucidating because of

what it can help to reveal: “new spaces, to be able to move within shifting boundaries, to create room for different layers of experience and to give voice to people whose voices are often taken for granted or (un)intentionally marginalised.”

When considering silences in the lives of refugee children and/or children seeking asylum in particular, Kohli (2006) points out that the overwhelming majority of literature has sought to explain these silences through reference to children’s or young people’s migrant status, i.e., foregrounding their status as refugees or asylum seekers and suggesting that this is the explanation for their silences during research processes. There are, of course, very good reasons for this explanation. Chase (2010) suggests that young asylum seekers are located in a series of systems and structures that control many aspects of their everyday lives. Silence and the refusal to speak about different aspects of their lives in a system of power such as an asylum-seeking system constitute a “rational response to their circumstances that are fraught with uncertainties, stigma and anxieties” (Chase 2010: 2065). Media reports which seek to include first-hand evidence from people seeking asylum often refer to the difficulties individual asylum seekers have with speaking out about their experiences because they fear it may affect their asylum claim (see O’Brien 2014) – they are within the system of power discussed earlier.

Notwithstanding these very real issues, when thinking about researching with children and the reasons for silences, one is immediately struck by a paradox. In all the scholarly emphasis, alongside insistences from funders and service providers to elicit children’s views and access children’s voices, there can be an imbalance whereby silences are seen as devoid of meaning. Lewis (2010) highlights that there is a need for a more balanced debate about the practices involved in giving voice to children and that there needs to be greater awareness and acknowledgement of the ways in which voice and silence are co-constructed between researchers and research participants. Within migration studies more broadly, the connection is often made between experiences of trauma and research participants’ silence. For example, Almquist and Broberg (1997) point to asylum-seeking families’ investment in silence as denial – as a strategy for surviving and living through traumatic experiences of persecution, flight, and exile. This research has pointed toward the ways in which refugee parents and children utilize silences in their everyday lives as mechanisms for suppressing traumatic memories and experiences and as ways of protecting each other. In the next section of this chapter, these arguments are explored and the sometimes automatic assumptions questioned. By detailing a number of different empirical examples of when children’s silences emerged in the fieldwork in Direct Provision Centre Glengarry, the authors demonstrate the ways in which silences and absences that made up many of the interactions with the children were related to the range of research methods, techniques, and materials used. Also, the analysis suggests that although these silences were embedded in the children’s migrant status as asylum seekers, they were also connected to a host of other aspects of the children’s identities. In short, the silences were simultaneously related to and not related to the children’s statuses seeking asylum and living in Direct Provision in Ireland.

4 Background to the Research

The data discussed in this chapter was produced during a 3-and-a-half-year Migrant Children research project funded by a Marie Curie Excellence Grant at University College Cork, Ireland. The project had four research strands, all of which focused on examining the varying experiences of children migrating to and living in contemporary Ireland. The project used a range of children-inclusive participatory research methods to explore the lives of children from four different migratory backgrounds: (a) African, (b) Central and Eastern European, (c) Latin American, and (d) returning Irish. This chapter draws on material that was produced and developed by children in strands a and b. The children were living in Glengarry, a Direct Provision Centre for asylum seekers which housed mainly (but not exclusively) families with young children. It is difficult to assess exactly how many children were resident in the Glengarry at any one time as the frequency of the turnover of families was quite high (i.e., families moving out of the center once refugee status or leave to remain has been granted; families were dispersed to/from other cities or centers in Ireland to/from Glengarry; or families were sent back to countries of origin after asylum applications were rejected). There were a group of approximately 15 school-aged children who lived in the accommodation center during the research fieldwork and approximately 30 children below 4 years of age. A private childcare company called “Sunshine” (pseudonym) provided after-school playtime activities for school-aged children once a week on a Wednesday after school during school term times and three times a week during the school holidays. These groups were free at the point of delivery and had been developed by the manager of Sunshine. She had recognized the need for a play space and activities for children living in Direct Provision and applied for funding for their provision. On each of these days, the childcare company also held a parent and toddler playgroup in the morning.

After meeting with Sunshine staff and being introduced to parents (via letters translated into appropriate languages), the authors began attending weekly after-school club sessions. During these sessions, the authors spent time getting to know the children, some of the parents who were present, and also the staff of Sunshine. We were then able to initiate a number of different research methods and techniques with the children such as model building, drawing, and photography (see Figs. 1 and 2). During these activities and interactions with children, parents, and staff, we became acutely aware that layers of silence permeated, saturated, and shaped most, if not all, of the researcher-children (as well as, but to a lesser extent, parents and staff) interactions and by extension the field data that was analyzed subsequently.

The experience of being aware of significant silences during research processes is not unique. There is small literature that explores the significance and importance of silence in research, often with marginalized peoples, and ways of interpreting it (see Gal 1991). Building on feminist literature on silences in research, in this chapter the idea that children’s silences are not necessarily synonymous with their powerlessness is explored, particularly within the context of asylum-seeking processes while living in the Direct Provision System.



Fig. 1 Model building "where we live" with children in Glengarry

5 Revealing and Interpreting Silences in Research with Children Seeking Asylum

It is important to acknowledge that some of the silences that can arise in research with children and adults do so because of the ontological, epistemological, ethical, and/or moral framework within which the particular research is situated or developed. The research with children and their families in Glengarry was situated within a particular ethical framework – that of "doing no harm," i.e., the ethical protocol for the wider project meant that we were committed to avoiding unnecessarily exposing the children to recalling any traumatic events or episodes in their lives. As the children were in the asylum system and living in Direct Provision, this meant that, insofar as it was possible, no attempt was made to ask the children directly about their home country, their journey to Ireland, or the details of their families' claims for asylum (more about this later). Thus, for example, unlike Booth and Booth (1996), it was not possible to eliminate alternative interpretations that may have surrounded particular silences by asking alternative and progressively adopted questions to children in Glengarry and, in doing so, construct narrative accounts of their lives. Adhering to the project ethical protocol did, as Jacobsen and Landau



Fig. 2 “My favourite day,” by Ameila (age 6); this refers to her first trip to the seaside which was organized by Sunshine staff for the children living in Glengarry

(2003) argue, introduce particular silences and “gaps” in the research material from the outset of our interactions with the children. In a sense then the research was active in reproducing children’s silences; we did not seek to challenge children’s discussions or accounts openly or deliberately. As Pittenger et al. (1961: 41) observe, “it only takes one person to produce speech, but it requires the co-operation of all to produce silence.” Therefore the limitations of the data produced in the research processes with children living in Glengarry are acknowledged even as the children’s voices are critically analyzed (see Komulainen 2007). In addition, the data do not speak for all children seeking asylum or living in Direct Provision in Ireland (or elsewhere). Instead they represented the sometimes chaotic realities and lives of children in the specific context of an asylum center.

Anderson and Jack (1991) offer a three-step means of listening to the silences and partial statements that can pepper research participants’ narratives: listening to the moral language of the narrative, listening to a participant’s meta-statement (i.e., for those moments where there is a disjuncture/dissonance between what is expected and what is stated to have actually happened), and listening to the logic of the overall narrative of what is being said. They point out that researchers often can think that they know what is being said during interviews partly because they appropriate what is being said into a preexisting schema. Anderson and Jack (1991) suggest that this effectively silences the interviewee, arguing that listening to the moral language of the narrative, to a participant’s meta-statement, and to the logic of the overall narrative of what is being said can help researchers “really listen” to what is being said. Thinking through one of these steps in particular and listening to

the moral language of the interviewee – or the points at which the self-evaluation and concepts used by interviewees come face to face with what might be conflicting cultural norms and expectations – can help to understand how silences saturated the conversations and exchanges with children in Glengarry.

For example, the extract below outlines a conversation that occurred between the authors and Joanna, a girl aged 8 from a West African country. She had lived in Glengarry with her mother, father, younger brother, and baby sister for over a year:

- Joanna: My friend in school is called Allen [recognizing that one of the researcher was called Allen] and I gave him a present in school today because I didn't go to his party.
- Allen: Oh, was it his birthday?
- Joanna: Yep.
- Naomi: What did you get him?
- Joanna: Spiderman, he always likes Spiderman.
- Allen: That's a good present. . . what age is he?
- Joanna: Eight
- Naomi: Are you eight?
- Joanna: Yep, I was eight first, then him.
- Allen: Did he go to your party?
- Joanna: Ehhh, no.
- Allen: Ok.
- Joanna: I didn't. . . he doesn't. . . erm it doesn't matter, I don't care if he didn't go, whatever, forget about it.

This exchange between Joanna and the researchers highlights the social isolation children living in Glengarry experienced. Joanna did not have a birthday party, or if she did she was unable to invite her school friends like Allen because of *where she lived*. This supports Fanning et al. (2001) finding that for parents and children living in Direct Provision Accommodation Centres, living conditions prevented them from inviting school friends for playdates or birthday parties. This can be considered part of the “preexisting schema” (Anderson and Jack 1991) we had about the issues raised by the conversation, as has been discussed elsewhere (see White and Bushin 2011). However, when thinking about the “moral language” that is being employed here in this interaction, these conclusions are not so certain or, rather, they may overlook an important “silent” point about Joanna's life. The context here is a conversation about birthdays, parties, and presents that contains a whole series of unspoken assumptions about age, friendships groups, hierarchies, and parties (i.e., the importance of being oldest, that birthday parties are significant, whose parties children go to, who children do/do not invite, etc.) that children use to structure and negotiate peer group relations. These assumptions can also act as valuable shared frames of reference for children and this was particularly the case in their interactions with us. This in turn allowed and helped children establish frameworks of similarity and difference between themselves and other children, both in Glengarry and elsewhere. Parties, invitations, playdates, age, and of course

school acted as important means by which hierarchies within Glengarry could be established and maintained: "I'm in fifth class, s/he is only in third"; "I am eight, she is seven." These also, it should be noted, provide a means by which the children could make their lives meaningful in (structured and unstructured/spontaneous) conversations about their lives with the (majority ethnic, adult) researchers.

Joanna struggles to put into words her confusion about the expectations of what she was supposed to do (which was signified by the question about party invitations) and what in fact happened. Her answer is ambiguous and conflicted and contains important omissions that could potentially point to several different conclusions – there was no party, that Allen was not invited, that Allen was invited but did not or could not attend, that Allen was not friends with Joanna at that time, that Joanna is not interested in parties, or that the cultural norms and traditions that Joanna is part of does not celebrate birthdays with parties in this way. Nagar-Ron and Motzafi-Haller (2011) suggest that when one feels that one's life does not enter accepted narrative patterns, as Joanna may have felt during the conversation, one can be faced with difficulties in granting meaning and coherence to one's life. Thus preconceived ideas (based on the literature) about the experiences of children living in accommodation centers for asylum seekers being different to other children and living "isolated" lives led to particular conclusions about Joanna's partial answer. However, her partial answer and the silences and omissions it contained might reveal a series of other issues, answers, or conclusions. The issue is not so much was there a party or not, who did/did not go, or was/was not invited. Rather, the important point lies in the ways particular cultural expectations and norms surrounding parties, childhood, peer groups, and Joanna's self-evaluation and self-conception (as having friends, having parties, being part of a peer group) clash in this transcription leading her to dismiss, move on, and otherwise remain silent about these issues. Thus instead of reading this as an example of giving Joanna "a voice" and interpreting her comments within our preconceived framework, it is perhaps better to consider the conversation as an ambiguity:

Before we can simply 'give a voice' to children, we need to acknowledge that there are ambiguities involved in human communication, and that these ambiguities result from the 'socialness' of human interaction, discourses and practices. (Komulainen 2007: 13)

Joanna's unfinished response to the question, her silence, is then explicable not simply because she lives in a socially isolated Glengarry but also because she is firstly a child (at the age when birthdays may signify important milestones – although this can also be perceived to be an adultist framework for childhood and one which may be shaped by the cultural expectations of majority ethnic researchers), the ways in which her childhood intersects with her migrant status (as part of a family seeking asylum and living in Direct Provision), and the ways in which this intersects with her socioeconomic and gendered position – as a young girl, living on the social and economic margins in Ireland, in that particular place at that particular time. This example, therefore, supports Lewis' (2010) call for researchers to give careful consideration to the exploration and interpretation of

silences in children's narratives before drawing conclusions. In this way, following Lewis (2010), the silences in Joanna's conversation with the authors are not to be interpreted simply as a "gap" between a question and a response, or as something missing between a question and a response. Rather the silence is something that is an integral and important part of the co-construction of this encounter. Furthermore to fully acknowledge the co-creation of this silence demands a reflexive awareness on the part of the researchers that their cultural expectations and assumptions play a key role in producing this silence and omission. Acknowledging this, as Sime ([this volume](#)) argues, does not negate attempts by "outsider" adults to reflect the realities of minority ethnicity children, provided these adults proceed with care in research encounters to provide empathic, sensitive, and accurate accounts.

As Kohli (2006) points out, many discussions about silence and not speaking concentrate on the fact that those who are not speaking are seeking asylum. Many authors focus upon clinical or psychotherapeutic perspectives on the significance of silence for asylum seekers – as a traumatic response to their experiences and as a space for reflection and, perhaps, healing. Other authors highlight the use of silences and particular kinds of stories that correspond with or conform to established ways of claiming asylum in countries of refuge; Hynes (2003), for example, views this through the lens of "trust." Of course, it is important to acknowledge the relevance and significance of the asylum and Direct Provision Systems in shaping and structuring the silences and hushed voices in Glengarry; at the same time, it is important to acknowledge the other multiple dynamics in our encounters with the children.

While as already mentioned, the ethical protocol employed in the research prevented the authors from directly asking the children about their home country or their experiences and details of their asylum claim; there were occasions when children did choose to talk about their home country. What was apparent about these (typically very short) conversations was the reluctance many of the children had to talk about their home countries, even to the extent that the children would lower their voices and speak at a low volume in hushed voices. This was especially the case when the children talked about other children who had "gone home," i.e., children whose asylum claim and subsequent appeals had been refused. As the manager of Sunshine stated:

It's a bit like either they have overheard parents or they have been told not to talk about it [...] They don't like to [talk about their home country] – or they won't talk very much about it either, and you don't know again if that is coming from the parents because the parents don't talk a lot about it. . . I've never liked to ask because I feel like I am prying and people are in delicate situations and that they maybe have versions of things for different parts of their lives that they need to. . . so then they are often, that caginess comes across with the children as well.

In his discussion of research with young adults seeking asylum, Kohli (2006) distinguishes asylum seekers' accounts of their lives as being either "thin" or "thick." "Thin" accounts elide over issues, wear silences, and economize with the truth (for all the reasons surrounding trust and distrust outlined above). "Thin"

accounts are forced (because of the asylum system) to concentrate on extraordinary stories of suffering because they act as the key to entering host countries. However, Kohli (2006) argues that they also trap asylum seekers into thin narratives of victimhood. Crucially for our research, Kohli (2006) identifies the importance of building up a rapport of trust between research participants and researchers. He also points to the importance of providing participants the means to produce “thicker,” perhaps more capable stories about themselves. Trying to do this in Glengarry proved enormously difficult. Providing the means for the children to produce such “thick” stories about themselves – to overcome the silences and absences that surrounded any discussions about their home country or life before Glengarry – and at the same time to adhere to the ethical protocol (to not expose the children to unnecessarily recalling traumatic events or episodes) were a constant tightrope walk and balancing act to perform.

6 “Children-Centered” Research Methods and Silences

One avenue pursued in the research process was carrying out research using specific “children-centered” methods. The initial arguments and rationale for developing these methods and techniques in the project were to “allow” or “enable” children’s voices to be heard, and in a particular sense these began to pay dividends. However, it became clear quite quickly that these arguments about allowing children’s voices to be heard failed to adequately capture the shifting and evolving use and potential of these methods. Instead, using a variety and flexible “suite” of methods (which included an array of research materials and resources) became a means by which the authors were able to negotiate and establish confidence and trust between themselves, the children, the parents, and staff in Glengarry. A central part of this revolved around the ways in which the children used these materials and resources consciously and creatively. In short, the real value of mixing these methods and developing different activities lays in the ways in which they created a research space where participants could choose to engage (or not) with the research project on something like their own terms. In doing this it became clear that the choice of methods, and the use of these within the evolving and shifting relations that made up Glengarry as a field site, allowed the project’s ethical protocol to move beyond “do no harm” to something approaching promoting a reciprocal and relational autonomy among some of the children who took part in our research (see MacKenzie et al. 2007).

For some children, engagement with, and in, the research process served to reinforce the silences surrounding their lives. For others, the use of research materials and resources produced “thick” accounts and stories along the lines that Kohli (2006) suggests. For example, one “children-centered” technique involved asking older children (aged 9–11 years) in Glengarry to take part in a self-directed photography project. This entailed providing children with disposable cameras and asking them to take photographs (outside of school time) on the theme “The people, places, and things that are important to me.” Once the photographs were developed,

their contents were recorded, categorized, and returned to the children. The children were then asked to choose their favorite pictures and stick these into a scrapbook (which they could decorate and design and call “my life” if they wanted to). Crayons, pens, glue, glitter, scissors, and an individual scrapbook were provided so that the children could adapt and decorate their photographs talking about these with the researchers.

While talking to Kirsten, a 9-year-old girl from West Africa who had been living in Glengarry with her mother and two younger brothers for 6 months, it was discovered that she had another sister in her home country. Up until this point Kirsten had only referred to her mother and two brothers in any discussion about her family. Her sister was 18 and had cared for Kirsten before she had travelled to Ireland to rejoin her mother and brothers who had recently migrated to seek asylum. In the course of this particular conversation, Kirsten mentioned her sister a number of times. Many migrant families are marked through absences, of particular members or entire kin groups, in host societies, and we found that these absences were important in the experiences of many of the children who lived in Glengarry. A little later in the conversation with her, attention turned to a photo of Kirsten in her school uniform. Pointing at the photo, Kirsten announced “I am going to send that to my sister.” Clearly Kirsten was preoccupied by her sister’s absence at that time, and her decision was to choose a photo of herself – wearing her school uniform, taken outside Glengarry on a sunny morning – to send to her sister (via her mother’s friend). This photo, as with all photos, communicated a set of messages about herself to her sister.

There are many things that can be said about this exchange – about the photo, about the choice of the photo, about Kirsten, and about the decision to send the photo – however, for the purposes of this chapter, the substantial point is that the research process itself provided (in a limited way) the resources and materials for Kirsten to develop her self-reflexivity and make researchers aware of her family networks and (crucially) to act upon this in ways that “not only generate rich data but which can also effect alternative agency and action in participant’s lives” (Kesby 2007: 203). Kirsten did not want to take part in the self-directed photography exercise when we first suggested it as an idea. However, over time and after having taken part in a number of other activities with us and the children, she decided to do so. She went on to draw maps, produce “life journeys” and life-line charts in other after-school club sessions. In short, Kirsten granted the authors access to a lot of “raw data,” but at the same time she used some of these experiences to help develop her own self-esteem and self-identity in creative and active ways. Thus children-centered methods, as they were used in this project, did open up a space for Kirsten to produce a “thicker” account of her experiences.

It is useful to compare Kirsten’s involvement in the self-directed photography project with that of another research participant – Elena. Elena used the same resources and materials in a different way. She had moved to Ireland from a country in central Europe and was of a comparable age to Kirsten. She lived in Glengarry with her mother, father, and younger brother (she also had an older sister living in her “home country” whom she did not talk about for some time). Unlike Kirsten,

Elena had been very enthusiastic about participating in the self-directed photography project when first introduced to the idea, and she was keen to have a disposable camera to herself in her individual project. Although Elena took 27 photographs, she chose not to include many of these in her scrapbook. She wanted to keep them and the negatives in the photograph envelope, partly because she knew the authors would take the scrapbooks and scan them (so that we would have a record of her work) before returning them for the children to keep. She was keen to show other people her photographs – the Sunshine staff and the other children – as well as her mother and brother. She also wanted to keep the scrapbook (despite it not containing many photographs) and all the pens, pencils, glue, and glitter we had given her to use. While completing the scrapbook, Elena did not finish discussing all of the photographs she used. She finished the discussion quickly, rushing through descriptions, and then took her photographs, the negatives, her scrapbook, and all of the art materials straight up to her family's bedroom in Glengarry (families lived in one room – overcrowding and the impacts on children of living in Direct Provision Accommodation Centres have received recent media attention – Siggins (2014)).

Over the subsequent weeks, Elena kept delaying showing the authors the scrapbook and finishing the discussion. Every time she was asked, she said “Yes” but never went to get it from her room. During discussion with the manager of Sunshine, it became clear that Elena's reluctance to show us any of the materials from the photography project (albeit temporarily) was likely to reflect that she had very few personal possessions. She has said that she did not have glue or pens when starting to make the scrapbook. Many of the children living in Glengarry had very few things that exclusively belonged to them because of the financial limitations of their parents and the communal environment. Play equipment, toys, and stationary were kept in the communal room that Sunshine had set up and were only available during the scheduled playgroup and after-school sessions. For the authors, the photographs, scrapbook, and art materials that Elena had acquired during the self-directed photography project were useful “tools” to gain access to children's “thick” (Kohli 2006) descriptions of their experiences of migration and living in Direct Provision in Ireland. However, for Elena, these “tools” became important personal possessions to own and protect, and her behavior in relation to them (and us) during the research process gave us an equally invaluable insight into her experiences, even though, paradoxically, it reproduced some silences surrounding her life.

7 Conclusion

Listening better includes hearing silence and that silence is not neutral or empty. So listening better requires the researcher or evaluator to be reflexive and reflective in decoding the encounter. Through this, the interpretation of silence becomes an integral part of the analysis and, over time, could contribute to the development of methodologies of silence alongside methodologies of voice. (Lewis 2010:12)

In conclusion, what this chapter has outlined is that the silences and hushed voices that saturated the fieldwork with children in Glengarry were the product of an array of different processes and pressures. A diverse and complex array of different issues influenced and shaped these processes and research interactions. These issues include the position of adult majority ethnic adults interacting with minority ethnicity children as part of a research project with a tightly defined ethical framework. Equally as asylum seekers subject to intensive surveillance and control by immigration authorities through living in Direct Provision, the children and parents in Glengarry were constantly conscious of what they should and should not say. As with other economically and socially marginalized groups of children, the children in Glengarry were being ignored in a neoliberal globalized society like Ireland that has undergone profound social and economic restructuring. This is a society where childhood and family life are subject to powerful forces of commodification and consumption. Other research in the Marie Curie Migrant Children project highlighted the importance and centrality of a global consumer culture in Irish childhoods (see Ni Laoire et al. 2011). Playstations, video games, DVDs, Barbie, and High School Musical not only represent central ways in which children in Ireland negotiate and articulate their social and cultural identities, they also represent key ways in which childhood itself is understood and discussed in public. Those without the purchasing power to buy these commodities are finding it harder and harder to be heard in the cacophony and tumult of post-Celtic Tiger Ireland.

As children, the girls and boys in Glengarry were rarely asked about their own accounts of their everyday lives outside of the research process. As the examples above demonstrate, when this happened during the fieldwork, it often resulted in interesting exchanges imbued with many layers of meaning. The presumption that children can be given a voice through the unproblematic adoption of child-centered methods reflects, as Komuleinan (2007: 25) argues:

a particular political and epistemological view of the world (as comprised of autonomous individualised agents) and can sometimes fail to appreciate fully the complexity of communication as context specific and interactional.

The lives of the children were certainly marked through, and by, silences, but these were not simply because they were part of the asylum system and/or living in Direct Provision. Their lives were multilayered. Thus the silences and hushed voices that typified these research relationships reflect these multiple layers: their status as asylum seekers (a position of liminality), as economically marginal figures living in Direct Provision (ignored and sidelined in contemporary Ireland), as children (often marginalized in an adultist society), and as individuals with desires, wants, and needs. While “children-centered methods” that are sensitive to children’s capabilities and competencies do try to “allow” children’s voices be heard by adults (something that is strived for in much applied work with children, following Article 12 of the UNCRC), for a variety of different reasons, children may choose to be silent or to maintain silences. Thus participatory research methods may only produce partial understandings but also researchers need to be very careful in how

they make claims about using specific methods to “give” children a voice to engage with or empower children. Researchers frequently need to critically reflect on the contexts and conditions surrounding the “production” of children’s voices – and to recognize that children’s silences are important. As van Manen and Levering (1996) argue:

The younger child’s life is more open and yet a ‘secret’ because it is hard to interpret, while the older child’s inner life is hard to understand because it may be more intentionally closed and thus a true secret for the adult’s interpretation and sometimes even to the *child’s self-understanding*.

In a similar vein, Nager-Ron and Motzafi-Haller (2011: 661) argue that research with subaltern figures may produce “flat” accounts, but this should not be interpreted as a “failure” but rather as “attempts made by the research participants that reflect their resistance to hegemonic narratives.” At different times each of these different but interrelated reasons could plausibly “explain” children’s silences, but a fuller understanding of these silences requires exploration and critical reflection of the intersections of the multiple layers of individuals’ lives.

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Interviewing Children at Home: Exploring the Use of Individual and Focus Group Interviews

10

Samantha Punch and Elizabeth Graham

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Abstract

This chapter considers the methodological issues and generational power relations involved in conducting research with children in the home setting. The paper discusses some task-based interview tools as well as the advantages and disadvantages of interviewing children individually and in groups within the home context. Moral, emotional, and practical considerations are explored before, during, and after doing interviews with children at home. Ethical and spatial issues are examined along with the power imbalances both between child participants and between children and researchers.

Keywords

Interviews • Focus groups • Interview tools • Generational power • Siblings

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1 Family Homes as a Research Setting

Since the 1990s, there has been an overwhelming increase in methodological discussions of doing research with children (such as Alderson and Morrow 2011; Tisdall et al. 2008), and this chapter contributes to this field by exploring the implications of interviewing children in the home setting. The chapter concurs with many recent studies that argue that, when researching with children, it is often appropriate to use a mixture of methods and techniques in order to engage their interest and enable them to express their views in a flexible manner (Fraser et al. 2004; Greene and Hogan 2005). There is no one magic method to engage children in the research process (Christensen and James 2000). Most of the methodological and ethical issues considered in this chapter are also applicable to research with adults. Doing research with children perhaps encourages researchers to engage more intensely with certain aspects of the research process because of the structural inequalities in the way that childhood tends to be socially constructed (Punch 2002a). More extensive planning, being creative and flexible, and offering a range of choices regarding their preferred forms of communication are issues which are often carefully considered when doing research with children. However, we may be in danger of overlooking some of these issues with adults which results in our tendency to stick to more traditional interview approaches, yet it may be just as beneficial to consider them in research with adults.

The chapter begins with a consideration of some of the ethical and practical issues of space when researching with children within the home setting. It discusses the advantages and disadvantages of using interview tools and task-based techniques. The benefits and limitations of using group and individual interviews are reviewed, before exploring the intergenerational and intragenerational power relations involved in doing research with children in the home context. Throughout the chapter, there is some reflection on the extent to which the issues raised are particular to research with children or are potentially relevant to research with any social group.

2 Family Homes as a Research Setting

For children it is often easier to feel relaxed and at ease in familiar surroundings (Moyson and Roeyers 2012). Research with children within the home may not be as cost-effective as collecting data from children in the school setting; however, it avoids some of the problems and difficulties associated with school research. Various researchers have found practical and ethical challenges as well as adult-child hierarchical issues during data collection in schools. For instance, practically, children's timetables have been found to be limiting (Kellet and Ding 2004), and locating available spare rooms has been problematic (Punch 2002b). Ethical concerns arise inasmuch that children may find it difficult to decline to participate if school staff have already given their consent (Backett-Milburn and McKie 1999). There is also a real risk that children may identify the researchers as teachers, and

thus their participation in the research may be viewed as additional, compulsory schoolwork (Kellet and Ding 2004). Within the home environment, children may be used to having a voice and feeling more comfortable (Powell et al. 2012). Therefore, many researchers choose to collect data in the child's home. However, interviewing children at home means that every setting is different and cannot be managed in the same way (Bushin 2007). Finding a quiet space within the home can be problematic, particularly in large families (McDonald et al. 2006; Powell et al. 2012). Moreover, this can be especially acute in some situations, for example, in families living in poverty who sleep and live in the same room (Gorin et al. 2008).

Thus, the geographical location of the research context is not only important in relation to whether the interviews are carried out at home or at school, but may even be affected by the choice of room within the home. In her research with siblings, the first author, Punch (2007), preferred being able to conduct the interview more informally on children's bedroom floors rather than being seated more formally at a dining room table. This was because it tended to take slightly longer to develop rapport and encourage children to relax in the more adult-centered living rooms. She found that some children seemed to be more relaxed in their own bedroom space surrounded by their own belongings. Particular possessions or toys provided illustrations for discussion of their sibling interactions. She appreciated the opportunity to see the kind of spaces where children would frequently interact with their siblings. For example, during one individual interview, the middle sibling indicated how she and her sister divided their shared bedroom into two bounded spaces which marked their own territory which the other sibling was supposed to respect. Similarly, toys could be drawn into the interview as evidence of sibling disputes over personal possessions or as an icebreaker chat at the start.

Phelan and Kinsella (2013) highlight that dressing casually, using fun, informal language, and conducting interviews on the floor alongside participants help build rapport, but more importantly, it decreases the power imbalance. However, they warn that creating a false sense of friendship between the researcher and participant can raise ethical issues. They also claim that so too does a relationship that minimizes the child's agency. Conducting an interview wearing formal clothes, using formal language, and at a place where the child would typically complete their homework (e.g., dining table) may accentuate the adult/teacher/child relationship and inadvertently create a power imbalance. Epstein et al. (2006) addressed the power imbalance by giving the children the choice of where to sit, and if the child chose to sit on the floor, so too did the researcher.

Bassett et al. (2008) discovered that it was difficult to find a suitable interview location that provided their teenage participants with a space to speak freely. The researchers found that many of the teens only had privacy in their own bedrooms. However, this is a controversial issue mainly because of issues relating to child protection (McDowell 2001). The safety of both the child participants and the adult researcher has to be carefully considered, and anyone researching with children should have a police check. Some researchers may disapprove of interviews taking

place in children's bedrooms (McDowell 2001), and the gender matching of the interviewer and interviewee is likely to be relevant.

One of the interviewers in Bassett et al. (2008) study also found that while her interviews with parents were conducted in private, the same privacy was not afforded to the teens. For example, while interviewing the mother, the researcher was able to do so in the living room with no interruptions; however, when interviewing the 16-year-old daughter in the same room, they were repeatedly interrupted by the participant's sister. Moreover, according to Epstein et al. (2006), while most interviews in their study were conducted in the living room or kitchen (four in the backyard) and were chosen by the child and parent, it was typically the parent who made the final decision of where the interview should be conducted. This restriction has implications for the child's agency during their participation in research. Where possible, Punch (2007) strived to let the children decide where they preferred the interview to be conducted, but in practice parents had often decided beforehand. She reflects that this is something which should have been discussed and negotiated when organizing the time and date of the interviews. In many cases, by the time she arrived on the actual day, it was difficult to renegotiate a parental decision that had already been made, particularly when the room and use of household space had been organized accordingly. Ideally it should be the children's decision as to which space they feel most at ease in talking about a specific topic with an adult researcher. Nevertheless, both children and parents have to be comfortable with the interview location. Hoppe et al. (1995) point out that when children are being interviewed at home, the space is already private, and, in order to maintain confidentiality, it has to be where others cannot overhear the discussions.

MacDonald (2008) discovered that the home environment was extremely problematic when interviewing children with cystic fibrosis. The researcher's expectations of a quiet environment that was time limited for 30 min was very far from the reality of multiple interruptions from family members and visitors. For example, during one interview, the father and siblings entered the room; siblings questioned the researcher's presence; the doorbell rang three times, which set the dog barking; the phone rang causing the mother to answer it each time and pause the interview; and the participant's befriender showed up to accompany him on a day out. For most of their research, Moyson and Roeyers (2012) found that the researcher and the child participants could sit and talk in a private room, such as a bedroom, kitchen, or parent's office. In instances where this was not possible, the interviewer attempted to close a door or window or move outside in order to ensure privacy.

As well as being disruptive and distracting to the interview process, interruptions also have implications for confidentiality inasmuch that family members/guests may overhear the interview. Additionally, due to the multiple interruptions which occurred during the interview process, MacDonald (2008) questioned if it was ethical to keep the recording equipment running and explains how consent, confidentiality, participant welfare, rigor of the research, and timing were all competing for priority. For example, during one interview, the participant's befriender entered the living room, and the recording was stopped because the confidentiality of the child would have been compromised and consent had not been granted from the

befriender. Bassett et al. (2008) highlight the tension between finding a quiet location for the participant to talk freely without being overheard and the need for visibility in order to address safety concerns. Confidentiality can also be difficult to maintain as a consequence of parents' curiosity and concern for their child (Fargas-Malet et al. 2010). For example, parents may ask about the content of the interview, which can result in stress for everyone concerned (Bushin 2007). Thus, interviewing children and young people at home is not without its practical and ethical challenges.

3 Interview Tools and Task-Based Activities

There are now vast amounts of literature detailing many methods, creative and innovative, that can be utilized when researching with children and young people. For instance, some researchers use: diary methods (Barker and Weller 2003), pictures/photos (Thomas et al. 1999), timelines (Farrell 2005), video (McSherry et al. 2008), emotive faces (pictures/drawings) (Veale 2005), ranking exercises (Clark 2005), and secret box (Punch 2002b; the secret box technique is described in the following section). However, there is a need for more literature which details the practicalities of utilizing such techniques in the home setting.

This chapter draws heavily on a study which used task-based interview tools to explore children's experiences of sibling relationships and birth order in Scotland (Punch 2008). The research considered the ways in which siblings are a source of support and conflict (McIntosh and Punch 2009) and how the negotiation of sibling roles varies according to birth order, age, and gender (Punch 2005). The study was conducted with a sample of 30 families of mixed socioeconomic backgrounds in central Scotland with three siblings between the ages of 5 and 17. Each of the 90 siblings was interviewed individually in their homes, followed by 30 focus group interviews with all three siblings together. Before conducting the research, Punch (2007) assumed that the subject matter would be relatively easy for children to talk about and, to a certain extent, she was right. Most children had little difficulty in revealing what they liked and disliked about having brothers or sisters. However, the familiar can be too familiar, and when she asked for specific examples to illustrate a particular issue, it was sometimes a challenge for the respondent to think of one relatively quickly. For example, Steven identified that it could be difficult being the oldest as he was expected to set a good example, but he struggled to think of recent incidences where that had been the case:

Just like, I don't know, it's kind of hard to give examples, but it just is. (Steven 15, oldest, Family 3)

Consequently, it was useful to introduce some task-based activities into both the group and individual interviews to facilitate the communication of ideas (Punch 2002b). The main tools included spider diagrams, charts, lists, and ranking exercises. However, it is worth noting that interview activities were not only incorporated because the research participants were children, as they can also be effective with

adults, such as vignettes (Finch 1987) and photographs (Hurworth 2003). There has been a tendency for child researchers to create and develop innovative tools more extensively for use with children, but it could be argued that flexible, creative ways to enhance communication in a variety of forms should also be considered more frequently with adult research participants (see Bowlby (2015) for an example that does).

Punch (2007) considers that one of the most effective group tasks for brainstorming is the use of spider diagrams. She used them at the beginning of the sibling group interview because they served as a warm-up activity as well as a means for providing useful comparative data. "The oldest" was written in a circle in the middle of a large sheet of paper, and each sibling, with a different color pen, added a leg to the spider diagram by writing different aspects of what it is or might be like to be the oldest sibling. This was a springboard for a more detailed discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of being the oldest. Thus, the spider diagrams were used as a visual aid on which to build information and probe more in-depth (Punch 2002b). Each child could actively participate and add to the diagram, by writing or drawing if they preferred. Spider diagrams were an effective way for the siblings to identify what they perceived as the central features of each birth order position.

Punch (2007) also used a fairly open, brainstorming task in the individual interview when children wrote all the positive and negative things about having siblings on separate pieces of paper headed by smiling or sad faces. They subsequently ranked their responses according to what they most and least liked about their siblings. A key benefit of this task was that it provided children time to think about which issues they would like to raise and they were not under pressure to respond immediately to a particular question. It also enabled the children to settle in to the interview and begin thinking about siblings in an open-ended way. They were able to define the issues that were most important to them in their sibling relationships, and these directed the subsequent interview discussion.

Where possible, the interview tools were used in a flexible manner (see also Bushin 2007). This depended on the time taken to complete previous activities, the interview dynamic, the children's preferences, and the researcher's ability to have developed a good rapport with the participants. For example, in the individual interview, Punch (2007) used a social network task where children wrote or drew themselves in the center of a piece of paper and added the names of people who were important to them. This visual representation was used as a comparison of children's sibling relationships with other key relations in their lives, such as with friends or parents. Some children were at ease and confident with straightforward talking (Harden et al. 2000), whereas others preferred the visual task-based activities. However, to avoid making incorrect possibly "adultist" assumptions, Punch offered them the choice of whether they preferred to talk, write, or draw about their social networks. Using tools in a flexible manner helps to cater for children's varied preferences and skills, enabling children to feel more comfortable with an unfamiliar adult researcher (Punch 2002a). The challenge is that sometimes the data generated through different techniques is more difficult to compare across the interviews, but

providing that the main themes are consistently addressed, this usually is not a problem in qualitative interviewing and analysis, which can integrate visual data.

Epstein et al. (2006) pretested the photographs they would use in their interviews with children, which explored their perspectives on a specialized summer camp, and this proved to be extremely beneficial to their research in a number of ways. They found that the photographs alongside the questions stimulated conversations between researchers and participants; therefore, there was no need to change the questions in the interview guide. They also added a photograph of a telephone because the young people mentioned the “telephone rule.” Sharing the photographs extended the length of the interview; thus, the researchers ensured that throughout the interviews, time was carefully observed, and more effort was made to stay on track. Moreover, because the participants brought their own photographs to share during the interview, the researchers learned that the best place to showcase the images was on the floor. It could also be suggested that piloting research methods in the home environment provides the researcher with a more realistic time frame that is needed to be allocated to each interview and will undoubtedly be useful when arranging a time that is suited to the family (Stephen et al. 2008). What this demonstrates is the importance of pretesting methods in terms of effectively utilizing time and space in the home setting.

4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Individual and Group Interviews

In terms of using interviews and/or focus groups for research with children at home, the literature suggests that both have advantages and disadvantages. Moyson and Roeyers (2012) used in-depth interviews to gain an understanding of the experience of being a sibling of a child with intellectual disability, from the siblings’ own frame of reference. Thus, the individual interview allowed for the sibling’s own personal experience to be emphasized. Mascha and Boucher (2006) conducted semi-structured interviews with children who had a sibling with an autism spectrum disorder. This method was chosen because the researchers believed it would enable them to support the individual needs of the participants who may find it difficult and painful to convey experiences of living in unusual family circumstances. Epstein et al.’s (2006) data were collected in individual semi-structured interviews using photo elicitation with 35 children, either at home or a hospital clinic. As aforementioned, the interviews conducted at home were affected by frequent interruptions. However, individual interviews in the home environment allowed for all photographs to be explored with all the children. Regarding the interview as an interaction and thereby acknowledging the respondents’ participation in the research process, it has both ethical and analytical advantages and disadvantages to qualitative childhood studies (Fernqvist 2010). For example, in Robson’s (2001) study involving interviews with young carers in Zimbabwe, the interviews were conducted by social workers and were distressing to both the social workers and the young carers. As the

research was unlikely to benefit the participants directly, this raised ethical concerns. In contrast, young carers interviewed in Tanzania and the UK appeared to value the opportunity to talk about their feelings and experiences, explaining that no one had ever asked about their caring experiences before (Evans and Becker 2009).

Bassett et al. (2008) found that their interviews with teenagers were particularly challenging in terms of the teens lack of engagement in the process. One of the limitations of using interviews with anyone, not just children, is that there is a reliance on people's views as told in the interview situation. This is a key reason why it can be beneficial to conduct both individual and group interviews, as the group situation allows for individual viewpoints to be validated, questioned, or challenged (see also Valentine 1999a). Meanwhile the individual interview encourages interviewees to talk at length and in detail about their own understanding of issues without interruptions or tensions emerging from the group context. Hence this chapter suggests that conducting both individual and group interviews, with either children or adults, enables researchers to combine the benefits of each type of interview.

At the end of the siblings' study, Punch (2002b) used a "secret box" to gather anonymous feedback from the children regarding their involvement in the research. She asked them to tick boxes at the top of the paper to indicate their sex and birth order position so she could compare responses according to these variables. The siblings found their own space in the room to fill out the sheet individually and anonymously, folding it up afterward and posting it into a small hole at the top of a box which was otherwise completely sealed with Sellotape. To ensure anonymity, she promised to only open up the box once the research was completed so they could write whatever they wanted about their experiences of taking part (see also Edwards and Alldred 1999). Punch (2007) only began this evaluation-in-the-box technique after conducting interviews with six families; thus, she obtained 70 responses from 24 families, including 40 boys and 30 girls. Some of the data presented in this chapter is thus based on the children's own anonymous reflections of taking part in that research. In order to distinguish between the different participants, a "B" or "G" is used to indicate boy or girl, respectively, and an "O," "M," or "Y" to differentiate between oldest, middle, and youngest siblings. Thus "GM" refers to a middle girl sibling.

On the evaluation sheet, Punch (2007) asked the children to indicate which type of interview they preferred. Overall they marginally preferred the group interviews (39) compared with the individual interviews (29). Given that the numbers are relatively small, no major conclusions can be reached apart from noting that groups are slightly the preferred option. Nevertheless, many children preferred the individual interview so there was no clear ideal as to which type of interview was perceived to be more suitable (see also Punch 2002b). Diverse reasons for preferring each kind of interview were stated. The main reason given for preferring the individual interview was because it allowed them to speak freely: "Because I could say what I want and I had more to say" (GO). There were several explanations for why the individual interview facilitated greater freedom of expression (see also Valentine 1999a), firstly because it was more private:

You could say things you couldn't exactly say with the group (GO)
I got to say things that I couldn't tell family about (GO)
Easier to say things about your siblings (BO)
Could say things and not feel bad (BO)

Secondly, the focus was only on them, "You got to speak more and answer yourself" (GM), and there were no interruptions, "I didn't have two sisters interrupting and being brats" (BO) and "You didn't have anyone butting in" (GM). Thirdly, there were no disagreements to cope with: "No argument, say whatever you want" (BO). Finally, two children in the youngest birth order position indicated that the individual interview avoided any consequences from unequal power relations between siblings:

I felt they were ganging up on me (GY)
Mainly 'cause people never made fun of me 'cause nobody was there (BY)

The above comments indicate that it was appropriate for the group interviews to follow the individual interviews so that unequal power relationships between siblings were less likely to influence the research agenda for the individual interviews. Another unanticipated reason for this sequencing was because some children indicated that they had been anxious as to what their siblings would be saying about them during the individual interview (Punch 2007). The subsequent group interview thus gave them an opportunity to hear for themselves what their siblings thought of them:

I enjoyed the group discussion because we let each other know what we think (BY)
You could hear what the others had to say about me (BM)

The anxiety or curiosity about what the other siblings had discussed is not unique to children's experiences of being interviewed separately in family homes. Valentine points out that adult couples may worry that they might be judged or are anxious "because each cannot manage the impression of themselves being reproduced by the other" (1999a, p. 71). Being interviewed together enables household members, whether children or adults, to negotiate the production of their shared accounts (Harden et al. 2010). In the siblings' study, hearing each other's views was one of the main reasons for preferring the group interview:

I preferred the group interview because we all heard about what each other thought even though we knew most of it anyway (GY)
You know what they feel about you (GO)
Because you learnt what the brothers think of you (BO)

While, for some, the individual interview had been easier as they could speak more freely, several children indicated that the group interview was easier for different reasons. There was slightly less pressure in the group context, "Didn't have time to think all yourself" (GM), as ideas could be shared and sparked off each other (see also Lewis 1992; Punch 2002b):

Because it had the input of three people (GO)
I could expand on what the others were saying or think of what to say from what they said (GO)
I preferred the group interview because it was easy to think of things to say (GM)

Focus groups, with participants of any social group, are likely to facilitate engagement in terms of encouraging members to contribute to topics raised by more confident group members and feeling more at ease in the company of others (Kitzinger 1995; Trakas 2009; Bryman 2015). Wilkinson (1998) asserts that focus groups are particularly advantageous in pre-existing groups (in this case siblings or families) as participants may challenge or contradict between what is said and what is reality. For example, a child said that they never cried or never played with dolls, but then a sibling questions them about the time they cried because they lost their doll at the park. Other benefits are the spontaneity of the discussion (Krueger 1994), the jogging of each other's memories (Valentine 1999a), and the more relaxed and fun atmosphere (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). However, these advantages can be particularly suitable for children who are possibly (but not necessarily) more likely to perceive the interview situation as a somewhat daunting experience (Bushin 2007), as they are perhaps less likely to be used to communicating at length with unfamiliar adults (Punch 2002a). This issue emerged in some of the children's responses in the siblings' research. Some felt the group interview was easier because it was "more relaxed" (GO), and they were not by themselves: "because I had others with me" (BY), "my brothers were there" (BM), and "because we had company" (GM). In addition, it was perhaps less nerve-wracking for some as it was the second interview:

It was easier to talk and I wasn't so nervous because I knew what to expect (GO)
Because I was nervous the first time (GM)

There are some similar advantages for the researcher as Wilkinson (1998) claims that focus groups allow the researcher time to acclimatize to the participants and their words, their language, and their frameworks. Children in Punch's research (2007) also suggested that to some extent the group interview was perceived to be more fun, partly because of the banter with their siblings and feeling more relaxed in their company and partly because more group activities could be carried out:

It was more fun things and when I did it on my own we didn't do as much things sometimes just drawing things (BY)

The group interview also catered for more discussion: "Because I liked it when my brothers and sisters were there to agree and disagree" (GY), even though sometimes this resulted in arguments. As one boy noted: "it allowed me to show what I talked about in the single interview actually happening" (BO). Kitzinger (1995), however, cautions that participants may be silenced because of other members dominating the discussion. According to Wilkinson (1998), despite retaining

control of the analysis and writing up, during the data collection in a focus group setting, the researcher's power and influence is reduced because they have much less power and influence over a group than they do in an individual interview.

5 Power Relations When Interviewing at Home

Group interviews allow for some interaction among the participants to be observed (Hennessy and Heary 2005). This was also the case in Punch's sibling research (2007), but the downside was that it was difficult trying to cater for siblings of mixed ages and competencies. The power struggles between the different birth order positions meant that the group interview proved to be quite challenging at times. Sometimes the older and middle siblings dominated the discussions perhaps because of their wider range of vocabulary and greater linguistic experience of the world. It was not always easy to include the youngest sibling into the conversation, as even direct questions to them were sometimes answered by one of the older siblings:

SAM: And when he gets annoyed what do you do Andy?

BY: Err. . .

BO: You just go in a big hump and he just starts shouting things down the stairs 'I should get to stay up late!' (George, 11, Andy 5, Family 23)

As a result of having others speak for them, the youngest sibling sometimes reacted in particular ways such as by not answering questions at all (see also Bushin 2007) or by shouting or by speaking in a high-pitched voice. This reflects a common challenge of group interviews as some members of the group can dominate and the researcher should aim to encourage the quieter individuals to contribute their views (Krueger 1994; Bloor et al. 2001). This can pose a particular problem when the group interviews are based on the pre-existing social group of family members. For example, parents may try to take control and speak on behalf of their children (Bushin 2007), or one half of a couple may constantly interrupt and speak for their partner (Valentine 1999a). Similarly, some of Punch's (2007) sibling group interviews dissolved into all the children speaking together or arguing, and usually it was the oldest who would try to end a dispute:

GY: This is what he does. . . [imitating it]

[talking over each other- Jackie and Marcos demonstrating fighting by rolling around on top of each other on the floor and shouting]

SAM: We won't be able to hear anything!

BM: Jackie! Get off! Get off me! [Marcos really screeching]

GO: Jackie get off him. Stop it! Jackie stop acting smart. Stop it you two. You stop it.

(Josephine 15, Marcos 9, Jackie 5, Family 5)

Thus, there were times when Punch's research coincided with the "ethical minefield" that Valentine described in her study with British parents: "What starts

out as a light-hearted banter between a couple over a disputed event or activity can rapidly deteriorate into a full-blown conflict, with the interviewer caught in the crossfire" (1999a, p. 70). As a child researcher, it was difficult for Punch (2007) to know how best to cope with the more explosive group situations because the "researcher" wanted to observe the siblings' interactions, but the "adult" felt a responsibility to intervene. Some have argued that:

Where groups are composed of members drawn from pre-existing social groups, it is both inevitable and desirable that the group interactions in the focus group reflect the group interactions in the pre-existing group: one group member may be more forceful than others, another may be the group humourist, and so on. Of course, the facilitator should not seek to overturn these natural features of group interaction. (Bloor et al. 2001, p. 50)

However, ethically this is a difficult position to embrace when it involves children and actual or potential physical fighting, particularly among siblings who are likely to experience power struggles, including physical force and overt resistance (Punch 2005). Punch (2007) tried to compromise with partial involvement by pointing out that the tape would not be able to pick up what they were saying if they were arguing. However, when some arguments progressed or fighting began, it was difficult to decide on the most appropriate response (see also Morris-Roberts 2001). Child researchers are often keen to avoid appearing like the typical adult, telling children what to do or trying to discipline them (Hennessy and Heary 2005). Punch (2007) was curious as to how the siblings might resolve the situation themselves yet felt that their parents would perhaps expect her to retain some control if fights broke out. She had to be prepared to intervene on occasions as she did not want them to hurt each other or for the interview to end in tears. It was not an easy dilemma to resolve and she tried to respond to each particular situation as it occurred. She tended to wait and see how they might deal with the incident themselves. If the situation deteriorated, she tried appealing to their better nature by asking them not to continue arguing or fighting or by attempting to regain their interest in a particular task. These kinds of interactions enabled her to observe some sibling power struggles being played out in practice. However, it was difficult to balance ethical concerns with the social research view that "the focus group is meant to be tapping into group life, not changing it" (Bloor et al. 2001, p. 50).

Morris-Roberts (2001) calls for child researchers to engage with a feminist "politics of intervention" where oppressive behavior is challenged and research participants are encouraged to reflect on their practices. In relation to the siblings' research, Punch's (2007) main reason for intervening was related to issues of child safety, but there were also ethical and moral responsibilities surrounding the reinforcement of negative sibling behavior based on gender, age, and birth order. In particular she was caught between the interests of the research in terms of watching sibling relationships unravel without intervention and the ethics involved in not questioning unequal gendered and intragenerational power imbalances. Gabb (2010) highlights that these multidimensional layers and narrative loose ends that characterize stories or individuals' emotional-social worlds help capture the uncertainties

of everyday lived family relationships. Thus, she cautions against tidying up or sanitizing the data.

In practice, there are multiple difficulties in trying to resolve the kind of conflicts which this chapter has discussed. Such tensions frequently arise during the research process, and the researcher is often left feeling uncomfortable because of the ethical ambiguities which they face (Valentine 1999b; Morris-Roberts 2001). It is worth bearing in mind that all group interviews are likely to be affected to some degree by the perceived power or status of different members of the group (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990), whether that is derived from age, gender, class, education, or any other social variable. Coping with power dynamics and conflict among the groups is a common aspect of managing group interviews (Krueger 1994) and is not only relevant to children. However, given that birth order, particularly during childhood, is linked to hierarchical concepts of power and authority (Edwards et al. 2005) which can be contested, resisted, and negotiated (McIntosh and Punch 2009), power struggles during sibling group interviews are likely to be fairly frequent and at times intense. For example, on many occasions the siblings in Punch's study (2007) seemed to take delight in contradicting each other, often before they considered whether the other actually had a valid point or not:

SAM: What would happen?

BO: Dawn would agree to what I say and Ann would stomp away in a huff.

GM: No I wouldn't

BO: Yes you would Ann!

GM: Okay yes I would. (Ray 10, Ann 8, Family 24)

Sibling alliances also evolved when two siblings (usually either both oldest or both youngest rather than the oldest and youngest together) appeared to be "ganging up on" the other:

BM: Duncan! It's an interview!

SAM: It's okay

BO: Duncan you're being asked a question, you know?

BY: Yes I know...

BO: Duncan what are you doing!

BM: Duncan you are just blaming everybody. This is an interview. It's not an insultation competition! [all talking at once]...

BM: What's that say? [referring to something Duncan has written on the paper for a writing task]

BO: Duncan, you're just wasting space

BM: You've wasted half the paper! (Michael 10, Christian 8, Duncan 6, Family 29)

The group interviews provided enhanced insights into the nature of sibling interactions as their conversations and their behavior reflected both the conflictual and the supportive elements of their relationships. The groups illustrated the ways in which siblings can switch rapidly between positive and negative behavior toward each other (Punch 2008). While group interviews generally allow both nonverbal and verbal aspects of group interaction to be observed and recorded (Stewart and

Shamdasani 1990), the observation of group dynamics can be particularly interesting when the participants are part of the same household (Valentine 1999a; Bushin 2007). The fluctuating nature of sibling relations can result in group interviews with brothers and sisters being a challenging yet illuminating research encounter (Punch 2007). While generating useful and interesting data which indicate the ambivalent nature of sibling power relations, group interviews are also more difficult to manage and clearly hear all of what is being said (Hoppe et al. 1995).

In Stephen et al.'s (2008) study of understanding preschool children's experiences with information and communication technologies (ICT) at home, two researchers were present at each visit. One researcher conducted the interview with the parent, while the other took notes to supplement the audio recording and, when the opportunity arose, talked and played with the preschool child or their siblings. It could be considered that this not only enabled the parent's interview to be conducted with fewer interruptions but it also allowed the interview with the child to be conducted when the child was relaxed, highlighting the importance of building rapport before beginning the interview.

It is worth considering that, for some children, sibling conflicts are an "integral part of their feelings of connection to their siblings" (Edwards et al. 2005, p. 45), whereas for others they could be more problematic. This may explain why some of Punch's (2007) sibling group interviews were effective and others did not work so well. However, this can happen in any research as some groups can be more challenging to conduct (Krueger 1994; Hennessy and Heary 2005). In the siblings' study, it was partly dependent on the mixed ages of the siblings and the ways in which they interacted with each other and partly because of the researcher's impact on the group dynamic.

MacDonald (2008) mention that at times, due to instances mentioned previously such as interruptions, the interview process was out of their control. Moreover, they contest the arguments that the power imbalance in social science research favors the researcher as opposed to the participant. They claim that within their research, children were able to deliberately employ strategies to evade "predatory" interrogations. For example, children exerted control by choosing what to disclose or hide, using parents to indicate that they had had enough of being interviewed, and appearing reluctant to talk, even in instances where one-word answers were required. MacDonald (2008) also assert that feelings of researcher insecurity could be heightened by the fact that the children and their parents are experts of their own situation.

Robson (2001) claims that children who withdraw their consent are challenging and resisting the researcher's methods, perhaps in response to the discomfort or distress they created. Likewise, she also suggests that tears are a form of voice that should be listened to or that they occur in response to expectations from adults of children to show distress more readily. Fernqvist (2010) argues that conceptualizing the interview as a setting for negotiating identity can be understood in line with Erving Goffman's frame concept. He goes on to explain that the interview frame can be divided into different frames with different limitations and opportunities. The everyday lives of individuals, children as well as adults, hold an entire range of different frames, and even very young children are aware of different situations or

frames. While conducting his own interviews with children and adolescents, Fernqvist (2010) observes different strategies of doing age. For example, a very young child can act mischievous or unfocused, while an adolescent may use their position to make fun of the researcher's questions, be rude, or refuse to answer. What this demonstrates is that children and young people can utilize power resources related to their age in different contexts.

Recording equipment can also be intimidating for children during research which is perhaps partly due to it being more representative of an adult-child interaction as opposed to a two-way child conversation. Bassett et al. (2008) state that the use of a tape recorder appeared to intimidate some of the participants. This became clear as some were more talkative before or after the recorder was in use. Similarly, Gill et al. (2008) claim that it is sometimes the case that people feel uncomfortable being taped. One way to minimize the participant's distress or discomfort would be to give the child control of the tape recorder so that they can switch off recording if they feel uncomfortable (Robson 2001). One researcher allowed children to put stickers on the recording equipment to make it more fun and less formal (Tisdall et al. 2008). Whichever way, or form, power manifests itself in research with children, it is clear that it is important to address this and make the effort to minimize power imbalances in order to help the participants engage with the interview, facilitating the data collection process.

At times during research with children and families in the home environment, a mixture of both interviews and focus groups are used, or interviews are conducted with another family member present (Gabb 2010; MacDonald 2008; Stephen et al. 2008). Both have advantages and disadvantages attached. Stephen et al. (2008) conducted three interviews with each family, but while the children were often present in the first two interviews, they were not directly involved until the third. This gave them more time to be comfortable with the researchers being in their home. Interviewing both the parent and the child was advantageous as it allowed the child to witness the interactions between their parent and the researcher and become accustomed to the researcher's presence in their home. Gabb (2010) collected data from ten families using a variety of methods, including diaries, emotion maps, semi-structured and biographical narrative interviews, and focus group interviews. Initially, the research design was intended for all methods to be completed by all family members. However, this approach was found to be unrealistic inasmuch that at least one family member in many families of the sample did not wish to participate, making the analytical process particularly challenging. MacDonald (2008) interviewed children and parents individually or together and had initially intended that the parents attend a focus group. However, she discovered very early on that it would be almost impossible for parents to be in the same location at the same time. Of interest is Highet's (2003) study in which, of the 30 interviews conducted with participants aged 13–15, 21 were paired by choice, four were threesomes, and only five were individual. Moreover, all but one of the paired interviews comprised of same-sex groupings. In the paired interviews, the young people were visibly relaxed and enthusiastic about participating. What this suggests is that for this particular age group, being interviewed with a friend may be

preferable to being interviewed individually, which is worth bearing in mind when researching teenagers in the home setting.

6 Ethical, Emotional, and Practical Considerations

It is important to consider the impact that conducting interviews at home can have on family interactions when the researcher is not present. In Punch's (2007) sibling research, it emerged several times that the interviews were talked about and sometimes used in sibling power struggles:

She just annoys me. Like today, she was like: 'I'm going to tell Samantha Punch about you' [mimicking a whiney voice]. (Gareth 13, oldest, Family 26)

SAM: How do you think she'd describe you as a brother?

BM: She probably would say 'annoying' and 'horrible'. She said that she's going to say horrible things about me [when you interview her]. (Graham 11, middle child, Family 4).

Before or after the interviews, some siblings teased each other with what they might say or have said about them. Sometimes Punch (2007) was concerned that the research might have had a negative impact on their sibling relations. Protecting research subjects from harm is not a specific ethical issue that only applies to working with children, as most researchers frequently worry about the appropriateness of their behavior in the field, particularly their "methodology, personality and morality" (Devereux 1992, p. 43). Ethically it is the researcher's responsibility not to make any interviewee feel worse after an interview.

Moyson and Roeyers (2012) highlight how leaving time to interact with the child after the interview is important for various reasons. For instance, they assert that the interview may involve an emotionally charged topic for the child, and by playing with the child afterward, this allows them to "get rid" of his/her story. They also believe that the extra time allows the researcher to observe the child in their natural setting and the interactions they have with family members. Moreover, the additional time that was given to the children to play and have fun enabled the researchers to give the child something back in return for their participation, which in turn would limit the guilt that some researchers experience when leaving the field.

In the siblings' study, it was not realistic to think that the interview process would encourage siblings to argue or annoy each other less than they usually do. As some of them suggested in their evaluations, their participation in the research may have enabled them to be more reflexive about their sibling relations and think about their birth order positions from different perspectives: "I thought that the project made me think about aspects of sibship I hadn't thought about before" (BO). However, aspects of their relationships such as conflict, rivalry, and support would continue to be the key features of their interactions (Punch 2005). Consequently to some extent, if siblings used their involvement in the research as a way of bantering or negotiating with their brothers and sisters out with the interview situation, this was not

unlike other forms of sibling interactions (see McIntosh and Punch 2009; Edwards et al. 2005). It is also worth bearing in mind that the home interviews might be affected to some extent by the nature of sibling interactions immediately prior to the interview. For example, as the following quotations suggest, the context of the interview is important because if the siblings had just had an argument, perhaps they might be more willing to be negative in some of their responses:

SAM: How might he describe you as a brother?

BO: Oh, I don't want to think about it. I suppose if you asked him at different times he'd have different opinions. Like if I'd annoyed him in the recent past then he'd use it. (Robert 16, oldest, Family 4)

I always like them but it's just a certain scale - how much I like them on the day. (Graham 11, middle child, Family 4)

While this may be particularly pertinent for the sibling relationship as it tends to be characterized as a fluctuating relationship, moving swiftly between positive and negative experiences (Punch 2008), nonetheless, these methodological issues are relevant to all types of interviewing. We have to take into account that "an interview is a social encounter like any other" (May 1997, p. 129). Hence, the kind of data we collect depends on many factors including the research setting, the context in which the interview takes place, and the extent to which the interviewer has built rapport and a relationship of trust with the interviewee (Westcott and Littleton 2005). Phelan and Kinsella (2013) explain that the interactions between the researcher and child participants can be aided by informal language, dressing casually, and body language. MacDonald (2008) achieved rapport with one teenage participant through a personal line of questioning that had little to do with their research enquiry (football, games, hobbies), but was more an exercise to enable the participant to relax. Similarly, Bassett et al. (2008) found that by asking the teenage participants about themselves at the beginning of the interview, it encouraged a deeper engagement with the interview process. While this informal approach is beneficial in terms of building rapport at the beginning of an interview, Mascha and Boucher (2006) highlight the importance of disclosing details of the methods used, interview schedule, relationship between researcher and participant, and the assurance of confidentiality at the start of the interview process, although it could be argued that this is age dependant. Building rapport at the beginning, and maintaining it throughout the interview, also helps deal with the power imbalance between adult researcher and child participant.

Furthermore, Bassett et al. (2008) suggested that disclosing information in the interview about themselves as people rather than as researchers enhanced the teenagers' engagement. For example, disclosing likes and dislikes of particular food enabled the teenagers to view the researcher as a person that they could relate to. This approach allows the researcher to counter their authority if it is in any way curtailing the children or young people's responses. Researchers must also ensure that participants know that they are free to withdraw at any point during the process and are given opportunities to do so. Cocks (2006) emphasize that researchers

should remain constantly vigilant to the responses of children at all times and informed consent is not something that is obtained at the beginning of the research and then set aside. This can be addressed by starting each session with an overview of what would be covered that day, followed by asking if the child still wished to participate (Phelan and Kinsella 2013).

When interviewing in the home setting, it is also important to consider that children are likely to talk about their experiences of being interviewed with other family members. At the beginning of the interviews, Punch (2007) made it clear to the children that if they wanted to discuss what they talked about to their parents or siblings that was their choice. The aim was to reassure them that the researcher would not be discussing anything with either their parents or their siblings. Care has to be taken to ensure this promise is not broken in any way as it can be difficult at times when parents ask researchers very direct questions afterward (Valentine 1999b). For example, some parents can be curious to know whether their children's fighting is perceived as "normal." Researchers should strive to give noncommittal, vague answers, but this can be hard when parents know they have just been talking to their children in-depth (Bushin 2007). It may mean that the researcher has to gently remind them that their children's confidentiality cannot be broken, but again this is not necessarily an easy thing to tell a parent who is perhaps concerned about what may have been discussed. Furthermore, this may influence the kind of families which volunteer to take part in research. For example, families that have siblings who are particularly violent toward each other or are dealing with specific problems might not be willing to volunteer to let a stranger into their homes to interview their children. Thus, it is important that the limitations of self-selecting samples are recognized.

Children's geographers should always consider in advance what steps might be taken if a child discloses abuse, no matter how unlikely it may seem. Researchers should decide before fieldwork begins whether they can offer full or partial confidentiality to their participants, and this is particularly pertinent for research with children (Alderson and Morrow 2011). In the siblings' project, Punch (2007) told the child participants that the interview would be totally confidential, taking the risk that if some form of abuse or harm was disclosed she would have to discuss that with the child concerned, knowing that she might have to breach that confidentiality if they insisted on secrecy. In practice, no such situation emerged. In contrast in a study on young people's problems (Hallett et al. 2003), because of the potentially more sensitive nature of the topic, the interview was begun by offering partial confidentiality. This meant the young people were told that if they indicated that their life was in danger, as an adult, the researcher would have a moral responsibility to do something about that, but possible action would be discussed with them first. Child researchers should carefully consider the issue of disclosure and confidentiality before embarking on their fieldwork, but the decision of whether to announce partial or full confidentiality should depend on the research topic, the sample of children, and the research context (Punch 2007).

Watts (2008) argues that qualitative research demands the development of rapport which can lead to an emotional connection with the participants; therefore, it is likely

that there will be an emotional response, to some degree, when curbing the relationship and leaving the field. The researcher may feel guilt that the participants have been emotionally harmed or exploited as a result of the research. This relates to the home setting in that the researcher has built rapport with the child and been a guest in their home environment. According to Bennett (2004), rationality is favored over emotion, especially in academic research, but that emotion affects the research at every level, even at the beginning in terms of the subjectivities that motivates academic research agendas. Thus it is likely that there may be subjectivities involved in the researcher's decision to study children. It could also be considered that there may be emotions involved in entering the home setting. For example, Widdowfield (2000) highlights her emotional responses to physical surroundings when conducting research in West End Newcastle with regard to run-down areas. Her response caused her to feel angry at the injustice and inequality, upset at the unpleasant and unhappy circumstances of people living there, and distressed that she could not see an easy solution to the problem. This is worth bearing in mind, and preparing for beforehand, in terms of the children's physical environment in the home setting.

Dickson-Swift et al. (2008) stress that it is also important for researchers to have support to cope with emotions during fieldwork, just as it is necessary to ensure support is in place for participants. This is especially the case if the nature of the research with children is particularly sensitive or emotive, such as a topic that is personal to the researcher or that the researcher can identify with. Therefore, the emotional risk of the researcher is also worth taking into account (Punch 2012) alongside the emotional risk to the participants (Sampson et al. 2008). Irwin (2006) argues that ending the relationship may be hard for both participants and researcher. The participants may feel hurt or abandoned, and the researcher may feel guilty about being able to return to their own lives away from the field which, according to Leyshon (2002), is all the more reason why researchers should make clear at the start their role as a researcher.

7 Conclusion

Researching children at home, although rewarding and providing rich data, is not without its difficulties. As the literature has shown, there are many complexities involved before, during, and after the research. Punch's research (2007) has demonstrated that the child participants, the parent gatekeepers, and the adult researcher should all feel comfortable about the timing and location of the interviews, as this influences the nature of the data generated. Both intergenerational and intragenerational power relationships may need to be negotiated when interviewing children at home. In particular, using task-based activities in both individual and group interviews is an attempt to minimize unequal power relations between the adult researcher and child participants. However, it is important that the researcher critically reflects on the advantages and disadvantages of using different types of interviews and techniques (see also Mascha and Boucher 2006). The home

environment as a research setting offers various advantages in terms of providing a convenient, familiar, comfortable, and informal setting for the child, as opposed to research within schools. The formal school setting or other public environments may be structured more hierarchically emphasizing adult-child imbalances of power. However, it should not always be assumed that the home is the most appropriate context for interviewing children, as for some it may not be a safe space. This may result in a certain degree of bias in a self-selecting sample of participants when stipulating that the research setting will be the family home.

If time and money are available, combining both group and individual interviews enables researchers to observe group dynamics and explore power relations within the group while also engaging in more private, in-depth discussions with individuals on a one-to-one basis. Researchers should carefully consider the sequencing of conducting focus groups before individual interviews or vice versa. As we have seen in this chapter, it can be beneficial to interview research participants both together and apart, but it will depend on the research context, topic, and sample of participants (MacDonald 2008). Group interviews provide a useful opportunity to observe interactions between participants and to develop group discussions, but the power relations can be challenging to manage. Ethical issues such as consent and confidentiality involving the participants and their family members, or anyone else entering the household, should always be addressed before, during, and after research with children. Moreover, due to the relationships that are likely to be formed as a result of the researcher being invited into the child's personal space, special consideration should be given to the emotions of both the participant and researcher, particularly when leaving the field. The type of interview, the particular interview tools used, and the research context each have advantages and disadvantages attached to them. Researchers need to be aware of what these are so that the difficulties can be minimized and their effectiveness maximized.

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Abstract

Research focusing on children and childhood has a long history, dating at least to the early twentieth century. Over the course of more than a century, children have variously been positioned as the objects, subjects and participants of research – and more recently, as bearers of human rights and actors within the research process. Research with children does not occur in a vacuum, but both reflects and shapes the ways in which children are positioned within a society. This chapter explores the ways in which recognition of children's human rights has influenced thinking about and approaches to research with children. It explores what rights-based research means for research ethics and methodology and for child-adult relations.

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Research focusing on children and childhood has a long history, dating at least to the early twentieth century. Over the course of more than a century, children have variously been positioned as the objects, subjects, and participants of research. Research has variously sought to understand children's path toward adulthood, their cognitive abilities, and their views and experiences, as well as the nature of childhood as a socially constructed and culturally specific institution.

Research with children does not occur in a vacuum, but both reflects and shapes the ways in which children are positioned within a society. This chapter explores the ways in which recognition of children's human rights has influenced thinking about and approaches to research with children. It initially maps the shift from research that objectifies children and prioritizes scientific experimentation and observation to research that positions children as social actors and as bearers of human rights. It then turns to consideration of what rights-based research means for research ethics and methodology and for child-adult relations.

1 Early Research on Children

In the early twentieth century, scholarly attention began to focus on the ways in which children develop and learn about the world around them. Research, such as that of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, contributed to the field of developmental psychology that burgeoned during the twentieth century. As Levine (2007, p. 248) notes, "from about 1880 to 1920, childhood was increasingly formulated in what might be called *paediatric* and *pedagogical* terms..." Until the late 1970s, the disciplines of psychology, medicine and education dominated research relating to children. Scientific experimentation or observation dominated methodologies that were designed to gain insight into children's health and development.

For much of the twentieth century, children's broader social worlds were of less concern to researchers than their development toward adulthood. Children were positioned as the objects rather than the subjects of research. The idea that individual children are bearers of human rights, which should be respected throughout the research process, was virtually unheard-of. The dominant approach to the study of children's development came under challenge from the 1970s. In 1977, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1977, p. 513) pointed out that "much of contemporary developmental psychology is the science of the strange behaviour of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time." Bronfenbrenner called for research that sought to understand children's

development and behavior in their homes, schools, and playgrounds, rather than in laboratory settings. Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach to human development focused attention of children's social worlds and their human relationships and interactions. With the work of Bronfenbrenner and others, children's life worlds became of greater interest to researchers, and their social relationships were taken seriously. The concept of children's human rights would not, however, be identified as directly relevant to research for another decade.

Throughout the twentieth century, scholars from a widening range of disciplines became interested in childhood as a social or historical phenomenon or in the ways in which children develop and are socialized. Much of this research relied on historical and textual analyses (e.g., Aries 1962; Zelizer 1985; Hendrick 1997). As a result, more attention was paid to the construction of childhood as a social phenomenon than to children as a social group. Anthropology has long focused on the roles children play and, particularly, the rites of passage to adulthood, but the history of the discipline's attention to children and childhood has been somewhat uneven (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2008, p. 241). Early ethnographic accounts were crucial in focusing attention of divergences in child-rearing practices around the world (e.g., Mead 1928; Malinowski 1929). Anthropological research has been at the forefront of challenging the notion of childhood as a clearly discernible biological phase that underpinned developmental psychology, pointing instead to the local and socially constructed nature of childhood across cultures (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2008, p. 242). If early anthropological research was largely concerned with rites of passage to adulthood, more contemporary research has positioned children as "meaning makers" who actively engage in and create the meaning of social interactions (see Toren 2007).

Early research *on* children tended to focus on the ways in which children develop along the path to adulthood, with an emphasis on scientific methods involving observation and experimentation. Contemporary researchers have observed the important role psychological research in particular has had in efforts to improve child care and education (Woodhead and Faulkner 2008). Yet children were the objects of research, rather than subjects or participants in the research process. The aim was to understand "objectively" how children develop, rather than to gain insight into children's "subjective" views and experiences or to understand the world from a child's standpoint. Methods were generally chosen on the basis of accepted standards of scientific reliability, rather than children's interests or understanding of them. As a result, many methods used would be considered unacceptable today, particularly within the ever-expanding area of social studies of childhood.

As scholars from a wider range of disciplines began to explore childhood, the ways in which childhood is constructed and the nature of children's roles within diverse social, economic, and political contexts became the focus of attention. In the last decades of the twentieth century, the nature of research relating to children and childhood was transformed. In disciplines as diverse as psychology and anthropology, we can observe a shift from the observation of children's journey to adulthood to recognition of children as social actors. Accompanying this shift has

been a greater concern about the treatment and status of children *within* research processes.

2 Rethinking Children's Place in Society: And in Research

From the 1970s, children's place within society came under challenge, initially from the so-called child liberationists. Children, alongside other marginalized groups, were identified by authors such as Firestone (1970), Farson (1974), and Holt (1974) as being subject to oppression. The child liberationists of the 1970s called for a radical repositioning of children within society and for *equal* rights between children and adults. The idea that children are the chattels of their parents was challenged and recast not as protection or care, but as domination and subjugation. By focusing attention on the social position of children and on child-adult relations, children liberationists represented the early vanguard of new approaches to research and children that emerged in the following decades. Archard (1993, p. 43) has described the child liberation movement as part of a broader movement for the emancipation of humanity, with children represented as one of the "major oppressed groups." While the radical approach of the early child liberationists failed to gain widespread traction, it was important in directly questioning the social position of children. For researchers, the child liberation movement challenged the position of children as objects of research, raising serious ethical questions, including questions about how researchers engage with children and children's consent to participate in research, independent of parental consent.

From the late 1970s, the nature of childhood was contested and the place of children within society subjected to increased analysis and scrutiny. Children became an interesting subject to researchers beyond the traditional disciplines of medicine, psychology, and education. The emergence of the "new sociology of childhood" was central to the rethinking of children's place within society. In their 1997 volume, *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*, James and Prout (p. 3) observed an "emergent paradigm" that promised to "consolidate and continue the change in direction initiated by the research of the 1970s." That change in direction included recognizing the socially constructed nature of *childhood*; recognizing the intersection between childhood and "other variables such as class, gender, or ethnicity"; and identifying "children's social relationships and cultures as worthy of study in their own right, and not just in respect to their social construction by adults" (James and Prout 1997, pp. 3–4).

Within the emergent paradigm identified by James and Prout was research that sought to understand children's social roles and relationships beyond development or socialization. Schildkrout (1978) argued "the emphasis on socialization has trivialized childhood." In her study of children in Hausa society of West Africa, Schildkrout highlighted both interactions between people of different ages and children's social and productive contributions. In essence, the framing of her

research focused attention not on children's socialization, but on the social structures within which children live, learn, contribute, and interact. Similarly, Ennew's (1982, p. 551) research on child labor in Jamaica explored the intersections between gender, generation, and power within a structural context of a "failing economy which lacks welfare provision." Ennew's research in Jamaica and later work with street children in Peru – like that of Schildkrout – worked *with* children to understand their social positions, their roles and responsibilities, and the choices they made within structural and relational constraints.

The emergence of a new paradigm in the 1980s and 1970s, typified by the research of Schildkrout and Ennew, took place as participatory research methodologies and methods gained ground, particularly in research in the Global South (see Chambers 1983). A small but growing number of researchers interested in children's perspectives adopted participatory approaches in an effort to engage children meaningfully in research. *Children in Focus – A Manual for Participatory Research with Children*, edited by Jo Boyden and Judith Ennew in 1997, set out the principles that should underpin participatory research with children, including issues of informed consent and the use of appropriate methods. Participatory approaches to research expanded in new directions, including the participation of children as co-researchers (see Kellett 2005).

As participatory research with children became increasingly common throughout the 1990s and 2000s, some researchers pointed to the potential for unethical research within a participatory frame. Beazley and Ennew (2006, p. 189) have argued that research labeled as participatory becomes unethical when "vulnerable people are coerced into activities and decisions for which they are unprepared, which almost always overburden them in the name of (limited and largely spurious) 'empowerment.'" Such concerns gave rise to efforts to develop epistemological and methodological approaches that protect children within research, while recognizing and valuing them as social actors and creating spaces for them to participate meaningfully and voluntarily. The rethinking of children's place within society and within research that has occurred since the 1970s, and concerns such as those articulated by Beazley and Ennew, resulted in explicit consideration of what constitutes ethical research with children (see Morrow and Richards 1996; Morrow 2001; Christensen and Prout 2002; Morrow and Alderson 2011). The nature of methods used and issues such as children's own consent were increasingly debated among researchers working with children and subject to the consideration of ethics committees in universities and other institutions.

3 The Influence of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the "Right to Participate"

Parallel to the emergence of a new paradigm of research with children from the 1970s was a broader discourse relating to the human rights of children. In 1979, the International Year of the Child, Poland introduced into the United Nations General

Assembly in 1979 a draft Convention on the Rights of the Child. A working group was established to consider the draft, and over the succeeding decade, the human rights to which children should be entitled within a binding human rights treaty were debated.

The adoption in 1989 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the United Nations General Assembly marked a turning point in the global discourse around children and childhood, with important implications for research. While the conceptual and practical meaning of children's rights was heavily contested (O'Neill 1988; Campbell 1992), the UNCRC was ratified by governments with unprecedented alacrity and entered force in 1990.

That children are the bearers of human rights was recognized in international law, and concepts of children's rights steadily influenced not only policy and services for children, but approaches to research. Arguably, the most radical aspect of the convention is the so-called participation articles, which entitle children to a range of civil rights, including freedom of expression (Article 13); freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Article 14); freedom of association and peaceful assembly (Article 15); and access to information (Article 17). Of the participation articles, Article 12 has been a particular focus of attention. This article entitles "... the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child."

The participation articles, and Article 12 in particular, have the potential to radically transform children's position within society and their citizenship status. Interestingly, these articles have been both the most controversial aspects of the UNCRC and, arguably, the most influential. As James (2007, p. 261) has observed, following the adoption of the UNCRC "listening to the voices of children has become a powerful and pervasive mantra for activists and policy makers worldwide." Research was identified as one means through which "children's voices" can be "heard." Roberts (2008, p. 263) argues that "listening to children is central to recognizing and respecting their worth as human beings, drawing a direct relationship between being listened to and the human dignity that is foundational to the concept of human rights." Yet, as Roberts points out, listening to children's voices does not mean that adults are hearing what they say. Despite a clear paradigm shift toward research that seeks to position children as participants with their own experiences, perspectives, and priorities, "research questions and research agendas are still largely the province of adults, [and] children's narratives tend to be edited, re-formulated or truncated to fit our agendas..." (Roberts 2008, p. 263). Listening to children does not, as Roberts reminds us, necessarily result in rights-based research. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been widely cited a rationale for researching with children or situating children as subjects or participants in the research process. Yet, as Lundy and McEnvoy (2012, p. 130) have argued, not all participatory research with children can be located clearly within a children's rights discourse, despite clear synergies between participatory and rights-based research.

4 Participatory Research and Children's Human Rights

As discussed earlier, participatory research has a well-established history, dating to the 1970s when the expert-driven nature of research and the construction of knowledge came under challenge. Hall (1979) exemplifies early proponents of participatory research with adults in his critique of survey-based methods. Hall argued that surveys oversimplified complex problems and forced participants into choosing from predetermined, rigid, and often inappropriate categories. Hall (1979, pp. 402–403) argued “If one is concerned with increasing people’s capacity to participate fully and gain some degree of control over their lives, then research methods themselves can be part of this process. . . .” During the 1980s participatory methods were developed and refined, becoming increasingly influential, particularly in research in the Global South. In their 1997 work, *Children in Focus: A Manual for Participatory Research with Children*, Boyden and Ennew echoed Hall’s criticism of survey methods. Boyden and Ennew (1997, p. 9) found that research about child exploitation and children affected by armed conflict relied on “formal, structured surveys and questionnaires with little reference to qualitative data either for designing surveys or analysing the results.” The consequence, they argued, was quantitative information that is divorced from context and methods that reinforce adult power over and preconceptions about children. Moreover, Boyden and Ennew found that children were rarely asked about their lives; instead adult proxies (such as parents and teachers) were asked, and children were almost never consulted on the use of research results (Boyden and Ennew 1997, p. 10).

During the late 1980s and 1990s, participatory research with children burgeoned, with an array of exciting and sophisticated methods developed. An underpinning principle of this research paradigm is that children are competent and capable people, able to provide insights into their own lives and the worlds in which they live (Alderson 1995; Hill 1997; Morrow 1999; Christensen and James 2000). As participatory research created spaces for children’s perspectives, priorities, and experiences to be understood and taken seriously, ethical principles emerged as central, and some scholars expressed reservations about methodologies and ethics (Beazley and Ennew 2006). Indeed, debates and discussion of ethical issues, including the nature of adult power, have been an important feature of the literature around participatory research with children (see Morrow and Richards 1996; Holt 2004; Alderson and Morrow 2011; Abebe and Bessell 2014).

Participatory research with children and concepts of children’s human rights developed during the same time frame and are often assumed to be based on the same epistemology and methodological paradigm. The paraphrasing of Article 12 of the UNCRC as children’s “right to participate” reinforces this assumption. There are, indeed, synergies between participatory and rights-based research, but they are distinct methodological approaches. While issues of children’s human rights have sometimes featured in debates around participatory methods, methodologies, and ethics, rights are not the defining principle of participatory research with children. While children’s assessments, voices, or perspectives are the focus,

participatory research does not *necessarily* place children's human rights at the center. Indeed, participatory research may not *necessarily* or *explicitly* consider human rights at all. What then is distinctive about *rights-based* research?

5 Children's Rights and Research

The Convention on the Rights of the Child does not explicitly refer to research, yet its fundamental intent has significant implications for research design and practice. In particular, the CRC positions children as bearers of human rights, who are entitled to be treated with dignity. Article 3(1) of the CRC states

In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

Arguably research institutions, and individual researchers, have an obligation under this article. Lundy and McEnvoy (2012, p. 130) argue that "all those undertaking research which is benefitting from state funding" have a duty to comply with the UNCRC. Others point to the value of the UNCRC not so much in its requirement for compliance, but in its provision of "a foundation for ethical engagement with children" and for "deep reflection around methodology, methods and ethics" (Abebe and Bessell 2014, p. 128).

Freeman (1997, p. 22) has observed that children have been "treated as objects of intervention rather than legal subjects." Indeed, in some forms of research, children have been (and continue to be) positioned as Freeman describes. Woodhead and Faulkner (2008, p. 19) have described the "objectified status of the child in research as clearly signalled in traditional scientific discourse, through being identified as experimental 'subjects.'" Freeman (1997, p. 22) has also argued that "because children have lacked the moral coinage of rights it has been easy to brush their interests aside in the sweep of consequentialist thinking." Research that has sought to understand children's behavior, without careful consideration of the rights and interests of children *within* the research process, illustrates Freeman's point. Woodhead and Faulkner (2008, p. 20) identify research designed to explore an infant's reactions to separation from his or her primary caregiver (usually mother) in a laboratory setting – often referred to as the "strange situation" – as an example of research that "brushes aside children's interests." Woodhead and Faulkner (2008, p. 20) observe that this "procedure is highly instructive about the relative status of adults versus children in research procedures. . ." as a young child is placed "in a strange room, leaving them with a stranger, as well as entirely alone, whilst dispassionately measuring the level of their distress in terms of crying, sobbing and other expressions of panic." The "strange situation" was developed by Mary Ainsworth in the 1960s and used initially in a small study in Uganda and then in a larger study in Baltimore in the United States. In the decades since, the experiment has become a standard method for measuring infant attachment. Proponents of

the method describe the aim as creating “mild distress” in young children in order to measure children’s responses to separation (see Ainsworth et al. 1978). The experiment is generally conducted in laboratory setting, with levels of stressfulness varying and inevitably determined by adult researchers. The “strange situation” continues to be used in psychological research into attachment, including in cross-cultural studies (Jin et al. 2012; Ding et al. 2012). Woodhead and Faulkner question the ethics of such research, which typifies Bronfenbrenner’s characterization of some psychological research as “the science of the strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults.” Such approaches to research *on* children also highlight the potential for children’s interests – and rights – to be disregarded.

Ennew and her colleagues (Ennew and Young 1981; Ennew and Morrow 1994; Beazley et al. 2009; Robson et al. 2009; Beazley et al. 2011) argue that respect for the human rights of children creates the “right to be properly researched.” The right to be properly researched is not enshrined in the UNCRC but arises from children’s entitlement not only to express their views through research and other avenues but also to the highest possible professional standards on the part of adults. The concept of the right to be properly researched does not suggest that all children have the right to participate in research, as some have suggested (see Alderson 2012). Rather, it highlights both the obligations of researchers and the entitlements of children who do participate in research (see Abebe and Bessell 2014). The burden of responsibility falls not to children to make claims, but to adult researchers to fulfill their obligations to maintain professional standards and behave generally in a manner that respects and fosters children’s human rights.

6 What Is Rights-Based Research?

Central to the concept and discourse around human rights are notions of entitlement and obligation. Freeman (2011, p. 11) argues that “without rights the excluded can make requests, they can beg or implore, they can be troublesome, they can rely on, what has been called, noblesse oblige, or on others being charitable, generous, kind, co-operative or even intelligently foresighted. But they cannot demand, there is no entitlement.” A rights-based approach to research *entitles* participating children to expect or demand certain forms of treatment. To achieve such entitlements in practice, the obligation is on researchers to respect children’s human rights and behave accordingly, not from a sense of noblesse oblige whereby the powerful treat the powerless charitably or generously, but because children are bearers of human rights.

Donnelly (2013, p. 7) describes human rights as “prima facie trumps,” arguing that claiming a right “shifts the burden of proof to those who would argue that this right in the particular case is itself appropriately trumped.” If one applies concepts of human rights, as set down in the UNCRC, to research settings, children’s best interests must be a primary consideration (Article 3.1); children have the right to information (Article 13); and children are entitled to protection from “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment,

maltreatment or exploitation” (Article 19). If these, or other human rights, are to be violated during the research process, the onus is on researchers to demonstrate why children’s human rights should be “trumped” in favor of the professional interests of researchers. To take a concrete example, researchers wishing to undertake an experiment using the “strange situation” method would be obliged not simply to demonstrate the “scientific” merit of the method, which might involve referring to its common usage and acceptance in some disciplines, but to demonstrate *how* and *why* it is appropriate to disregard children’s rights to best interests, information, and protection.

In considering the value of rights-based approaches, a key question is whether rights offer anything over and above “ethical research” with children. As noted above, the ethics of research with children is a subject that has received considerable attention and on which there is a well-developed literature (see Morrow and Richards 1996; Morrow 2001; Christensen and Prout 2002; Morrow and Alderson 2011). For Donnelly (2013, p. 7) human rights focus attention on “the subject (who holds them) rather than an ‘objective’ standard to be followed or state of affairs to be realized.” If we take this understanding of subjective rights, entitlements, and obligations as a starting point for conceptualizing a rights-based approach to research, a subtle but significant difference emerges between rights-based research and research ethics. To take again the “strange situation” as an example, such research may be deemed ethical in that it used an accepted method and involves parent’s consent that their children be subjected to distress. Moreover, the principle of beneficence may be invoked to argue that considerable good will result from the knowledge gained (to understanding of child development generally and possibly to the understanding of the developmental stage of the individual child who is the object of research). From a rights-based approach, however, we need to place the individual child’s human rights at the center and ask how and why it is acceptable to violate this child’s human rights to best interests, information, and protection in this situation. Individual researchers have an obligation to demonstrate how and why violation of these individual child’s human rights and human dignity is acceptable in the name of research. From a right perspective, whereby the individual child as the subject or bearer of human rights is at the center, an experiment such as the “strange situation” is unjustifiable. If research on children’s response to separation from their carers offers genuine benefits to understanding of child development, the onus shifts to researchers to develop a methodology that respects the rights and dignity of each child and methods that do not purposively cause the child distress, even in forms determined to be “mild” by adult researchers.

Clearly, there is considerable overlap between research ethics and children’s human rights. Yet, as the discussion above indicates, they are not the same. Generally, research ethics focuses on establishing a set of objective standards with which researchers must comply. Several scholars, including Abebe and Bessell (2014) and Skelton (2008), have noted the ways in which ethics processes can become ends in themselves, as researchers seek to meet the requirements of ethics committees as a procedural step on the way to conducting field research. For some, “getting ethics approval” becomes a milestone in the research process to

“tick off” in order to begin the real business of research. Here, we see a fundamental normative gap between human-rights-based approaches to research and *procedural ethics*. Some scholars have sought to bridge this gulf by highlighting the importance of *ethical practice* underpinning all aspects of research (see Ennew and Plateau 2004; Bessell 2006; Lundy and McEnvoy 2012; Abebe and Bessell 2014).

Recent attempts to develop universal guidance on ethical research with children, such as the “ethical research involving research” project supported by UNICEF’s Office of Research and Childwatch International, emphasize critical reflection on the complexities of research involving children throughout the research process (see Graham et al. 2013). The work of Graham and her colleagues (2013) identifies consideration of harm and benefits, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, and payment and compensation as essential to ethical research. These principles have long shaped the approach of ethics committees in universities and other research institutions, providing the objective standards to be upheld in the research process. Similar considerations are central to rights-based research, and there are strong synergies between research ethics and rights-based research. The principles that underpin contemporary standards for ethical research also underpin rights-based research. Rights-based research, however, focuses the attention of the researcher not only on “children” collectively as research participants, but on the individual child within the research process. Ennew and Plateau (2004, p. 28) argue that rights-based research positions children not as objects of concern but as subjects of human rights. Ennew and her colleagues (2010) have argued that to be “rights based,” research must take both research ethics and the participation of children seriously at all stages of the research process and be fundamentally committed to ethical *practice*. While children’s human rights, particularly the right to “participate,” are entering the lexicon of research ethics (see Graham et al. 2013), research deemed to be ethical by the objective standards of relevant committees are not necessarily rights based.

7 Beyond Methods to Rights-Based Methodology

The shift toward participatory research with children has produced an exciting array of research methods, both adapted from participatory action research with adults and designed specifically to engage with children (see Beazley et al. 2006; Abebe 2009; Chakraborty 2009). While methodology and method are collapsed into a single concept in some approaches to research, rights-based research requires a clear distinction between the two. Methods that are appropriate to the age of the child; sensitive to the cultural, linguist, and social context; and robust and rigorous are central to rights-based research. Ennew and Plateau (2004, p. 44) argue that “research methods must allow children to express their own views, experiences and perceptions and help children to do this in a variety of ways.” Importantly, Ennew and Plateau highlight the different abilities and experiences of research participants (child and adult). They emphasize the importance of a “tool kit” of methods that allows researchers to choose methods that are appropriate for gathering data that will

illuminate the research question being explored, while ensuring participants understand and are comfortable with those methods. Importantly, Ennew and Plateau note that methods should be culturally appropriate and “not offend cultural rules” (2004, p. 44). This presents a particular challenge in cultures where children are expected to be obedient and respectful and not to contradict adults (see Twum-Danso 2009). Researchers, and children, must sometimes navigate uncharted territory with methods designed to engage children and elicit their opinion without overstepping cultural boundaries in ways that might place participating children in socially vulnerable situations. A rights-based approach does not provide answers to all the messy, real-world situations researchers encounter (see Robson et al. 2009), but does provide principles on which researchers can draw to resolve real-world dilemmas. Here, it is methodology – rather than methods – that is central to a rights-based approach.

While methods are the tools used to gather data, methodology encompasses the “principles and theoretical perspectives that underpin the research” (Bessell 2009, p. 18). Crotty (1998, p. 7) describes the process by which these principles and theories come together as the research design, not only shaping the choice of methods, but the ways in which those methods are used by researchers and experienced by participants. Rights-based research requires researchers to give careful consideration to methodology. How methods are applied is as important as the choice of methods. Indeed, the same methods can be employed within very different methodological frameworks, resulting in research that variously respects, disregards, or violates children’s human rights (see Bessell 2009, p. 19).

Lundy and McEnvoy (2012, p. 131) argue that rights-based methodology must “develop deliberate strategies to assist children in the formation of their views.” Lundy and McEnvoy (2012, pp. 136–137) argue that while researchers must not lead children toward a predetermined response, they have a responsibility to support children in deciding on their own position through the provision of information and assistance to understand it. Thus, researchers must not only consider appropriate methods, but develop a methodology that engages children and supports them to form views freely (Lundy and McEnvoy 2012, p. 141).

Judith Ennew, a pioneer of rights-based research with children, has identified four articles of the UNCRC as underpinning a rights-based methodology: Article 3.3 regarding professional standards, Article 12.1 regarding the child’s right to express his or her views, Article 13.1 regarding the child’s right to information, and Article 36 regarding the child’s right to protection from exploitation. That children should be protected from exploitative or abusive research is a key principle for researchers seeking to respect children’s human rights during the research process (see also Alderson 2000, p. 278). For Ennew and her colleagues, a rights-based methodology is derived from interpreting these articles to ensure children are genuinely situated as participants in research who have a stake in and control over the process; methods used ensure children are able to express their opinions, views, and experiences; and children are protected from “harm that might result from taking part in research conducted by researchers who use quality, scientific methods and analysis” (see Beazley et al. 2009, p. 370). Here, the UNCRC is

Table 1 Articles of the UNCRC that underpin rights-based research with children

Article of the UNCRC	Text of UNCRC	Principles shaping rights-based research
Article 3.3	“States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, the numbers and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision”	Research must conform to the highest possible scientific standards Researchers must be carefully recruited and supervised
Article 12.1	“States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”	Children’s perspectives and opinions must be integral to research
Article 13.1	“The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice”	Methods need to be found, and used, to help children to express their perspectives and opinions freely in research
Article 36	“States Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child’s welfare”	Children must not be harmed or exploited through taking part in research

From Ennew and Plataeu (2004, p. 29)

understood as providing a framework of guiding principles that can be adapted and applied depending on the nature of the research and the context in which it is being undertaken. Table 1, adapted from Ennew and Plataeu (2004, p. 29), outlines the relevance of these articles to research.

While researchers working in the broad space of rights-based research with children draw on different articles of the UNCRC to inform their methodological approach, the convention provides a common framework (see Lundy and McEnvoy 2012). Article 12 is often the starting point for thinking about rights-based approaches to research, but as the work of Ennew and others suggests, other articles are equally significant in forming a robust methodology. Central to methodologies based on children’s human rights is the nature of the relationship between researchers and participating children. That relationship is grounded in respect for children’s human rights, dignity, capabilities, and choices.

8 Reflecting on Power

Research that genuinely seeks to respect children's rights, dignity, capabilities, and choices – as rights-based research does – necessarily raises questions about the broader power relations that shape child-adult relations within any given context. In most – probably all – societies, adults have authority over children. Yet power is socially constructed and plays out differently across contexts – the nature of power in any particular context should not be assumed but, to the greatest extent possible, understood. A rights-based approach to research requires researchers to consider the position of children in power hierarchies within broader society and within the research context – and the intersection between these two contexts.

Adults, particularly parents or guardians, are usually charged with making decisions on behalf of children, particularly younger children or those considered not yet sufficiently competent or experienced to make choices themselves. These decisions are often assumed to be based on love, care, or altruism. Freeman (1997, p. 24) challenges this assumption, arguing that children need rights “to protect their integrity and dignity.” A rights-based approach challenges us to protect children's integrity and dignity within the research context. Ensuring children are able to provide informed consent or dissent is one example of the protection of children's dignity and integrity. The consent of parents or other adults is never considered an appropriate proxy for the child's consent. Within rights-based approaches, informed consent is neither a formality nor a single event. Rather, researchers are required to enter into an ongoing ethical conversation with children in a manner that respects their rights to information, to participate, and to choose not to participate. For such conversations to occur, researchers must cede power to children.

Yet the issue of consent is only one aspect of rights-based research. Proponents of rights-based research have argued that researchers must consider and discuss with children the nature of their participation in a way that explicitly recognizes and seeks to redress the power imbalances between professional, adult researchers, and children. This is particularly important – and challenging – when researchers are from the Global North (or are based in institutions in the Global North) and child participants are from the Global South (see Robson et al. 2009). Here, generation intersects with race, nationality, socioeconomic status, and global distribution of wealth to create particularly complex power relations that take time and focused effort to disrupt.

Understanding the dynamics of power is essential to a rights-based approach. Abebe (2009, p. 457) has pointed out that in the Ethiopian context, interviewing children rather than heads of households “risked being seen as a threat to adult authority and power.” Challenging children's subordinate social status by seeking private interviews may result only in adults deciding that children should not participate or in making children vulnerable as adults seek to reinstate their position of power. Thus, children's right to protection from harm involves an approach that recognizes children's (often subordinate) social status without reinforcing subordination or replicating it within the research context. Rights-based research challenges researchers to seek to empower children within the research process and to

use emancipatory ethics to resist domination (see Robson et al. 2009, p. 470), while recognizing the vulnerability of children within unequal power relations.

A rights-based approach does not provide researchers with a solution to the dilemmas posed by power and children's subordinate status within structures of power. It does, however, focus our attention on the nature and implications of power relations. A rights-based approach provides "an alternative lens through which to reflect on the role of the researcher in the adult-child relationship" (Lundy and McEnvoy 2012, p. 141). Such reflection has the potential to enrich both the process and outcomes of research and to reposition children.

9 Conclusion

While rights-based research with children is not new, it is an emerging paradigm. Grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children, a rights-based approach restructures research to place children's entitlements as bearers of human rights and researchers' obligations as duty bearers at the center. Rights-based research rejects the notion that children are to be objectively studied, but seeks to understand children's lives and perspectives. Rights-based research is built upon methodologies that take children seriously as social actors while seeking to illuminate and challenge unequal power relations within the research context. Importantly, rights-based research does not seek to unreflexively impose a universalist and homogenize interpretation of human rights, but to ensure that children are protected, respected, and treated with dignity *within* research while taking account of the specificities of context. Rights-based research does not resolve every dilemma or challenge that researchers face in seeking to work with children across a multitude of contexts on a multitude of issues. It does, however, offer an approach to research that treats children as human beings with human rights and not as objects of observation.

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Part II

Methods, Tools, and Techniques

Matej Blazek

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Abstract

This chapter reviews participatory video as an emerging methodological approach to geographies of children and young people over the last decade. It discusses the place of participatory video in the subdiscipline in three steps. First, it examines the scope of participatory video in the wider field of social sciences and humanities, and it explores its emergence in geographical scholarship on children and young people at the interface of the induction of participatory video to geography in general, the shaping of the discipline of children's geographies, and the emerging work with participatory video and young people in other social scientific disciplines. Second, the chapter presents current achievements and dilemmas of participatory video in the production of knowledge in the work with children and young people and suggests possible routes through which participatory video could play an even more important epistemological role in the subdiscipline. Finally, the chapter explores ethical and political issues related

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to participatory video work with children and young people and relates them to wider questions of geographical research.

Keywords

Participatory video • Positionality • Epistemology • Children • Research • Development • Otherness

1 Introduction

The changing discipline of children's geographies (Holloway 2014) has entailed methodological proliferation and diversification (van Blerk and Kesby 2009). Ways of conducting research have been informed and affected by a number of debates, including about children's participation (Matthews et al. 1999) and power (Holt 2004), structural difference among children and young people (Hopkins 2013) and between children and adults (Jones 2008), emotional dimensions of research with children and of children's lives themselves (Blazek and Windram-Geddes 2013), the questioned primacy of the voice and the problematic legitimacy of other modes of knowledge (Kraftl 2013), the increased recognition of childhoods outside the Minority Global North (Jeffrey 2012), the importance of intergenerational relations (Punch and Tisdall 2012), increased interdisciplinary (Holloway 2014) and collaborative praxis (Mills 2013), demand for policy-focused research (Vanderbeck 2008), and not least a range of technological advancements facilitating research (Mikkelsen and Christensen 2009). The emergence of participatory video in geographical research with children and young people can be traced explicitly to most of these debates, and it has been recognized as having a potential to shape further methodological but also epistemological and political agendas of geographies of children and young people. Yet, its use and especially published written accounts in geographical work with children and young people remain scarce.

This chapter reviews participatory video as an emerging methodological approach to geographies of children and young people over the last decade. It discusses the place of participatory video in the subdiscipline in three steps. First, it examines the scope of participatory video in the wider field of social sciences and humanities, and it explores its emergence in geographical scholarship on children and young people at the interface of the induction of participatory video to geography in general, the shaping of the discipline of children's geographies, and the emerging work with participatory video and young people in other social scientific disciplines. Second, the chapter presents current achievements and dilemmas of participatory video in the production of knowledge in the work with children and young people and suggests possible routes through which participatory video could play an even more important epistemological role in the subdiscipline. Finally, the chapter explores ethical and political issues related to participatory video work with children and young people and relates them to wider questions of geographical research.

2 Participatory Video and Geographies of Children and Young People: Framing the Genesis

Participatory video can be defined as a process of video-making *conducted by* a group of people or community, rather than *produced about* them, as is the case of documentary film-making. Such a depiction has three important features. First, it encompasses a very complex processual architecture, including resourcing, definition of scope, scripting, filming (and acting), editing, screening, and disseminating. A key aspect of participatory video is iterativeness of these activities (Haynes and Tanner 2015), as the collective responsibility and “ownership” (Miller and Smith 2012) over a participatory video project often require revisiting and reconsidering the progress and achievements and how they relate to the wider objectives of the work. Second, the focus of participatory video is very often on the process rather than the product itself (Kindon 2009). Whether the rationale of a participatory video project is situated in the context of community development or research (see below), it is widely agreed that the dynamics of producing a video collaboratively can be as empowering as the advocacy potential of the final video product (Plush 2012) and that the knowledge generated in the process of film-making can be richer and more powerful than what is presented in the video itself (Olivier et al. 2012).

Third, perhaps most importantly, and similarly to other forms of participatory activities (Opondo et al. 2007; Cahill 2007a), both the focus on the process of participatory video and its complex nature highlight the central role of the relationships between the film-making group/community and the facilitators (researchers or practitioners), as well as among the individual members of the group/community. Due to the often emancipatory rationale of participatory video, the relations between video-makers and communities have been widely recognized and scrutinized. They are often pictured as an encounter of privileged professionals with marginalized communities, in which the inherently intersubjective nature of participatory video creates a potential to subvert power hierarchies (Kindon 2003). However, the amalgamation of the agreed political agenda with the different, and often conflicting, motivations of the facilitator and participants (Blazek and Hraňová 2012; Mistry et al. 2015a) might make their relationships more convoluted. There is often the risk of a tokenist involvement of the participants if the pressure of “commission” (Parr 2007) and the expectations of facilitators’ institutions or funders for specific deliverables within a certain timeframe stand in the way with what is often a slow, uncertain, and proliferating process of collaboration (Shaw 2012). Additionally, as power relations become localized and contextualized in a group or community setting and as the binaries between the knowledge subjects and producers (Yang 2012) are challenged, the distinction between the powerful outsiders and the marginalized insiders can become fragmented and even reversed once the facilitators begin establishing their place within the local social dynamics. Finally, preexisting relationships and power dynamics within a community can play a massive role in the process of participatory video. There can be antagonistic interests, hostile relationships, and firmly sedimented power relations within what might appear to an outsider as a homogeneous community (Blazek and Hraňová 2012), and the group-work element,

with its ethical and political associations, is being recognized as one of the crucial aspects of participatory video (Shaw 2015). Due to the complex and situated nature of participatory video projects, other terms have been also used to describe the process of video-making with some participatory elements, each emphasizing different aspects or limits to the involvement of participants, including “community video” (Kindon 2003), “subject-led video” (Yang and MacEntee 2015, specifically referring to “youth-led video making”; or Lomax 2012, using the term “child-led video”), “Participants Authored Audiovisual Stories (PAAS)” (Ramella and Olmos 2005), digital storytelling (Reed and Hill 2010), or “collaborative video” (Parr 2007).

Framed in such a manner, participatory video can be traced to community development initiatives of the 1960s, although earlier modes of “alternative film production” as a political activity can be identified (Corneil 2012). Technological changes in the 1980s and 1990s, and especially the digitalization of both the video-making and dissemination tools and new online platforms provided new opportunities for the wider and more accessible engagement with video in a range of contexts (Armes 1988; Shaw and Robertson 1997; Lunch and Lunch 2006; Haw and Hadfield 2011; Teitelbaum 2012; Dougherty and Sawhney 2012; Mitchell et al. 2015). In the development context, participatory video showed a potential to fill particularly two complementary roles in the agenda of empowerment: to generate a material for advocacy and mediation that would be powerful for both its content and accountability (because of the involvement of community members as simultaneously the subjects and producers of the video, Mistry and Berardi 2012) and to develop community capacities and facilitate mobilization through a collective process of reflecting, learning, sharing, collaborating and, ultimately, acting (White 2003; Lunch and Lunch 2006).

Production of knowledge thus can be seen as central to participatory video, whether in terms of “outwards” knowledge intended for wide dissemination and circulation (Braden 1999; Plush 2009) or as “inwards” modes of knowledge, such as materials restricted and utilized only by the groups or communities themselves, or knowledge emerging as an element of learning within the participatory video process (Blazek and Hraňová 2012; High et al. 2012). The preeminent role of knowledge-generation in participatory video and the “dialogic approach” (Kindon 2003, p. 143) to the transformative potential within and beyond individual communities made participatory video appealing also to researchers. This engagement has not been straightforward due to a number of challenges, however. One concern repeatedly raised in academic literature is about the value of knowledge produced in participatory video due to its “staged” and often “celebratory” nature, which contrasts with the detached style of documentary film-making and is perceived as problematic by various fields of academia (Mitchell et al. 2012, p. 5). Another concern is about the “complex layers of meanings and knowledge embedded in [...] video-making” (Luttrell et al. 2012, p. 165), as they necessitate a situated and mixed methodological apparatus to capture, reflect, and analyze the complexity of both outcomes and processes of participatory video work (Olivier et al. 2012).

In terms of introducing participatory video to geographical scholarship about children and young people, three strands of academic work were particularly

important. First participatory video became established as a relevant approach in geography following Kindon's (2003) pivotal paper advocating participatory video as a feminist practice with the potential to rupture and transform hierarchical power relations. This was followed by a decade of participatory video use especially in the fields of geographies of development informed by feminist and participatory perspectives (Hume-Cook et al. 2007; Kindon et al. 2012; Richardson-Ngwenya 2012; Mistry and Berardi 2012; Mistry et al. 2014, 2015; Brickell 2015; Garrett and Brickell 2015). Second, at about the same time, researchers in other social science disciplines interested in childhood and young people began exploring the potential of participatory video in both Global North and Global South as a way to reach out to participants from this age group but also capture some of the epistemological and political differences between adult researchers and young research participants. Although some of this work has been too situated in the wider context of development (Mitchell et al. 2008; de Lange and Geldenhuys 2012; Baú 2015; Yang and MacEntree 2015), a considerable amount of work used participatory video to engage with children and young people also in especially urban areas of the Global North, often at the interface with fields of informal education, community development, and urban planning (Lomax et al. 2011; Lomax 2012; Hammond 2014; Nolas 2014; Luchs and Miller 2015). Third, there were parallels between the key topics addressed by participatory video scholars in other fields of geography and social sciences and some of the central discussions of the last decade about future developments of geographies of children and young people. These included the challenges of addressing hierarchical power relations between adults and children (Cahill 2007a; Gallagher 2008), the need to work with children and young people in a wider range of settings and through a multivariied and yet ethically appropriate sets of techniques (van Blerk et al. 2009), and the debate about engaging with the wider registers of knowledge, literacies, and articulations that characterize children's and young people's lives (Horton and Kraftl 2006; Harker 2006). As such, participatory video seemingly offered a tool for innovative geographical work that would integrate some of the central subdisciplinary questions of epistemology, politics and, ethics.

Having said that, the actual accounts of participatory video work with children and young people written by geographers, either self-identified as such or published in geographical outlets, remain rare. Exceptions include Cahill's (2007b) research on young people's access to education in Salt Lake City, Trell and van Hoven's (2010) work on the sense of place in Canada, Waite and Conn's (2011, 2012) use of participatory video drama to explore young women's experiences in relation to sex health in Uganda, the work of the author and his colleague in the context of young people in community development in Slovakia (Blazek and Hraňová 2012; Blazek et al. 2015), Haynes and Tanner (2015) adopting participatory video as a tool in resilience building and climate change adaptation with young people in the Philippines, and most recently Butcher and Dickens (2015) working with young people in East London to examine their experiences of redevelopment, gentrification, and urban transformation. The rest of this chapter reviews in more detail some of the tensions as well as opportunities that might be impacting on the use of participatory video by geographers doing research with children and young people, discussing in

turn the epistemological and ethical/political issues, and offering examples from published case studies to illustrate these arguments.

3 Participatory Video with Children and Young People and Epistemology

The interest of geographers working with children and young people in participatory video can be associated with their attention to visual methods. Adapting visual methodologies, such as mental maps, drawings, daily time lines, and photo diaries, has been recognized as an important step towards “child-led” models of research that seek to limit adult interventions in the production of knowledge about children’s lives by themselves and as a tool of facilitating cross-cultural investigations of different experiences of childhood (Young and Barrett 2001). While visual methods have become central to social research with children and young people (Thomson 2008), participatory video brings the additional potential of being open to different literacies (Braden 1999) and to capture and relay also other registers of knowledge that are central to children’s and young people’s experiences. In turn, Evans (2016) shows that video can be perceived by young people as a medium through which they can more easily communicate their views and experiences to others. As geographers have been recently engaging with children’s and young people’s sensory and visceral knowledge (Bartos 2013; Collins and Tymko 2015), their embodied experiences (Windram-Geddes 2013; Procter 2015), with the soundscapes of childhood (Gallagher 2011) and knowledge embedded in music (Dickens and Lonie 2013), participatory video has the capacity to bring these different aspects of experiencing and making sense of the world by children and young people together and to communicate them in adaptable (Mistry and Berardi 2012) ways.

Yet, there is some debate about how children’s marginalized positions in society have fundamental implications for the epistemological limits of understanding children’s experiences (Punch 2002). Some geographers have argued that although “children’s worlds” can be approached by adult researchers, the distance between the two remains ultimately unbridgeable because childhood is constituted as an otherness to adulthood in uneven power dynamics (Jones 2008, p. 196). In Jones’s (also Jones 2013) view, children can be seen as “subaltern” subjects, in parallel with the postcolonial literature (Spivak 1988): as they are entirely subjected to power structures of adult societies, they become positioned outside the hegemonic discourses; they cannot speak by themselves within the nexus of adult discourses, including research, and their voices are either adapted and transposed, or marginalized. The question of children’s otherness and/or subalternity has been addressed by researchers employing participatory video in different ways. Plush (2009) writes about “amplifying” (rather than “exploring”) children’s voices through participatory video, which means making them heard more widely without tampering with their contents and qualities. Ramella and Olmos (2005) discuss the idea of “extended language” as a metaphor for participatory video. Extended language is not restricted to the registers of “telling,” which are limited to words as means of expression and to

the conveyance and understanding of an utterance between the author and the audience. It instead integrates telling with elements of “showing,” conveying thus visual and other forms of nontextual information (for example through the medium of music) that are more open to escape dominant frameworks of interpretation. Finally, Freytes Frey and Cross (2011) explicitly argue that the artistic element of participatory video challenges the power dynamics embedded in frameworks of representation. As such, it ruptures the “subalternity” of children and young people by simultaneously fostering their agency through the artistic process of participatory video, by facilitating new forms of enunciation, and by discovering channels to locate young people’s voices where they will be heard by adults.

Although numerous participatory video projects have been successful in reaching out to children and young people placed at the margins of society and engage in depth with topics otherwise extremely difficult to talk about (Wong 2008), a case can be made that knowledge produced by children and young people through participatory video still remains “colonized” (Jones 2008, 2013) by adults for the purpose of academic work. Participatory videos with children and young people are rarely presented as results of academic research and almost never as central research outputs. Even when they are disseminated together with research papers, video is usually presented as a supplementary material to the textual format (e.g., Blazek et al. 2015). Participatory video work is thus more often disseminated through narrative reflections and data generated through other activities, especially ethnography, during the process. This is not only an issue in work with children and young people; Garrett (2011) shows that text at the very least tends to accompany video outputs and more often replaces them, pushing the videographic work to the very margins of geography. He argues that the institutional landscapes in which most academics work is a reason behind much of this, as visual and performative work is not clearly recognized as an auditable output of research, principally defining researchers’ agendas and ways of work. There are further arguments about the institutional roots of the marginalization of video as a product, such as the expectations and low-risk approach of funders, who might be hesitant to support often small-scale and time-consuming projects entailing high levels of unpredictability due to their participatory nature, similarly to other participatory action techniques (Pain et al. 2011). More generally, this is a tension between the primacy of research as commission, with the responsibility centered towards the institutions and funders, and research as collaboration, with the responsibility oriented towards participants (Parr 2007). This in turn leads to further disparities between the “P” and the “V” elements of participatory video (Lemaire and Lunch 2012): the focus on the reflexive process with action elements that is beneficial to the participating group or community, versus the prioritization of the product in terms of the quality and format as a means of justifying the facilitators’ involvement. The problem with these tensions in regard to research with children and young people is that the institutional primacy of text and the wary attitudes to video counter the very rationale of the critical epistemology that promotes children’s perspectives and inspired the use of participatory video (and other visual and participatory methods) in research with children and young people, eventually reinforcing the uneven relations between adults and

children. The question of the institutional (cf. van Hoven and Meijering 2011) legitimacy of knowledge produced by children and young people meets the question of the institutional legitimacy of knowledge produced as video, and together they reinvigorate the troubles of doing research with children and young people without subjugating them to adult hegemonies.

This claim is not intended to undermine the power and potential of knowledge produced through participatory video with children and young people. Knowledge generated during the process of the video production but also dissemination provides important and in many ways unique contributions to the geographical knowledge with impacts beyond academia, whether it includes ethnographic inquiry into what often entails deep and open interactions with and between young research participants (Blazek and Hraňová 2012), interpretations of video process *and* product by the researchers (Waite and Conn 2011), or the mediation of children's voices to authorities, often in collaboration with practitioners and other adult community members (Haynes and Tanner 2015). In addition, participatory video has several distinctive assets in terms of produced knowledge. It enables an individual person's views and perspectives to be relayed and explored in a group during the collective process of video-making (Yang 2012), paralleling advantages of individual interviews and focus groups. The reflexive stance towards the dynamics of the participatory video process can lead to multiple outputs, such as when the group disagrees (Blazek and Hraňová 2012). In terms of the wider social dynamics in which participatory video evolves, it can also lead to unexpected outcomes (Blazek et al. 2015), the very genesis of which can be a subject of (participatory) analysis (Mann 2006). The shared experience of doing the project together can establish relationships, and the nonrepresentational elements of video as a generated knowledge might foster a means of understanding between the researchers and the participants as well as among individual participants (Freytes Frey and Cross 2011), together building a ground for future collaboration. Finally, participatory video entails both outwards-oriented modes of knowledge, intended for circulation, and knowledge generated as elements of transformative learning (Blazek and Hraňová 2012), the two of which are often interconnected and together establish a stronger ground for empowering change in young people's lives (Waite and Conn 2011).

Participatory video carries a significant potential to generate multiple forms of knowledge that can be utilized over a range of scales, from the personal development of young people participating in the project to large-scale policy decisions. However, it also carries a number of challenges and limitations. The spaces of academic knowledge production and exchange give only very limited recognition to nontextual forms of outputs, such as video. This to a large degree devalues participatory video as a product as well as the effort behind the video production. While the variety of formats encompassed in video offers children and young people opportunities to be involved according to their preferences (from writing a script, through designing the visual content, to narrating a story or acting in front of the camera), identifying these preferences and finding a balance in the group composition can be a demanding process requiring skilled group facilitators (Mistry et al. 2015b). Further, participatory video can be a lengthy and time-consuming process with uncertain outputs. This

poses a risk to funders and institutions demanding value for their financial inputs, and research plans accounting for contingencies and including multiple forms of outputs might be necessary to convince relevant stakeholders to support video projects (Garrett 2011). The lengthy process can be also problematic for the young participants if they do not witness outcomes of their contributions (Haynes and Tanner 2015), so editing and sharing work-in-progress materials is recommended (Lunch and Lunch 2006). The ultimate challenge of doing participatory video is thus about working with such a multiplicity of expectations and motivations, and with the paths that lead to it as they unravel from the individual positionalities of participatory video facilitators and participants and from their relationships.

4 Positionality, Relationships, and Ethics

Participatory video has a potential to engage children and young people in research in ways different from other approaches. Taking part in the production of a video may be more to children and young people (Trell and van Hoven 2010). One reason can be the extraordinariness of video technologies in the everyday life, something that might be appealing as a new and unique experience for the participants (cf. Hadfield-Hill and Horton 2014). The power of access to technologies was for a long time seen as the cornerstone of the empowering potential of participatory video. Mistry et al. (2015a) thus argue that the access to technology is one of the key aspects sustaining the lopsided power dynamics of participatory video research, and Ramella and Olmos (2005) characterize the act of “giving away a camera” as “giving a way” to the participants. This is likely to change with the accessibility of video-making technologies in cell phones (Schleser 2012; Mitchell et al. 2015) – which some argue might transform participatory video from a case-specific small-scale research tool to the instrument of work with wider datasets (Lemaire and Lunch 2012) – but their usage remains limited in poorer areas of the world. Additionally, there still might be the technological appeal of the higher quality of expertly conducted video-editing and further technological processing (converting videos into convenient formats, circulating it on the internet), which adult facilitators might offer to young people through their expertise and which could be otherwise unattainable without further training and equipment. The attractiveness of video as a final product can indeed be an additional motivation, as something that young people can share with their friends, families, and communities, which might enable them to gain recognition and which can have an emotional value outside the deliberate scope of the project (Blazek and Hraňová 2012).

Such “mundane” motivations to some extent challenge the often circulated (and somewhat romantic) picture of young people contributing to participatory video who strive to express their concerns and perspectives about urgent issues of livelihoods, thereby building and developing their political agency. As Mistry et al. (2015a) argue, “[p]articipatory video is still a process that is led by external funding and specialized [civil society organizations]/academic institutions,” and “although communities receive benefits [from participatory video], they are significantly more

mundane than the headlines provided by participatory video proponents.” This seems a little unfair, as a number of commentators, including these authors themselves, acknowledge that the diversity of seemingly banal benefits can be as valuable in building learning and personal development as more obvious political achievements. But Mistry et al.’s (2015a) statement highlights the fact that the relationships between the participatory video facilitators and the participants, as well as among the participants themselves, emerge to a large degree from diverse motivations and depend on how these are discussed and negotiated.

Much effort by social researchers working with children and young people has been focused on establishing them as peer researchers (Lushey and Munro 2015). On various occasions, geographers employing participatory video found young people surfacing throughout the collaborative work as highly conscious political agents capable of articulating their experiences, thoughts, and perspectives, both towards an external audience (from their own community, local and national authorities, or general public) and within the working group that serves as a safe space for communicating, learning, and coping together. On most such occasions, however, there seems to have been a match between what the researchers had identified as livelihood concerns of these young people and what the young people had to say, such as in Waite and Conn’s (2011) research with young women in Uganda into gender injustice, marginalization, and sexual health; the work of Blazek et al. (2015) into circumstances and experiences of teenage female carers in Slovakia; or Haynes and Tanner’s (2015) investigation of young people’s awareness of natural disasters risk in the Philippines. In all these cases, the researchers, through their prior research and especially engagement with local practitioners and other stakeholders, were aware of what might be an important topic to the young people recruited for the participatory video activities, and, to some extent, they had also identified these young people as situated political agents. Yet, such knowledge is often absent, or young people’s motivation to take part in a more or less explicitly political project can be less obvious. Blazek and Hraňová (2012) provide an example of geographical participatory video work, where young people’s initial motivation was a combination of externally induced factors (taking part in an international exchange after completing the project) and an early positive experience with film-making activities, including a sense of achievement and fun (cf. Trell and van Hoven 2010). Yet despite such low-profile stimuli, the whole project later evolved towards significant changes in the local community.

In relation to this, Hunleth (2011) argues that children’s reasons for taking part in participatory projects certainly might differ entirely from adults’ motivations and they may not be obvious from the onset, but the process of investigating them is what can gradually take the research project forwards and reveal more about children’s experiences and concerns. At a different level, this also raises the question about involving children and young people in research more instrumentally: facilitating space for participatory work in which the participants can pursue their own interests and motivations, but at the same time being aware of the researcher’s own agendas and professional commitments (Hunleth 2011), including wider incentives of contributing to “adult” academic and policy debates from the position of a professional

authority (Gallagher 2008) and generating and triangulating further knowledge through nonparticipatory research methods (Hemmings 2008).

From another angle, the examples above problematize also the positionalities of the researchers. They highlight the role of facilitators – other adults or young people who support the establishment of relationships and rapports between the researchers and the young people who are most commonly practitioners working in schools or communities where the young people live. Consequently, this expands the range of relationships that need to be considered as constitutive of participatory video dynamics far beyond the researcher-participant scheme, and where others need to be considered too, such as funders and policy-makers (Richardson-Ngwenya 2012). This also expands the portfolio of roles that researchers sometimes need to adopt in the process of video-making. Within the messy relational dynamics of participatory research (Kesby et al. 2007), adult researchers might become, at least temporarily, facilitators and informal educators, collaborators, coactivists or colleagues, mediators and advocates (Garrett and Brickell 2015) or even artists and therapists (Lockowandt 2013). Together, this creates a pressure on researchers' management of roles and negotiation skills, and it again emphasizes the importance of collaboration with others from the local community (including practitioners) who have relevant knowledge and complementary skills to support this process.

Some geographers have argued that the diversity and disparity of motivations and positionalities can lead to significant ethical dilemmas in the conduct of participatory video. Blazek and Hraňová (2012) suggest that different expectations together with unequal power relations among the participants might trigger tensions and conflicts that could exclude some of the participants from the process. Haynes and Tanner (2015) and Evans (2016) illustrate that the close involvement of researchers in participatory video and the process of exploring issues in participants' lives might raise young people's expectations about beneficial outcomes of the activity. Mistry et al. (2015a) warn that different agendas of researchers and participants might put pressure especially on local coresearchers and cofacilitator, whose role is to find the balance and mediate connections.

Such diversity therefore requires both a clearly articulated collective conceptualization of the project and subsequent continuous reflections on the process and evolving circumstances. Ethics in participatory video thus need to be envisaged as an iterative process, embedded in the evolving individual experience, group dynamics, and external circumstances (Shaw 2015), and it cannot be reduced to a one-time act of giving a consent because this is always inevitably incomplete, as far as the researchers cannot know entirely what will happen in the course of research (Parr 1998).

These concerns, conceptualized further in debates about participatory action research (Cahill 2007b), are supplemented in participatory video with ethical issues related to doing research with minors and to working with visual data. On the one hand, social researchers widely prioritize and promote children's rights to participation and being heard, recognized in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and anchored in the range of guidelines and frameworks on ethics in research with children and young people (Alderson and Morrow 2011). This leads to the requirement for children's informed consent about taking part in

research. On the other hand, as Valentine (1999) argues, children nominally cannot give a legally valid consent, so this needs to be further requested from their parents or other guardians. Haynes and Tanner (2015) illustrate how producing participatory video might expose young participants to dangerous situations so issues of safety and chaperoning might need to become central to the planning process. Together with other codes of practices that participatory video researchers usually negotiate, including codes of ethics of their own institutions and funders, and frameworks of their collaborating organizations (Tisdall et al. 2009), doing research with children and young people involves a complex framework of negotiations that need to be established and continued.

Building primarily on visual data involving the child participants further increases the ethical sensitivity of participatory video (Pink 2007). Visual displays often provide more sensitive and emotional material than their textual descriptions could (Emmison et al. 2013), and the difficulty in sustaining anonymity and confidentiality is often more evident in video production, amplified by the richness of visual data (Haw and Hadfield 2011). Then, contrary to the researcher's efforts to protect participants' anonymity, children and young people involved in the production of participatory video often want to be seen and presented (and their parents might wish the same, cf. Blazek et al. 2015), raising the issue of who has the moral authority to take decisions on behalf of research participants. Together with the longevity of digital data and the unpredictability of their circulation (Teitelbaum 2012), the matter of negotiating and agreeing upon the material that will be produced is thus enormously complex. It should be negotiated and clearly formulated from the onset of the project, including issues such as ownership and dissemination of the materials (Miller and Smith 2012) and mechanisms for not revealing materials that could be harmful to the participants or to others (van Hoven and Meijering 2011).

In summary, participatory video is an ethically complex setting of evolving positionalities that requires a relational approach to ethics, aware of the range of actors, within and beyond the video-producing group, and of the various scales and spatialities of the video production and dissemination (Richardson-Ngwenya 2012). Due to its dynamic nature, some academics refer to the statement of participation as an "informed choice" rather than consent (Lockowandt 2013), highlighting both the difficulties in predicting the exact course of video projects but also the complex relational agency it often entails, which is not vested entirely with the researcher or other project facilitators. Perhaps most importantly, these issues signal that reciprocity, rather than a one-way conceptualization of ethics, needs to be at the core of how relationships and relational process of participatory video are established.

5 Conclusions: Participatory Video as a Nonadultist Practice?

This chapter discussed participatory video as an approach situated in, and emerging from, specific political and epistemological debates in geographies of children and young people. The overview highlighted the potential and some of the achievements of participatory video in engaging with children and young people who might be

otherwise more difficult to approach for research. A central argument around participatory video focused on generating a multimodal range of knowledge that could capture a wider spectrum of the experiences and perspectives of children and young people than methods working exclusively with either narratives or visuality currently do. It also presented some of the political promises of participatory video in destabilizing the uneven power dynamics in adults' engagement with children's and young people's worlds. However, the chapter also highlighted a number of challenges that participatory video encounters on such a route, especially the epistemological expectations on academic researchers and the complex issues of relationships and ethics that far exceed the researcher-participant relationship.

In the paper that largely introduced participatory video to geography, Kindon (2003) framed participatory video as a feminist methodology with the potential to break from the masculinist practice of "perpetuat[ing] hierarchical power relations and creat[ing] voyeuristic, distanced and disembodied claims to knowledge" (p. 142), especially those which were visual. Given the historical and philosophical parallels between feminist geography and the subdisciplinary field of children's geographies (Holloway 2014), this recognition can be further translated into an agenda of gradual development of approaches that would counter hegemonic, adultist conceptions of the world, including the place of children and young people in it, where participatory video is already demonstrating promise in disrupting some of the well-established hierarchical structures. And the specific angles of the questions of power, knowledge, and politics, embedded and addressed in participatory video with children and young people, can in turn be a means to establish the sought-after "wider relevance of the children's geographies" (van Blerk and Barker 2008, p. 117) at the core of the discipline.

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Participatory Research with Children and Young People: Using Visual, Creative, Diagram, and Written Techniques

13

Thomas Grant

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Abstract

This chapter provides a methodological toolkit for those interested in using participatory techniques with children and young people. It charts the rise of participatory “techniques” and “approaches” within the subdiscipline of children’s geography; arguing these often carries different hues or levels of participation. Ideals of full-scale participation, as an “approach,” can in theory seem well defined, but in the field these often translate as messy, complex, and problematic, which often challenges previously held views of participation. This requires innovative and adaptive responses when issues of time, resources, and competencies enter the mix. There is therefore a need to have a degree of reflexivity to ensure that research which struggles to achieve full-scale participation as an “approach” is not seen to be in some ways inferior for only partially enabling participation within certain aspects of the research. It is important to acknowledge that participatory research can progressively achieve transformative practice albeit at different levels (Beazley H, Bessell S, Ennew J, Waterson R, *Children’s Geographies* 7(4), 365–378, 2009). The chapter is aimed at two groups of researchers. Firstly, for those looking to use a participatory (PAR) approach, this toolkit provides a list of possible techniques which young people can choose from, as coresearchers, when helping to design the research. Secondly, for researchers who are looking to use alternative and nontraditional methods to engage with children and young people and make the research accessible for them.

Keywords

Participation • Participatory techniques • Participatory action research (PAR) • Participatory approaches • Ethics

1 Introduction

Participatory methods have become popular among geographers of children and young people; however what is identified and understood as “participation” is often highly contested within the discipline. In a fully participatory research project, the aim would be to include children and young people in all the various elements of the research process, often in an attempt to challenge power relations and empower them toward achieving social change. However the level of participation is often a site of contention. This has led geographers engaged in participatory research with children and young people to identify the difference between *participatory techniques*, which provide alternative methodological tools and participation as a meta-method *approach*, which requires a political commitment toward enacting and inspiring social change and challenging unequal power relations (Cahill 2007).

Participatory research has emerged alongside a new theoretical understanding of the child, which has resulted in children being repositioned as subjects rather than objects of research (Christensen and James 2000). This has led to exciting new

opportunities for engaging children and young people in research where children are increasingly seen as competent social actors (Morrow and Richards 1996; Sime 2008), capable of providing insight about their own experiences and perspectives (Greene and Hogan 2005), and are therefore participants who shape social, political, economic, and spatial structures (Christensen and James 2000). In light of this, assessing the level of participation at which children and young people can participate is vital when undertaking participatory research.

This chapter therefore seeks to distinguish the difference between participatory *techniques* and *approaches* and highlights recent debates about participation. It begins by exploring what is meant by the term “participation” and how children and young people can be regarded as being included in the research process. Attention is paid to exploring some of the differences which exist between participation as an *approach* as opposed to a *technique* and the ways in which these can be challenged in practice, within the field, as not being as clear cut compared to the theoretical ideal of a fully participatory approach.

The chapter continues by examining some of the participatory techniques used in children’s geography by providing a review of various methodological techniques used by geographers and social scientists. These can be used both within a participatory project as an approach or as alternative methodological techniques in their own right.

The sections detailing various techniques are in no particular order and can therefore be browsed on a section by section basis, or in full, depending on the research interests of the reader. It is also important to stress that this chapter does not provide an exhaustive list of techniques but has highlighted many which are regarded as popular within the subdiscipline. Equally the labels to which some of the techniques have been given can be problematic. For example, it is conceivable that all techniques require a level of creativity in producing the research. However, different techniques have been assigned to one of four subsections as a means of best fit: visual, diagram, creative, and written techniques.

Many of the following techniques are flexible and adaptable and have often arisen out of the cultural contexts where the research takes place (e.g., rap in poor urban neighborhoods in England). This is reflective of their participatory nature and the ways in which participatory research can innovate and adapt to the needs and self-expression of the communities taking part. The chapter finishes by exploring some of the ethical issues which need careful consideration when undertaking research of a participatory nature but are by no means intended to be an exhaustive or full list of requirements.

2 Participatory Research in Children’s Geographies

The rise of participatory research cannot necessarily be attributed to any one single discipline (Pain 2004). However participatory techniques and approaches are largely recognized as having their roots in the 1970s through the work of Freire (1972) who pioneered a radical participatory approach to education in Brazil.

Interest in participatory research within human geography can be traced back to community development work in the global south which used “participatory rural appraisal” and has been used extensively in recent years by geographers who have undertaken research with children and young people in both the developed and developing world (Pain 2004).

Children’s geographers understand and interpret young people’s participation in research projects in a variety of ways. Research has included young people in selected elements of the research (e.g., data collection) by employing particular methodological *techniques*, through to a more holistic and inclusive *approach* with the aim of achieving social transformation and challenging unequal power relations. Participatory research is diverse, and therefore the level of participation has often been cited as key to defining what it means to engage in research of a participatory nature (Cahill 2007; Kesby 2007; Pain 2004; Pain and Francis 2003). Researchers need to be clear about what they hope to achieve through participation and how indeed participation is measured.

Hart’s (1992) “ladder of participation” is useful when questioning the characteristics of participation with children and young people. He argues that there are eight different degrees or levels of participation which range from tokenistic forms of participation, which can be regarded as being, in effect, nonparticipatory, to child-led initiatives which require joint decision-making with adults. The eight different levels involve children being included in the decision-making process to varying degrees. The level of participation and the extent to which children and young people are included in making decisions about the direction of the research have therefore formed a key focus for debate within the subdiscipline.

In a fully participatory *approach*, often referred to as participation action research (PAR) (Cahill 2007) or militant research (Halvorsen 2015), children and young people are usually included as joint decision-makers with adults, in all aspects of the research. In using the term *approach*, this means that what is being used is not just one single participatory technique, but rather it includes a number of different interrelating techniques which help to address the research question and include young people in the creation and development of the research. This is often referred to as a meta-method approach (Kesby 2007).

PAR aims to harness the perspectives of participants to challenge social exclusion. This can help young people to develop the capacity to analyze their own lives in order to achieve social transformation (Kindon et al. 2007). This means the researcher should aim to facilitate and empower young people to solve problems affecting their lives. By using participation as an *approach*, there is a clear attempt to democratize the research process (Cahill 2007). While PAR seeks to include young people in all of the research decisions from design, data collection, and analysis and dissemination, participatory research can, as an alternative, engage young people in just certain aspects of the research (Pain and Francis 2004). For example, this may involve including them in the decision-making process when collecting the data, but not in the analysis or dissemination process.

When using PAR as a *meta-method approach*, the focus is on facilitating space for young people to contribute toward designing the research and being part of analyzing and disseminating the data. PAR also should enable participants to explore the issues which affect their lives in meaningful and culturally relevant ways. This can, with the involvement of young people in the decision-making process, include many of the participatory and creative techniques which follow in the next sections. It is important that young people determine these techniques as being appropriate means of self-expression for themselves.

Participatory techniques can however be used outside of PAR as alternative research methods in their own right. Kesby (2007) and Cahill (2007) argue that there is a difference between using “hands-on” methodological *techniques* which are chosen by the adult researcher compared to using PAR as an *approach* which seeks to include young people in the entire research design. The former does not necessarily make the research participatory in its ability to be socially transformative, and the latter can only be participatory through empowering young people to assist in the design, data collection, and analysis of data which, only then, can have the potential of leading to social action and social transformation. Using “hands-on” participatory *techniques* therefore does not necessarily lead to social change. Social change occurs through facilitating space for children and young people to question the world around them and to foster new solutions to deal with the social issues identified. This is much more likely to be achieved through a PAR approach. In this respect care needs to be taken to ensure that participants’ voices are listened to and that methods are not just naively used, thinking that because they are “hands on,” young people will want to engage, feel comfortable, or be competent using them (Kesby 2007).

Participatory research with young people has been regarded as being particularly useful when working with children and young people who are “hard to reach,” marginalized, or disadvantaged and has been used in both developed and developing countries. It is regarded as a good means of challenging and questioning power relationships which can lead people to become marginalized (Cahill 2007; Pain and Francis 2003; Sime 2008). This might involve exploring the relationship with those in authority, such as adults or the nation state, who hold power over others. PAR research has tended to focus on empowering marginalized groups, but participatory approaches are adaptable to any group with some research focusing on young people from more privileged backgrounds (see Allan 2012).

Geographers using participatory methods have been keen to ensure research is designed in a manner that is “context-specific, forefronting local conditions and local knowledge and producing situated, rich layered accounts” of participants’ lives (Pain 2004, p. 653). This spatial consideration allows for knowledge about a place to be produced by the participants which represent those living in a neighborhood (Mattingly 2001). Geographers have also emphasized the importance of not only considering personal experiences and possibilities for transformation but also researching how these fit within wider geopolitical factors to draw connections

	Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation	
8	Child-initiated – shared decision with adults	Degrees of Participation
7	Child-initiated and directed	
6	Adult-initiated – shared decision with children	
5	Consulted and informed	
4	Assigned but informed	
3	Tokenism	Non-Participation
2	Decoration	
1	Manipulation	

Fig. 1 Ladder of participation (Hart 1992)

between different scales (Cahill 2007; Cahill et al. 2007; Cameron and Gibson 2005).

The researcher needs first to question whether participatory techniques are appropriate, as part of a *meta-method approach*, which regards participants as coresearchers and included in all of the decision-making processes, or alternatively, whether the researcher should consider using an *alternative technical method*, where the decision-making process for choosing the research technique remains with the researcher but where the children and young people assist in collecting the research data. As Hart's (1992) eight levels of participation reveal (see Fig. 1), it is possible to have different levels of participation and inclusion of young people in research which ranges from nonparticipation (e.g., tokenism), to youth/adult equality in decision-making. As such participation can often take a form of somewhere between these two extremes. This can be dependent on a number of different factors and needs careful consideration when planning research of a participatory nature.

The length of time in which the research can be conducted is vital to gauge when planning participatory research. For example, to use participation as an *approach* rather than as a *technique* requires a lot of time as the whole of the research needs to be designed with the participants (Setyowati and Widiyanto 2009). This means that the data collection itself only forms a small part of the time spent with participants and that time also needs to be allocated toward planning, analysis, and dissemination of the data. If time runs out this may require certain aspects of participation to be reduced to enable the project to finish within the time permitted (Grant 2016).

The following sections outline a number of popular and emerging participatory techniques used in research with children and young people. They cover a range of methods from visual, diagram, written, and creative techniques and aim to do two things. First, they act as a detailed review of the literature and how these techniques have evolved within the discipline and second, they provide some guidelines about best practice around collecting and analyzing data when using participatory

techniques with children and young people. These various techniques can be read in sequential order or as stand-alone sections, depending on the reader's interest.

3 Visual Techniques

Visual techniques have been increasingly used by youth researchers since the turn of the twenty-first century, which saw the use of photography and video in research as means of empowering young people to deal with issues of adult-child power relationships, which traditional research methods often struggled to deal with effectively (Allan 2012). These methods can offer children and young people the ability to direct the research, gain new skills (Allan 2012), and develop the ability to express themselves by nonverbal means (Änggård 2015). This section outlines two popular visual techniques used in participatory research: photography and video.

3.1 Photographic Techniques: Photovoice and Self-Directed Photos

There are a range of different photographic techniques used by geographers researching children and young people. Two of the most popular are “photovoice” and “self-directed photos” also referred to as “photo walks.”

Photovoice is a method which allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the world from the perspective of the participant. This is achieved by giving participants a camera and asking them to take photos which capture aspects of their lives. Using photovoice with children can address issues of power relations by questioning how within certain context knowledge from a particular less powerful group (e.g., children or poor people) can be seen as being deficient over knowledge from other more powerful groups (e.g., professionals or expert adults). Photovoice therefore gives participants control over the research and the photos they take and allow their voices to be heard over dominant and more powerful groups (Campbell et al. 2013). Participatory methods, such as photovoice, are different from traditional methods where children and young people are often the object of the research (Berg 2005). In this respect traditional methods might involve young people being photographed as research subjects, whereas participatory research switches this round and the participants take part as coresearchers who have responsibility for directing the camera and taking the photos.

Self-directed photos have also been a popular method among geographers researching children and young people. This is often inspired by “mobile methods” which seek to investigate the everyday movements (e.g., strolling, walking, or driving) of people from their own perspective and the interconnected relationship between movements of people, objects, ideas, and information (Büscher and Urry 2009). Self-directed photos have often taken the form of “photo walks.” These are informative ways for young people to express their relationship to their environment and the places which are important to them (Änggård 2015; Kullman 2012;

Pyyry 2013). For example, Pyyry (2013) asked teenage girls to take photos of the places where they “hang out,” and Kullman (2012) used photography and film to understand young people’s journeys to school. This enables a process where walking and taking photos enables thinking and experience to occur simultaneously within the research (Pyyry 2013). While these examples seek to understand young people’s use of movement and travel between places, photovoice has also been used in a less mobile sense. For example, Chakraborty’s (2009) research with young Muslim women used photography to explore and depict social norms and expectations placed on them through focusing on clothing and the body.

Geographers using photographic methods have included young people in the research design to varying degrees. Campbell et al. (2013) in their research with Ethiopian school students held an introductory workshop to enable young people to contribute toward the research design by developing the research questions as a guide to their photography. However, the development of research questions with young people may not always be possible. This may be due to the need to focus the research on a particular area of interest to fulfill funding or research objectives, or as a result of time or resource constraints. This was the case for the “Young People’s Future Aspirations Research,” where limited time with the young people meant that certain elements of the research design, such as developing the research questions, were not feasible. In this case the young people chose the method; however, the researcher set the question: “Take photos of the people, places and things which are important to you?” (Grant 2016)

However, in another research project, Wee and Anthamatten (2014) investigated children’s culture of play and used photovoice as a *participatory technique* where the method of using photography was pre-chosen by the researchers and detailed instructions were given to children about taking photos of their “favorite places to play.”

As such these three examples show how participation, particularly around decision-making, can vary within participatory research which range from including young people in developing the research questions (Campbell et al. 2013; Chakraborty 2009), choosing the methodological technique (Grant 2016), or just collecting the research data (Wee and Anthamatten 2014).

Photographic methods, like other visual methods, are rarely regarded as evidence in their own right. They are often used to stimulate discussion (Rautio 2013) and are often complemented by other methods to help analyze the photos. For example, Campbell et al. (2013) used photovoice alongside a “draw-and-write” technique not only to gain an understanding of the meaning behind the photo but also to encourage young people to reflect on their own inner lives and that of their wider social group. Leyshon (2002) used the photos as a visual prompt to discuss their meaning with the young people. This enabled him to gain an understanding from the perspective of the young person, rather than deconstructing the meaning behind the photo from the perspective of the researcher.

Pyyry (2013) used a process called “photo talk” where young people were invited to discuss the photos they had taken. This can also take the form of an interview (Ånggård 2015). It is the responsibility of the researcher when analyzing photos with participants, not only to create space for participants to reflect on what

is significant but also to draw out that which might at first appear to be irrelevant (Pyry 2013). Likewise in the “Young People’s Future Aspirations Research,” the participants were asked to choose five photos to annotate and then talk about them as part of a wider group to spark a discussion about the meaning behind the photos. The focus on analyzing the photos was to understand why the photos were captured by the young people and what it represented to them (Grant 2016). It is therefore common practice to seek an explanation from young people about photos they have taken. This ensures that the participants’ understanding of the content and its significance and reasons for taking the photos are understood. Ethically speaking, this ensures that while young people direct the taking of photos, this is not diminished by the researcher imposing their own interpretation of the photos. This is ethically important; otherwise it defeats the original purpose of asking young people to take the photos.

3.2 Video and Film Techniques: Participatory Video

As with photography, the use of participatory video (PV) has been regarded as an effective means of working with participants within research by actively involving them in creating the video. In PV the role of the researcher involves “looking alongside” rather than “looking at” participants as the object of the video (Kindon 2003, p. 143). This requires a negotiation and balance of the right kind of relationships between the researcher and participants and has the potential to “destabilize hierarchical power relations” and facilitate space for transformation (Kindon 2003, p. 142). Geographers have increasingly used PV with young people to address a range of social issues from climate change (Haynes and Tanner 2013; Plush 2009), sexual health (Waite and Conn 2011), urban issues (Blazek and Hraňová 2012), and rural issues (e.g., employment opportunities, gentrification, and housing) which young people identified as affecting their lives (Leyshon 2002; Leyshon and DiGiovanna 2005). Participatory video can involve a range of approaches from short films (Blazek and Hraňová 2012; Haynes and Tanner 2013); Creating Hackney as Home Research Project) to video diaries (Noyes 2008) and has many advantages over photography because it is contemporary and immediate and provides more information for research compared to photos (Leyshon 2002).

Providing young people with video training in filmmaking and using a camera has been regarded as vital in helping them take ownership of the research and as a motivating factor (Blazek and Hraňová 2012). Planning is important in the development of PV. Once the research topic has been identified, either by the young people or researcher, it is good practice to create a storyboard and to develop a filming schedule to help structure the development of the video (Haynes and Tanner 2013). Creating a film is almost invariably time consuming, and researchers have repeatedly discovered that this can result in initial plans for longer or additional films needing to be scaled back (Haynes and Tanner 2013; Leyshon 2002).

The process of working together to produce and edit the film enables a better understanding of what the participants value. In PV it is the process of making the

video which is often of significant benefit to the research findings as it involves developing community and creating knowledge through understanding the perspective of the participants. It is therefore the process of collaboration and exchange which is of most value (Garrett 2011). The combination of filming, editing, and screening can act as an effective means for social change as this creates new knowledge about the issues affecting people's lives (Haynes and Tanner 2013; Kindon 2003).

Depending on the finish and quality of the video, children and young people might require additional help from PV consultants or experts who can work with them not only to create the video but also to teach new skills and finish any complex editorial elements (Haynes and Tanner 2013). Researchers using PV should work with participants to think about the intended audience. For example, young people in the Philippines made films to address issues of disaster relief and climate change (Haynes and Tanner 2013). The videos were aimed at particular audiences and addressed issues affecting the local community. The results were then shown to both local residents and also to regional officials in government, which helped to disseminate the results to a wider audience.

Blazek and Hraňová (2012) aimed to show films made by young people during their research to a number of different audiences ranging from the international youth exchange in Liverpool and then locally to young people's friends and families and also at a community screening to those from the wider neighborhood. This enabled young people to talk about the challenges they faced, but also to explore possibilities for change. It is therefore important to consider from the beginning of the research how the dissemination process can best include and capture young people's own perspectives. However, care needs to be taken to consider the ethical implications of including young people in the dissemination process in this way, as it results in the identities of participants not being kept confidential and young people speaking about their private lives to a wider audience (Valentine 1999).

4 Diagram Techniques

Participatory diagrams tend to be interactive child-led activities which seek to create a highly visual diagram to address a research question. The process can be tailored to different groups and can therefore be innovative (Kesby 2000a). This can take various forms which includes mapping (Kesby et al. 2005; Morrow 2008; Young and Barrett 2001), storyboarding and timelines (Walker et al. 2012; Pain and Francis 2004), sketches (Young and Barrett 2001), cartoons (Kesby et al. 2005), brainstorming and tree diagrams (Gwanzura-Ottmöller and Kesby 2005; Pain and Francis 2003, 2004), matrixes (Kesby 2000a), ranking (Pain and Francis 2003; Van Blerk and Ansell 2007), cause/impact diagrams (Pain and Francis 2003), imaginative drawing (Bland 2012), and body maps (Hastadewi 2009).

Geographers have therefore researched children and young people using participatory diagramming in a wide range of different ways and to many different

purposes with the aim of casting light on issues that affect young people's lives, such as sexual health and HIV (Kesby 2000a, b; Gwanzura-Ottmöller and Kesby 2005); the impact of crime (Pain and Francis 2004), through mapping children's use of space and place (Bromley and Mackie 2009; Young and Barrett 2001); dealing with the effects of injury (Hastadewi 2009); and natural disaster (Walker et al. 2012).

Diagram techniques can use a range of materials from locally sourced materials (e.g., leaves and sticks) (Kesby 2000a) to stationery and post-it notes. Diagramming does not need to be drawn; it can involve the use of movable objects to create the diagram. It can involve either individual or group work (Kesby et al. 2005). As the process is both tactile and verbal, this allows those who might find it difficult to participate in traditional research to focus on the activity rather than the presence of the researcher (Kesby 2000a; Kesby et al. 2005). This is important when working with children as it creates an environment where children can focus on the task, rather than meeting the expectations of an adult. This process might also help to build trust with the researcher if children are unsure about working with an adult they do not know very well.

Diagrams can provide a stimulus for being able to collect more detailed data from talking about the diagrams (Young and Barrett 2001). This can be useful in the analysis to gain an understanding of the perspective of the child and can reveal new information about how they perceive a particular problem or issue affecting their lives (Gwanzura-Ottmöller and Kesby 2005). Researchers have argued for the importance of checking with young people that preliminary findings do adequately represent their own views. This can involve giving a short presentation to young people summing up the data collected. Morrow (Morrow 2008) describes how when presenting her summary of findings, she was challenged by a young person for failing to include an important point raised by the group. Alternatively, young people themselves can create a summary of the work they have created and present it alongside the researcher to ensure their views are represented accurately.

Diagram techniques therefore enable a high level of participation from children and young people while also providing a stimulus for obtaining further oral and written material (Tapsell et al. 2001; Young and Barrett 2001). As there is a wide range of diagram techniques, this chapter is only going to expand on two popular techniques used by human geographers and social scientists: mapping and matrixes. However, the diversity and flexibility of diagram methods means it is easy to create and mold these to suit any research project and/or group of children and young people.

4.1 Mapping

Participatory mapping enables an exploration of how children use and perceive space as a "lived experience" from their own perspective. This allows children to challenge adult assumptions about the use of space (Young and Barrett 2001, p. 143). Researchers investigating young people's relationship to place have often

asked participants to map out places which are important to them (Morrow 2008; Young and Barrett 2001), or which provide them opportunities for education (Grant 2016) or employment (Bromley and Mackie 2009). Maps can either be drawn (Young and Barrett 2001) or participants can use various materials such as flour and water dough to mold a 3D map (Morrow 1999).

4.2 Matrixes, Ranking, and Scoring

Matrixes, ranking, and scoring are a way to prioritize, compare, and score issues and social phenomena which relate to people's lives (Kesby 2000a). For example, in Kesby's (2000a, p. 427) study investigating sexual health in Zimbabwe, participants developed the research question before creating a matrix: "What are the most serious health problems in this area?" Participants then created a list of health problems or ailments in their area and placed them on a matrix using a list of criteria to establish just how serious they were perceived to be. The criteria ranged from "it isolates you" to "it kills you" (see Kesby 2000a, p. 428 for full list). This then allowed the problems to be ranked. Likewise in the "Young People's Future Aspiration Research," young people were asked by the researcher, "what issues are most important to people living in your neighborhood?" Young people were provided with some suggestion cards (e.g., housing, facilities, health, etc.) but were also provided with blank cards to write any other topics that were uncovered in the research. They were then asked to rank them and select the five most important issues for people living in their community. This activity was repeated with a slightly different emphasis to cover what was important to young people personally. This allowed primarily for a discussion to be had about what was deemed important to the community more generally, but also how this might differ from what the young people themselves felt was important. The researcher should also seek to question what was not included in participants' answers. For example, young people often argued that education was not important to people living in their community and yet identified it as being personally important to them (Grant 2016) (Fig. 2).

Visual methods therefore provide a range of excellent techniques for exploring how children and young people perceive and understand the world around them in ways which are often very accessible to them. The following section outlines how geographers have used creative techniques to help young people to express and understand their lives.

5 Creative Techniques

Methodological techniques which are creative have become increasingly popular with researchers of children and young people. This allows those who are more kinesthetic and practical in their learning style to engage effectively in the research process through the use of tactile methods. Different techniques have ranged from multisensory methods which use play with natural objects such as sand, clay, and

Fig. 2 Ranking exercise
(Britney, age 13, England)
(Grant 2016)



sticks (Bingley and Milligan 2007) and physical exercise such as yoga (Chakraborty 2009) to creative methods which use imagination, design, music, or performing arts to research young people's experiences. Design methods have included 3D modeling (Bingley and Milligan 2007) and identity boxes (Awan and Gauntlett 2013), while music has been used to enable young people's self-expression through the use of rap (Dickens and Lonie 2013). Performing arts have also proved popular where role-play, drama (Mattingly 2001; Van Blerk and Ansell 2007), and dance (Sonn et al. 2013) can be effective methods of working with children and can be powerful mediums for representation (Mattingly 2001). Hastadewi (2009) argues that methods which are playful can help children open up to the research process by expressing their different thoughts and opinions. These "hands-on" methods can therefore provide fresh and innovative activities for working with young people in "fun" and playful ways.

5.1 Imaginative Drawing

Imaginative drawings can be used within research, particularly by asking children and young people to think about fresh possibilities for the future either for their own lives personally, or for the wider community to which they belong. Bland (2012) asked young people to design their ideal learning environments. Bland, who draws on Saul's (2001) imagination theory, argues that imagination can be used within research as an effective means of creating a vision of what could or should be within society but that it is important to balance this with reason in order to anchor the research in some sense of reality. For example, during the "Young People's Future Aspirations Research," young people were asked to either write or draw the following: "Imagine that you have retired from work. Either write or draw what your life has been like and what has happened to you?" Young people were asked not to write or draw an exaggerated account but to imagine what they think it might really be like (Grant 2016).

5.2 Rap Music

Raps can be used as a culturally relevant method to help some young people express their views and to promote self-awareness and self-expression. Dickens and Lonie (2013) have considered the potential that writing rap lyrics can have for allowing young people who are deemed to be in challenging circumstances to express themselves within research. Writing rap lyrics can lead to a greater understanding of a shared sense of identity with others who come from similar backgrounds. This in turn can help adults understand the various issues young people have to face. Dickens and Lonie (2013) were particularly interested in researching how young people's lives were included and took on prominence through the writing of lyrics. In the "Young People's Future Aspiration Research" project, some of the participants selected rap as the medium for exploring their experiences of living in a deprived housing estate. Young people were asked by the researcher to write a rap about what it means for them to live in their community and to consider both positive and negative aspect of their lives. In this case young people selected the technique used; however time restrictions meant the research question was predetermined by the researcher. As such young people were included in only certain aspects of the research design. Despite this the lyrics were often very emotive and often provided a rich source of data about certain stereotypes young people felt were attached to life on the estate. This enabled a discussion about how these stereotypes are formed and whether indeed young people regarded them to be true for themselves personally. Young people at the end of the research performed the raps to each other with a cajon drum to provide a beat (Grant 2016) (Fig. 3).

5.3 Drama, Role-Play, and Community Theater

Drama, role-play, and community theater can be effective means for enabling young people to explore the issues affecting them and to create new ideas for changing their situations (Van Berk and Ansell 2007). Drama is also a very deliberate way of representing people and understanding the social realities and

Fig. 3 Rap taken from "Young People's Future Aspirations Research" (Curtis, 13, England) (Grant 2016)

*In my area everyone's the same,
No one has money but tries to head for fame,
How are we chavs?
Just because we live in flats.
My family is what I worship,
They make living worth it.*

identities which relate to a particular place (Mattingly 2001). A good example is Van Berks and Ansell's (2007) study in which young people identified the social issues and difficulties which affected them through a ranking exercise. This enabled participants to discuss ways in which these can be addressed from within and outside the community. Once the relevant issues had been identified by the young people, they developed drama sketches to disseminate these to the rest of the school. Activities like drama can be recorded to capture what was discussed and performed during the research. Drama can also be used to feedback some of the findings to those who could not view the live performances as well as helping to disseminate the research to a wider audience.

When using drama or community theater, it is important for participants, as local people, to be more than just actors in the drama but for them to be included in writing the script and retelling their own stories. Mattingly (2001) argues that this can be achieved in three ways. First is asking participants to select different events from their past which might address particular issues or difficulties (as with Van Berk and Ansell's (2007) ranking exercise). Second, participants must turn these events into stories, and finally they must be sequenced and ordered to "explain causal processes" (Mattingly 2001, p. 450). When trying to achieve the final finished script, it may need the help of professional playwrights to work with participants depending on their level of competency (Mattingly 2001). While having professional help for the final stage limits the extent to which young people participate in sequencing the material, it is still a process which can include participants as consultants and ensures that they are happy with the end result.

5.4 Craft and 3D Design

Craft and design can involve the use of a range of different materials from natural items such as sticks, leaves, logs, twigs, sand, and clay to textiles, beads, buttons, and different metals and plastics (e.g., plasticine and Lego). Craft and design can be used to research various social interactions. For example, Bingley and Milligan (2007) argue that 3D models enable older young people to express their experiences of and relationship to woodland and nature and that using such models also helped them to overcome feelings of self-consciousness especially when doing research with others. Awan and Gauntlett (2013) also used 3D models to encourage young people to design identity boxes out of shoeboxes. They were given a range of materials to decorate the boxes and could also use material of their own. The identity boxes involved decorating the inside to represent internal, personal facts and the outside to convey the impact of external factors on their lives. Using craft and design enables participants to produce unique creations which can be used to help them in talking about their experiences. This can take the form of interviews which can be conducted either during or after making the artwork or model (Bingley and Milligan 2007). When using craft and design techniques, it is important to realize that not all participants might feel comfortable or have the skills to participate. Indeed careful consideration about the suitability of all participatory

methods should be applied when choosing participatory techniques, be they creative, written, or artistic. One way of ensuring that techniques are suitable is to allow young people to choose which technique they want to use. This is an advantage of the meta-method approach as it gives young people a choice about which participatory techniques they would like to use and ensures they are comfortable in undertaking them.

The use of creative methods, much like in diagramming, can be very much tailored to the group of children or young people involved. Such techniques provide a great opportunity within research to work with participants in fresh, innovative, and imaginative ways and if feasible can allow space for children to input their own creativity and ideas into the development of the research project.

The final section on participatory techniques explores written methods. It highlights the fact that while hands-on techniques are very popular, there may be some groups of children and young people who prefer to express themselves through writing.

6 Written Techniques

Written techniques can take a range of different forms and can include personal diaries, email correspondence/conversations to memory and scrapbooks. Enabling young people to reflect and feedback their thoughts during the research is a vital role for the researcher. One way this can be achieved is through writing, not only as a means of explanation of other visual kinesthetic or creative methods but as a technique in its own right. While the majority of participatory techniques with children tend to be visual or “hands on” as a means of engaging young people in nonthreatening and nontraditional methods, some children and young people may value different learning styles (Gardner 1993). Writing methods might be preferable for some groups of young people especially for those who find verbal communication difficult or are reluctant to speak as part of a larger group (Cahill 2007). For example, in Ison’s (2009) research with young people who had cerebral palsy, verbal communication was sometimes so difficult for young people that they opted to use email as a means of developing the research conversation with each other. The benefits of written methods can often be overlooked in research with children and young people. However, when considering how appropriate this method is, it is important for all participants to feel comfortable with the method as barriers, such as poor spelling, can prevent some from participating fully in the activity (Wills 2012).

While written material might be regarded as being quite private, analyzing written material can still be done within a group setting. For example, Cahill (2007) who used personal diaries with young women from New York, wrote down different contributions on large sheets of paper which, when displayed together, was called “Our Wall.” This acted as a public memory of the knowledge produced during the research. This technique enables young people to select what they want

to share with the group and can also allow the researcher and other participants to clarify key themes which have emerged through the research. The use of written methods within research with children and young people is often sidelined in favor of other more “hands-on” and supposedly “child-friendly” methods which are perceived to be favored by children and young people. However, this is a problematic assumption as some young people may well feel extremely comfortable when writing about their experiences. This assumption may actually therefore reduce the choice young people have and limit the effectiveness of including children and young people in the research. The following section details two popular written methods: personal diaries and memory books.

6.1 Personal Diaries

Personal diaries can be used as a process of reflective writing where young people are encouraged to write down any thoughts or reflections in a diary to develop their own perspectives on the issues or topic being covered in the research. Cahill (2007) argues that how someone chooses to write can reveal a lot about them. In her work with young women, Cahill used an approach called “free writing” where participants were encouraged to write down what came into their minds. This can create “inner speech” and can help thoughts to become concrete and developed and allows the writer to better understand the world. This method allowed young people to think about and clarify their position within their community and where necessarily, challenge their preconceived ideas and their place within the neighborhood. This technique can therefore be useful for challenging power relations and charting how young people’s perceptions change over the course of a research project.

6.2 Memory Books

Memory books can form a useful tool for reflecting on past experience and perceptions. It usually requires participants to write about a memory from a given topic or trigger word to help people remember. For example, Wills (2012) asked young people to write about their memories of a birthday in the hope that this would trigger them to write about food. The time period for reflection can also vary and include longer periods. Thomson and Holland (Thomson and Holland 2005) also asked young people to document their “everyday life and sense of self” over a period of 3 months.

Written techniques might not be appropriate for all groups of children and young people but should certainly be considered and seen as an important way of helping young people to express themselves. The final section of this chapter outlines important ethical issues which need careful consideration when undertaking participatory research.

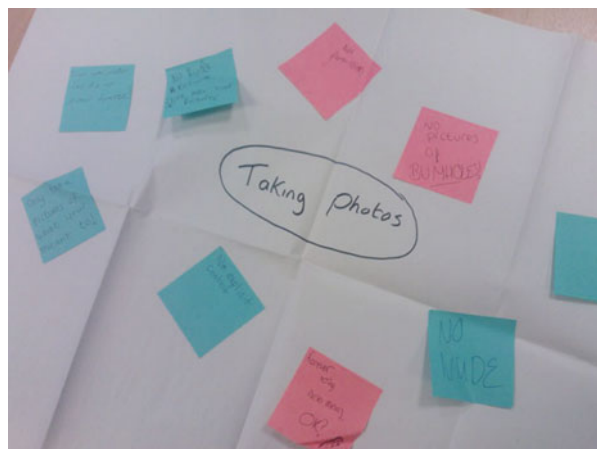
7 Ethical Issues When Using Participatory Techniques

There are a number of ethical issues which are common to some or all of these different participatory techniques, which are summarized in the following section. These are loosely arranged in the order by which they should be considered. Consent is required before undertaking research, and competency and appropriateness are considerations which need thought during the research design. Ownership and representation relate to data collection, while analysis and dissemination finish the process of participatory research.

7.1 Consent

Informed consent of the participants and their parents is now a mainstream practice within research with children and young people. However, in some of the methodological techniques, there is a requirement to critically think about the people and objects children and young people choose to include in their data gathering. For example, photos or videos might include others who are not part of the research. This requires a discussion with participants before giving them a camera. It is advisable that young people are included in drafting a list of ethical guidelines to frame the research. This might include making sure that photos are not taken of people in demeaning or embarrassing situations (Campbell et al. 2013; Luttrell 2010), obtaining consent when taking photos of others (Johnsen et al. 2008; Vakaoti 2009), and ensuring that the identities of everyone in the photos remain anonymous through pixelating photos or recordings. Including young people in developing ethical guidelines for the research can also help young people take ownership and responsibility for the activity. Considerations over consent and the inclusion of other people's identity might also apply to other activities such as drama, where pseudonyms should be considered if identifying issues from an individual's past (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4 Photo of ethical guidelines developed by young people in the “Young People’s Future Aspirations Research” (Grant 2016)



7.2 Competency

Ensuring that children and young people are competent when using different research tools is essential, particularly with techniques which use technology or “hands-on” methods such as photography or videos. Moreover, it is important to ensure that children and young people have the technical ability to use the cameras (Buckingham and de Block 2008; Campbell et al. 2013) and to provide the necessary training. During the “Young People’s Future Aspirations Research,” many of the young people had never seen or used a disposable (still) camera and initially questioned why there was not a delete button or a screen to view the photos. Young people were equally unaware of what a photographic negative was. Therefore it is important not to assume that children and young people will have previous experience and technical knowledge of all equipment (Grant 2016).

Other researchers have also acknowledged the importance of enlisting professional help to enable young people to produce their activities. For example, Bingley and Milligan (2007) enlisted the help of an expert wood-carver to work with young people when they used larger hand tools when making 3D models. Haynes and Tanner (2013) also sourced professional guidance from filmmakers to help edit the films, and Mattingly (2001) enlisted the use of scriptwriters to work with young people to produce a script. The use of professional guidance does not necessarily disempower children and young people; however it is important to ensure that it is young people’s own ideas that guide the process.

7.3 Appropriateness

When choosing a particular methodological technique with the participants, it is important to question critically the appropriateness of a particular method which can include thinking about the resources available such as equipment. If certain pieces of equipment are not available or a particular method might require being passed through another stage of ethical clearance, then certain techniques might not be appropriate. During the “Young People’s Future Aspirations Research,” young people suggested going for a walk around the estate. This idea did not have parental consent or approval from the school or university ethics board. To do this, it would have taken too much time to gain the relevant permission. This resulted in a list of more appropriate techniques being suggested to the young people from which they could make a choice. One of the main restrictions for being able to do this was the time it would take to obtain ethical clearance through university procedures. Resources and time were therefore major factors in choosing which techniques might be appropriate (Grant 2016).

The focus of the research is another factor to question when designing research. For example, Campbell et al. (2013) stress the limitations of using photos in the research, because these are only able to capture the present world. Photos cannot capture the past nor imagine the future; hence, other methods are needed which can facilitate imaginative projection of ideas (e.g., Bland 2012). This has implications

regarding the focus of the research, particularly in participatory research, if used as an *approach*, which aims to arrive at a point of action and aims to challenge the past and present. It can also be problematic when thinking about how future solutions might emerge out of the research. Other techniques therefore may be needed to explore the possibilities for future change to occur.

7.4 Ownership and Representation

Using participatory methods often places greater emphasis on children and young people participating in collecting the data. This is different to traditional methods where participants are the object of the research, and therefore in participatory research, young people are regarded as the source of the data, as well as collectors of the data. Within participatory techniques children collect the data, be it through taking photos, making films, or writing a play about their experiences. This means that the participants, who have produced the data, should ideally be the people who explain its meaning. For example, in traditional research, photos might be regarded as belonging to the researcher (Walker et al. 2008); however, within participatory photography, it is important to acknowledge that the photos have been taken by the participants, and therefore the use and interpretation of such photos should be analyzed with the participants.

Participatory research is a good way of helping young people who are marginalized to represent themselves and their neighborhoods from their own perspective rather than from popular beliefs held by society or the dominant discourse or ideology. For teenagers living in poor neighborhoods, there can be a widely held perception that they are vulnerable and yet simultaneously dangerous. Participatory techniques (such as the community drama used by (Mattingly 2001)) enable young people to represent themselves and to challenge these ideas. This in turn challenges power relations and can lead to new solutions to problems and issues that affect participants.

7.5 Analysis and Dissemination

The inclusion of children and young people in disseminating data during research has been achieved by their representation on working parties, committee meetings, and even conference platforms. However, this can be ethically problematic over issues of confidentiality and asking children and young people to speak about their lives in public (Valentine 1999). The involvement of children and young people in dissemination, however, remains something which has been quite difficult to achieve outside of a PAR or action approach which tries to include children and young people in the dissemination process. The danger is that feedback can become passive and participation can prove to be just tokenistic. Van Blerk and Ansell (2007) argue that research should do more than just give participants the results, but that it should seek to include children and young people, which can lead to a greater

depth of analysis and create ownership over the findings. This, in turn, may lead to greater impact both for social change within the group and for the wider research findings and contribution to the discipline. Research studies highlighted in this chapter have attempted to include young people in this process (e.g., Blazek and Hraňová 2012; Cahill 2007). However, whether a participatory technique is used as part of an approach or as an alternative methodological technique, care needs to be taken to ensure that the analysis is true to that of young people and where possible should seek to include children and young people in the analysis stage.

8 Conclusion

A number of popular and emerging participatory techniques have been outlined which have been used by geographers undertaking participatory research with children and young people. Current debates within the subdiscipline of children's geography have centered on what constitutes "participation" with children and young people and has led to the distinction between participation as an *alternative technique* and participation as a meta-method *approach*. A central tenet of this debate has been the extent to which young people are included in the decision-making process during research from the initial design to the analysis and dissemination of the results. This chapter, while acknowledging this debate, has not set its focus on this difference, but it does acknowledge its importance to anyone doing research of this nature. It has however highlighted that participation in the field is often messy and made complex by a number of factors such as time, resources available, and young people's own real and imagined competencies. As such, completing a fully transformative meta-method participatory approach (PAR) within the research context can prove problematic. It is here that a degree of flexibility, adaptability, and openness to what some might deem as "lesser" forms of participation is needed to relegitimize some of Hart's (1992) eight levels of participation. While these might be far from ideal, there are many occasions upon which a full-scale meta-method approach is not possible. As such space needs to open up within the discipline that understands that while striving toward a full-scale PAR approach, an inability to reach this does not render the research as dubious in its participatory nature nor necessarily limit its ability to be transformative (Beazley et al. 2009). In this respect participation can be limited as the result of the messy and complex social reality which the research is based on.

Various methodological techniques can be employed within or outside of a participatory approach. Within a PAR approach the methods outlined in this chapter can therefore be useful in helping develop a toolkit of possible participatory techniques for children and young people to choose from. It also highlights that choosing a participatory technique can also be innovative and applied to different situations as appropriate. Outside of participation as an approach, these methodological techniques can act as an excellent means of engaging children and young people in nontraditional ways which are age appropriate. A range of different techniques has been outlined from visual, creative, diagram, and written methods,

and the chapter includes advice about how these have been achieved within the field. Finally, undertaking participatory research also brings with it a renewed focus on the ethics of working with children and young people beyond that of including them in the research process. It raises issues of competency, gaining consent from others included in data, the appropriateness of a technique, how children and young people are represented, and who has ownership of research data. Finally the chapter has not provided an exhaustive list of possible techniques or ethical considerations but has attempted to chart how the subdiscipline of children's geography has evolved and innovated to produce relevant research methods which attempt to include children and young people in the research process.

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Combining Multiple Qualitative Methods in Research on Young Disabled People in the Global South

14

Stefanie Gregorius

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Abstract

Disabled young people in the Global South have been widely considered to be among the poorest and most excluded of young people worldwide. Due to disabling social and physical environments, they are often deprived of opportunities to participate in education, employment, and social life, which complicates their transitions to adulthood. Despite a growing body of geographical research that focuses on methodological and ethical issues in investigating the lives of young people in the Global South, disabled young people and their complex everyday realities remain silent within these debates. This chapter builds upon the burgeoning use of participatory mixed method approaches within human geography. Informed by the author's experience of conducting participatory research with disabled youth in Ghana, it reviews different

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qualitative research methods and explores possibilities of combining these to disentangle the complexities surrounding the needs, challenges, and capabilities of disabled young people in the Global South. It is argued that if the different preferences and varying abilities of young people with different impairments are taken into account, a multi-method approach can be inclusive and empowering.

Keywords

Multiple qualitative methods • Disabled young people • Global South • Participatory methods • Inclusion • Different impairments • Ghana

1 Introduction

Estimates suggest that there are approximately 200 million youth (aged 15–24) with some sort of physical, sensory, intellectual, or mental health disability; the majority of these young people (approximately 80%) live in countries of the Global South (Groce 2004; UN 2010). Based on predominant disabling social and physical environments, which curtail opportunities to participate in education, employment, and social and community life, disabled young people are often considered to be among the most marginalized and poorest young people worldwide (Groce 2004; Parnes et al. 2009). Due to different forms of disability-related exclusion, the transitions to adulthood of disabled young people become particularly challenging and complex.

Disabled children and young people in the Global South are generally less likely to attend school and have lower levels of education compared to their nondisabled peers (Parnes et al. 2009). It is estimated that approximately 98% of disabled young people in the Global South do not attend school, with significant variations across categories of social difference, including gender, socioeconomic status, and impairment type (UN 2010, p. 3). Limited levels of education generate detrimental effects on other aspects of young people's lives, especially with regard to employment and social participation. Disabled young people are frequently under- or unemployed and earn less than nondisabled people, which increases levels of dependency on family members in particular (ibid). The exclusion within the areas of education and employment is inherently linked to disability-related stigmatization and discrimination which limits young people's opportunities for social participation. Furthermore, Groce (1999, p. 1) argues that disabled young people are often constructed as "childlike" and in need of care. Arguably, such conceptualizations and different levels of exclusion, which "other" disabled young people from their peers, have significant implications for their personal life trajectories. It also means that their potentials and capabilities remain unrecognized.

Despite an increasing body of geographical work that focuses on methodological and ethical issues in investigating the everyday lives of young people in the Global South, disabled young people remain silent within these debates. Little is known about how these young people navigate through life with the capabilities they

possess and how they make their transitions to adulthood. The following sections briefly introduce relevant conceptual and methodological developments in the interlinked arenas of youth and disability, with particular reference to Global South contexts. It should be noted that there is not a scope in this chapter to address all major conceptual developments within disability and youth studies. However, the section's focus is on providing a background for the subsequent sections, which discuss the applicability of different qualitative methods in research on disabled young people in the Global South.

This chapter is informed by the author's doctoral research project that explored the transitions to adulthood of disabled young people in Accra, Ghana, with particular focus of their education, employment, and social trajectories. The data collection of this research project consisted of 9 months of fieldwork in Ghana, using a combination of multiple qualitative research methods to understand how disabled young people make their transitions to adulthood. The discussions of this chapter are situated within this project, and literature is used that addresses a series of methodological reflections the researcher and the participants encountered when using life story interviews, focus group discussions, solicited diaries, participant-directed photography, and participatory video. These reflections are part of a wider trend in geographies of children and young people in the Global North and South that seek to reduce unequal power relations between the researcher and research participants and promote empowering and inclusive research practices (e.g., Langevang 2007; van Blerk and Barker 2008).

2 Youth Studies

In order to conduct research with "youth," it is crucial to consider its various definitions, which are socioculturally and socio-spatially manifested. For a layperson, youth is often associated with the state of being young and particularly with the distinct phase of life separating childhood and adulthood. In terms of defining youth in chronological biological age, "youth" in the Global North generally refers to people aged 15–24. In many countries of the Global South, however, the category of youth has been extended up to 30 or even 35 years of age. In addition to defining the concept in terms of chronological biological age, youth can also be understood as performance (Evans 2008). The work of geographers has been particularly valuable in deconstructing conceptualizations of youth as "not adult," "at risk," and "troubled" by focusing on young people's agency and considering youth as a distinct period in one's life (Skelton 2002; Evans 2008). Specifically, geographers have sought to contest the assumed homogeneity of definitions of youth by emphasizing the importance of spatiotemporal variations in the use and meanings of this term (Evans 2008).

One of the most widely used concepts in youth research in the Global North is youth transitions. Traditionally, youth has been conceptualized as a transitional phase in relation to an assumed linear relationship between childhood and adulthood that is marked by key events, stages, or rites of passage such as the transition

from school to work, leaving from home to independent living, and from dependence within the parental family to finding a partner, becoming a parent, and being independent (Punch 2002; Evans 2008). Such developmental understandings assume that young people follow a “normal” course of development, for example, straight from school into employment (see Valentine and Skelton 2007, for a critique). This original understanding of youth transitions as being unidirectional has been strongly criticized across disciplines as the period of “youth” has progressively become extended and fragmented, both in the Global North and Global South (Skelton 2002; Jeffrey 2010; Cieslik and Simpson 2013). More recent research focuses on exploring the lives of young people particularly with regard to wider social and economic changes that occur through processes of globalization and include rising youth unemployment, changing labor market conditions, expanding post-school education, and increasingly delayed marriage and family formation (Jeffrey 2010; Valentine and Skelton 2007). Geographical work in the Global North and South has increasingly focused upon biographical and life course approaches to exploring young people’s “fragmented” and “protracted” transitions to adulthood as a means to shed light on the fluidity of their status, which often varies between dependence, interdependence, and independence (Langevang 2007; Valentine and Skelton 2007).

Methodologically, youth studies have experienced a shift from considering young people as objects of research to focusing on their agency and active role in shaping the research process (James et al. 1998). Common research methods include semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and observations, which are used to gain insights into young people’s everyday lives and to understand their behavior and practices (Cieslik and Simpson 2013). Such methods respond to critiques of quantitative methodologies, traditionally used in youth transition research, that are characterized by limited interaction between the researcher and the participants and its focus on “objectivity” (ibid). In connection to the recognition of young people’s agency, there has been a growing interest in exploring multiple avenues in which young people, both in the Global North and South, can be involved in the research process (van Blerk 2006). Increasingly, children’s geographers are using multiple qualitative research methods to explore the experiences of children and young people. Methodological debates within children’s geographies often revolve around changing power relations between the researcher and the participants and issues of positionality (Hemming 2008; van Blerk and Barker 2008). It can be argued that using participatory methods allows one to address unequal power relations and understand in detail the complex social processes that influence young people’s lives across a variety of axes of difference, including disability, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status.

Generally, participatory approaches have their roots in international development research as a tool to bring about social change. When applied to youth studies, participatory research seeks to challenge social exclusion of young people and facilitates empowerment to transform their own lives (Cahill 2007, p. 298). This becomes particularly important for disabled young people in the Global South who

frequently experience oppression and marginalization due to disabling social and physical environments (Groe 2004).

3 Disability Studies

Like youth, disability is a highly contested and complex concept, and meanings vary across different disciplines and contexts. Understandings of what constitutes disability can be divided broadly into either medical or social models. The medical/individual approaches to disability are rooted in medical and psychological knowledge and label impairments as an “individual medical tragedy” (Shakespeare 1993, p. 255). Such understandings of “dysfunctional” bodies tend to characterize persons with impairments as dependent and in need of care and deny them their capabilities and agency (Barnes and Mercer 2010).

Based on the significant limitations of the medical model in understanding the complex lived experience of disability across categories of social difference, social models of disability developed mainly outside academia and were promoted by disability activists and their organizations. It has been argued that the social environment, rather than the impaired body, generates social exclusion and marginalization. The focus was on redesigning society in order to attend to the needs of disabled people (Oliver 1996).

Like the concept of youth transition, both disability models were developed in the Global North and are based on specific sociocultural circumstances (Sheldon 2005). In the context of varying conceptualizations of disability, Priestley (1998) reminds us that the exclusion/inclusion of persons with different impairment types is interlinked closely with the predominant cultural perceptions of disability. However, research on disability in the Global South remains scarce and has been heavily influenced by quantitative scholarship that is concerned primarily with measuring the prevalence of disability and the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs in numerical terms (Hartley and Muhit 2003). Such research ignores cultural and contextual factors and reduces the research participant’s active involvement in the research process (Turmusani 2004). As a result, individual experiences and social aspects of disability have been sidelined and are poorly understood (Hartley and Muhit 2003). Singal (2010, p. 416) claims that the predominant focus on quantitative disability research in the Global South has led to a “more or less complete absence of the lives of disabled people in the literature.” The dominance of scholarship from (and in) the Global North chiefly explains why socio-spatially varying understandings of disability, especially in the Global South, remain silent within the disability discourse (Grech 2011; Meekosha 2011). It is therefore imperative to explore the experience of disability from the perspective of disabled people in the Global South themselves, which requires inclusive and participatory methodologies that take into consideration the varying abilities and preferences of persons with different impairment types.

Qualitative approaches have been presented as having the potential to explore and understand better the complex everyday lives of disabled people (O’Day and

Killeen 2002). Similar to the movement in youth studies, a parallel shift can be observed in disability research with the aims of actively involving disabled people in all stages of the research process and seeking to facilitate empowering research relations and positive change for disabled people who are often constructed as vulnerable and marginalized (Barnes and Mercer 2010). Although this movement has been predominantly observed in the Global North, there is a small but growing body of qualitative research in the Global South exploring the relationship of disability and gender (Ghai 2001), disability and poverty (Grech 2011), and issues surrounding disability and children (Wickenden and Kembhavi-Tam 2014). However, with some exceptions, there is still a dearth of qualitative research on disabled youth beyond the Global North.

4 Using Multiple Qualitative Methods

As outlined in the previous section, participatory qualitative research methods have been increasingly used in research on “vulnerable” populations, including youth and disabled people. The use of multiple qualitative research methods, including oral, visual, and written methods, has been adapted in several geographical studies on young people in the Global South (Young and Barrett 2001; Langevang 2007). It has been argued that the combination of several methods has the potential to outweigh unequal power relations that constitute the relationship between adults and young people and helps unravel the complexities of young people’s everyday lives in situations of poverty (Young and Barrett 2001; Punch 2002; Langevang 2007).

With regard to disability, the use of multiple participatory qualitative methods can be understood as responding more adequately to the different preferences and varying abilities of persons with different impairment types and can promote inclusive and empowering research practices. Influenced by the author’s research experience in Ghana, this chapter reviews and discusses how different participatory methods can be combined usefully to explore the everyday lives of disabled young people in the Global South.

4.1 Participant Observation

Geographers use participant observation to investigate the meanings of place and the contexts of the everyday lives of their participants through actively immersing themselves in the latter’s lives and interacting with them socially in various settings (Kearns 2010). For instance, within a Global South context, Langevang (2007) argues that spending prolonged periods of time with their participants and being accessible and open for dialogue are crucial components to build trust and rapport, which can prove advantageous before other data collection methods, including interview and focus group discussions, are conducted. Watson and Till (2010)

remind us that observing everyday geographies is a fluid, multistage process and requires a high amount of flexibility on the researcher's part. This becomes even more complex in cross-cultural research involving "vulnerable" participants, including disabled young people. Generally, the research practice should not reinforce unequal power relations between the researcher and the participants. Of particular importance are discourses revolving around representation. Before conducting participant observation, it is crucial to obtain cogent background information about the participants and learn about their social environments and cultural norms in order to act in a culturally sensitive manner.

Participant observation finds additional value in geographical research including young disabled people. In a study on children with and without impairments, Holt (2004) argues that participant observation can be a useful tool to learn about young people's diverse embodied practices, cultures, and abilities and can facilitate empowering research relations. Furthermore, Cocks (2008) uses participant observation as a research tool to enhance inclusion for children with profound and multiple impairments as a way not to exclude participants on account of their ability to communicate.

Conducting research with disabled youth in the Global South requires careful reflection, especially if the researcher has no impairment and comes from the Global North. In the existing literature, disabled people are viewed to be "othered" in many countries of the Global South. In Ghana, for instance, Tinney et al. (2007) note that disabled people are often believed to be cursed or disability is seen as the result of witchcraft. However, it is important to be critical of such accounts, since they can inadvertently reproduce neocolonial views of certain cultures and societies as "less" than cultural imperatives emerging from the Global North. Talle (1995) highlights for instance that there are cultures in which disabled people are undifferentiated and fully included in community life. This demonstrates that the level of inclusion of disabled people is largely influenced by cultural conceptualizations of disability.

Disabled people both in the Global North and South often remain excluded from education, employment, and social and community life, which might affect their ability and willingness to communicate, as well as their attitude toward meeting strangers. It is therefore crucial to be aware of cultural conceptualizations of disability, to exercise a high level of sensitivity at all stages of the observation process, and to be careful not to reinforce existing power imbalances. Based on the author's experience in Ghana, this can be achieved through encouraging dialogue with the participants, being approachable and flexible, and spending prolonged periods of time together in spaces where disabled young people feel comfortable, including at their homes, at their workplaces, or at disabled people's organizations. These processes were found to help in building trust and rapport and destabilize unconscious misconceptions about the abilities of disabled young people. Establishing levels of familiarity was also useful for involving participants in further research methods (interviews, focus group discussions, and photo-diaries) and yielded a rich amount of data.

4.2 Life Story Interviews

Life story interviews refer to a narrative research method used to gather information of a person's life, including the individual's roles in a given context over her/his life course (Atkinson 1998). Specifically, it is a research technique where the researcher and the participant spend a considerable amount of time together in the process of listening to the stories of an entire life, which is beneficial for exploring how individuals experience significant changes over the life course (Liamputtong 2010).

In the context of youth studies, life story interviews help investigate how young people navigate changing circumstances in making the transition to adulthood (Langevang 2007). This method finds additional value in Global South contexts where the life transitions of young people are presented as being increasingly complex, reversible, and protracted (Jeffrey 2010). Exploring the lived experiences of significant events in an individual's life and the social and structural contexts in which they occur also allows researchers to gain an understanding of the participant's social positioning. Geographers are increasingly using life story interviews in working with young people in the Global South in order to shed light on the complexities of individual life trajectories and investigate personal and cultural meanings of youth that differ from the Global North (e.g., Langevang 2007).

In addition to its usefulness in exploring different trajectories in the lives of young people, life story interviews are advantageous in disability research. Until relatively recently, disability studies have tended to focus on the voices of able-bodied outsiders, instead of disabled people themselves. Life story interviews, however, can promote the expert role of disabled people in their own lives (Morgan 2001). Life stories also help to recognize that the construction of impairment and disability is a process and the individual's experiences vary across categories of social difference, including age, disability type, and gender (Seddon et al. 2001). This technique sheds light on how the onset of an impairment has affected different areas of the individual's life, including social relationships, self-perception, education, and employment. Such personalized accounts unravel prevalent conceptualizations of disability in a society and highlight the different experiences of disability depending on sociocultural and socio-spatial contexts (Irwin 2001). In addition, foregrounding the voices of disabled people themselves and highlighting their roles as experts demonstrate their agency in actively shaping their own life course. As a consequence, life story interviews can be a useful tool to empower disabled people to speak for themselves, which challenges prevalent misconceptions about their everyday lives. In the context of disabled young people, life stories can also prove beneficial in exploring how disability affects transitional processes in particular spaces and contexts, including education, employment, and social and community life.

Conducting life story interviews with disabled young people in the Global South involves a number of ethical challenges that require a reflexive research practice. Talking about disability-related experiences, which frequently relate to experiencing social exclusion and oppression, can cause emotional distress. Despite the acknowledgment that it is impossible to be prepared for every situation that may

arise during the interview, it is important that certain precautions are met. Life story interviews with young people should be conducted in an environment comfortable for the research participants. It is crucial to ask the young persons about a place where they feel free to talk about their life histories. However, this can be difficult for young people who are treated childlike and not used to speak for themselves (Groce 1999) and where parents or carers might want to be present during the interview. In a situation where the young person gets emotionally distressed during the interview, it is imperative to remind the participant that she/he can withdraw from the project at any given point without providing an explanation. Ideally, prior to the interview, the researcher should ensure to identify individuals or disability experts who participants could turn to for emotional support. Other ethical challenges might arise due to unequal power relations between the researcher and the participants. Overall, the researcher needs to be aware of the predominantly marginalized position of disabled young people in the Global South while at the same time recognizing their capabilities and expert roles.

Highlighting the expert role disabled young people play in narrating their own life stories was particularly empowering for those participants in the author's research project in Ghana, who felt sidelined and marginalized in society. It was shown that the focus on disabled young people's expert role helped reduce unequal power relations between the participants and the researcher (white European, nondisabled, female). Talking about critical events during the life course was considered liberating for participants whose disabling social environments had hitherto denied them the opportunity to voice their opinions and experiences of disablement publicly. These examples contribute to current discourses in geography that revolve around creating empowering, participatory, and inclusive relationships between the researcher and young people and highlighting young people's agency in shaping their everyday lives (van Blerk 2006; Langevang 2007; Hemming 2008).

4.3 Focus Group Discussions

Since the late 1980s, focus group discussions have been increasingly used by geographers to investigate "various qualitative aspects of people's everyday engagements with their social and spatial world" (Hopkins 2007, p. 529). Langevang (2007) used focus group discussions with young people and argued that this method has the potential to outweigh challenges associated with the power imbalances between adult researchers and young people.

Focus group discussions are also commonly used in development research and ethnography to "give a voice" to marginalized populations, such as ethnic minority groups, impoverished people, and persons stigmatized by illnesses (Liamputtong 2010). They have also proved beneficial in disability research as they offer a platform to facilitate increased exchange between people who frequently experience exclusion and marginalization (Kroll et al. 2007). However, experiences of conducting focus group discussion with disabled people in the Global South are

largely unknown. Based on the level of social exclusion and segregation of many disabled people especially in contexts where they are constructed as cursed or the result of witchcraft (see, e.g., Tinney et al. 2007), identifying and recruiting participants might pose significant challenges, and people might not be used to discuss their everyday experience with others. Another limitation relates to mobility issues and the often inadequate access to transportation and the built environment. One way to overcome such challenges would be to identify spaces where disabled young people have some level of familiarity and are less likely to feel shy talking about their everyday lives. Using an already existing network could also facilitate the process of setting up different focus group discussions across categories of social difference in order to flesh out how disability experiences differ, for example, across gender and impairment type. Sharing specific characteristics and experiences can have an empowering effect on young people, who might find it easy to steer discussions and thus take an active part in the research process.

It has been argued that incorporating participatory activities into group discussions can provide a focus and encourage shy members to engage more freely (Liamputtong 2010). Suitable stimuli for discussions could be, for instance, photographs or video clips. A number of researchers have instructed participants to take their own photographs (see section on participant-directed photography) and let them draw images and maps aiming to facilitate the discussion process (Kesby et al. 2005). In the context of conducting focus group discussions with disabled young people in the Global South, pictures relating to their everyday lives in different contexts (e.g., using images from photo-diaries, see section on participant-directed photography) can be shown to spark discussions about different experiences of disablement.

Based on the levels of exclusion many disabled people experience, it is likely that only a minority of participants are used to such a format of discussion. For some young people, this might be an intimidating experience, whereas others might find it empowering to express their views, to compare themselves, and to learn from others with similar characteristics about their everyday lives. This requires the researcher to be experienced in work with disabled people, make informed judgments about the well-being of the participants, and have strong mediation skills.

The author's experiences of conducting focus group discussions with disabled young people in Ghana revealed that special and integrated schools and disabled people's organizations were conducive environments for group discussions where young people felt comfortable to share their experiences. This generated a wealth of information about their everyday lives. Young people were keen to learn about each other's experiences of disability and compared themselves to other people in the same situation. It also created an empowering and inclusive environment where participants with strong self-esteem became motivational speakers for those who had less faith and confidence in their own abilities. Focus group discussions were therefore unique opportunities to exchange experiences, especially for those young people whose social interactions had been limited due to disabling social and physical environments. Furthermore, pictures from the photo-diary project and a participatory video (see sections on participant-directed photography and

participatory video) were used to spark discussion, which became particularly useful for participants who were not used to share their experiences with others.

4.4 Solicited Diaries

There is a limited body of work by geographers on the use of solicited diaries (for exceptions, see Meth 2003; Langevang 2007; Morrison 2012). Morrison (2012) argues, however, that this method can be useful in shedding light on participants' embodied and emotive dimensions of their everyday lives. In contrast to interviews or focus group discussions which can be considered as "one-off events," solicited diaries capture the participants' everyday lives in a more familiar context and enable the individuals to reflect on multiple themes relatively untinted of the researcher's influence or other participants dominating in focus group discussions (Meth 2003). This method is commonly used within health research in the Global North and focused predominantly on (older) adults. Langevang (2007), however, uses solicited diaries as one of multiple methods to explore the everyday lives of youth in Ghana. She argues that although this method is largely dependent on the abilities and the commitment of the participant, it physically "removes" the researcher from the data collection process which has the potential to outweigh the effects of power imbalances (*ibid*).

Despite the fact that disabled young people in the Global South have lower levels of education and are more likely to be illiterate compared to their nondisabled peers (UN 2010), solicited diaries could be used particularly with literate hearing-impaired young people who are enrolled in education. Hearing-impaired people use various forms of communication to interact with people, including writing, lipreading, and body language. If hearing-impaired youth are used to writing as means to interact with their social environment, solicited diaries could be a particularly useful technique that takes into consideration their specific abilities and everyday social practices. This is not to suggest that solicited diaries are only beneficial for young people with hearing impairments, but could be used for youth with different impairment types. Overall, this research method can help gain an understanding about events, the social context in which they occur, and the impact they have, which are crucial aspects in understanding the underexplored lived experience of disability in the lives of young people with different impairment types in the Global South. It can also be an important method to complement other data collection methods, such as observation and interviews, where the presence of the researcher is likely to influence the type of data collected.

Despite its benefits, there are shortcomings with solicited diaries which merit consideration. Meth and Malaza (2003, p. 148) remind us that the absence of the researcher during the diary entry process can be challenging, especially when the participant reports about sensitive issues (e.g., onset of impairment, experience of different forms of violence) in her/his life and the researcher is not able to provide emotional support. The method has also been critiqued for being time consuming and requiring the participant to be literate and physically capable to conduct such a

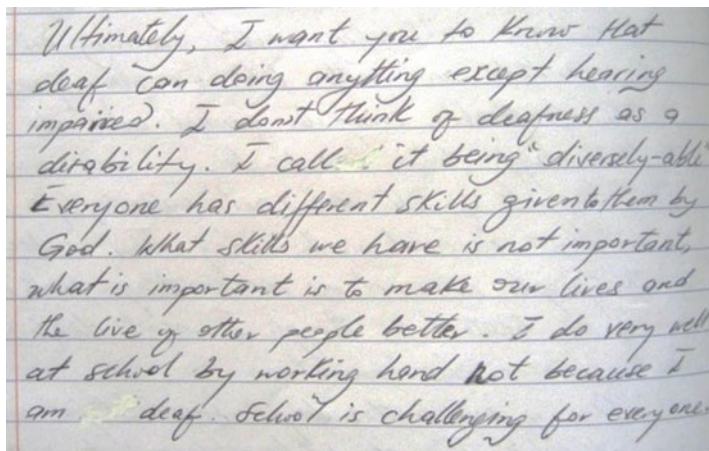


Fig. 1 Diary entry of a 19-year-old hearing-impaired male student at a special school in Ghana

task (Langevang 2007). Considering the generally low literacy rate of disabled young people in the Global South and their varying capabilities, this method is not suitable for every participant. It is important to note, however, that the researcher should avoid making assumptions about the ability of the individual, but discuss together with the young person whether this method is suitable.

Complementary to focus group discussions, the author used solicited diaries with hearing-impaired students at a special school in Ghana. This technique was appreciated by the students as it allowed them to gain ownership of the research project and talk about issues they considered important. This was an important aspect of the author's participatory research project and helped to redirect the focus to crucial themes previously unknown or ignored by the researcher. Figure 1 shows the diary entry of a 19-year-old male. He used this research tool as opportunity to destabilize misconceptions about the educational achievements of hearing-impaired young people and highlights the role of faith in his everyday life.

4.5 Participant-Directed Photography

Recently, geographers have become increasingly interested in using photography as a methodological tool to study the everyday lives of research participants (e.g., Young and Barrett 2001; Langevang 2007). For example, photo-diaries have been used to recreate young people's everyday lives in the Global South and gain insights into places and activities to which researchers would not normally have access (Young and Barrett 2001). It has been argued that self-directed photography offers participants the possibility to gain ownership of the research and some degree of power, which has the potential to destabilize power imbalances between the

researcher and the participant. Similar to solicited dairies, the researcher is physically removed from the actual data collection process, and the participant can select what she/he wants to communicate via the photographs. In contrast to interviews and focus group discussions, the participant might feel a higher sense of ownership and control over the research process. The guidelines for self-directed photography are often very loose, and the participant can decide what she/he wants to take photographs of. It is important, however, to provide training on how to use a camera, especially for participants with no or limited experiences in photography.

It can be argued that participant-directed photography is particularly useful in research with disabled young people in the Global South who are largely invisible in youth, disability, and development studies. Providing youth with different impairments with a camera can help get access to places of exclusion and inclusion as well as social networks where the researcher would normally not have access to (Young and Barrett 2001). Usually photographs are discussed in follow-up interviews or focus group discussions, which helps shedding light on the complexities of the everyday realities of the participants, including crucial places, networks, and events in their lives. Pictures can also be used as prompts in discussions with other research participants.

Similar to the methods described above, using solicited photography should entail a careful consideration of inclusion criteria relating to the capabilities and preferences of the research participants. For instance, photography by persons with visual impairments might seem inconceivable to most people. However, it is imperative in disability research to challenge taken-for-granted conceptualizations about the participants' abilities. Using self-directed photography across different impairment types (including visual impairments) can be empowering and might work as a tool to create awareness about the abilities of persons with different kinds of impairments when shown to different audiences. Similar to solicited dairies, participant-directed photography can complement other research methods, for example, to outweigh communication challenges associated with language during interview and focus group discussions.

Experiences from the author's research project in Ghana have shown that participant-directed photography is a useful tool for research participants to destabilize misconceptions surrounding disability in the country. For instance, disabled young people took many pictures of themselves dressed up smartly to show that they care about their appearance and fashion as much as nondisabled youth. Participants also took pictures of themselves in different work environments to defy common misconceptions that disabled people cannot work. Figures 2 and 3 show pictures of two physically impaired participants who work as a builder and beautician, respectively. These examples show that participant-directed photography is a powerful tool to visualize disabled people agency and challenge misconceptions about their abilities.

There are, however, ethical issues that merit consideration when using participant-directed photography. In a Ghanaian context, Langevang (2007, p. 278) reminds us that this method can also put young people at risk when used



Fig. 2 A 32-year-old physically impaired man working at a construction site



Fig. 3 A 29-year-old physically impaired woman who earns her living through working as a beautician

in settings where cameras are normally not common and participants fear that researcher from the Global North would use the pictures to portray Ghanaians as “backward.” She further notes that they are issues relating to trust that need consideration, especially when pictures are taken of people who are not involved in the research process (ibid). As a consequence it is crucial to critically reflect on issues revolving around representation and anonymity and provide the participants with clear guidelines regarding ethics.

4.6 Participatory Video

Video-based research has gained increased popularity within geography and the broader social sciences over the last decade (White 2003). Participatory video making, in particular, is a tool that allows participants become the directors of their own stories and decide what they want to convey (Garrett 2011). It has been argued that participatory video is useful for investigating the lives of “vulnerable” people in the Global South as it has the potential to destabilize unequal power relations between the researcher and the researched whereby the participant takes control of the production process (White 2003; Garrett 2011).

As disabled young people in the Global South are among the most marginalized and poorest of young people worldwide, participatory videos can be used to address social injustice and destabilize disabling attitudes within society, give disabled young people the voice to express their needs, and demonstrate their capabilities (see also White 2003). Different to interviews and observations, this method constitutes an alternative form of representation with potentially empowering and transformative effects on the lives of “vulnerable” populations (White 2003; Garrett 2011). Garrett (2011) notes that gaining ownership over the research process and being actively involved in knowledge creation gives agency to the research participants and has the potential to bring about social change. It also minimizes the input of the researcher on what and how things are recorded and represented, which helps balancing unequal power dynamics between the former and the participants. Participatory video finds additional value in research with disabled young people in the Global South as it helps them narrate their own stories, which becomes particularly useful for young people with impairments that limit their ability to communicate verbally or for those who find it easier to express themselves without the input of a researcher. As a consequence, videos can help publicize the often hidden identities and capabilities of disabled young people in the Global South.

As videos are generally more easily distributed and consumed than, for example, academic papers or reports, participatory videos of young people with impairments can serve as an accessible advocacy tool to create knowledge and awareness about the lives of disabled people. It can also be argued that participatory videos, if shown to different audiences, have the potential to destabilize disabling misconceptions about persons with different impairment types and can bring about social change.

Like the methods discussed above, participatory videos involve careful consideration of inclusion criteria relating to the participants’ abilities and preferences. Generally, it is crucial to reflect on these criteria together with the research participants. It is also important to provide training before the data is collected, especially with participants, who have limited or no experience with this technique. Similar to participant-directed photography, videos can also be used as prompts to spark discussions during interviews and focus groups.

Despite the benefits outlined above, participatory videos inevitably give rise to ethical challenges that must be considered, particularly with regard to anonymity, ownership, and video screening. For instance, either videoed individuals should

provide consent or their identities should be concealed. The participants should also have authority over the whole dissemination process, including decisions concerning where, how, and to whom the videos should be shown.

The author's experience of using participatory video with disabled youth in Ghana demonstrated that this technique can be empowering and bring about social change. For instance, the video of a 24-year-old physically impaired man that showed him in both disabling and enabling environments was presented to different audiences both in the Global North and the Global South and created awareness about the lives of disabled young people, their challenges in life, and their capabilities. The experience in Ghana suggested that participatory video can change perceptions about the abilities of disabled young people and create awareness about their challenges and needs. The making of the video also encouraged this participant's proactive behavior; he convinced a local television broadcaster to air parts of the video on national television. In addition to its use as an advocacy tool, the participant urged the researcher to use the video as teaching material for undergraduate and postgraduate students, which even encouraged some students in the Global North and South to conduct disability research. This example highlights possible effects participatory video can have in bringing about empowerment and social change.

5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed different qualitative research methods and demonstrated how they can be used in research with disabled young people in the Global South. It has been highlighted that young people with different impairment types should be offered various options to participate in methods that suit their abilities and preferences in order to represent their lives as adequately as possible. This requires the researcher to adopt a flexible, inclusive, and respectful approach that supports young people's agency and autonomy. It has also been argued that the researcher needs to critically reflect on personal and cultural construction of disability and youth in order to avoid exclusionary research practices, especially when conducting cross-cultural research. Disability research with young people in the Global South also needs to take into consideration the cultural context the participants are living in, which significantly shapes their everyday lives.

Critical ways to engage disabled youth in cross-cultural research are to ensure that participants take ownership of the project and create platforms that enable them to voice their own opinions. The combination of different qualitative methods in research with disabled young people in the Global South takes into consideration their varying abilities and helps promote inclusive and empowering research practices.

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Abstract

What changes when doing research along with children and young people? How can a sense of inquiry among young people and a dialogue between young people and researchers be facilitated? This chapter draws from methods and findings of a multisited ethnography conducted in Ontario, Canada, by Farmer. Visual language portraits and digital photography served as reflexive tools and artifacts that

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enabled students to make explicit their realities and understandings of migration, transnational familial connections, travels, and everyday experiences centered around home and schooling. Language portraits supported a biographical inquiry for students. Personalized body maps were constructed and shared when students were tasked the following: “I draw on my silhouette languages and cultures that connect me.” Additionally, using digital photography, students were given the following prompt: “With this camera, I take pictures of places, people and things that connect me.” From these artistic methodologies, rich narratives emerged which motivated the development of thematic visual mapping techniques to convey the diverse array of networks people form.

The focus of this chapter is enabling methods. Through approaching research differently with children and young people, this chapter discusses the use of creative visual arts-based methods and key challenges in building knowledge differently.

Keywords

Reflexive drawing • Children and young people • Visual language portraits • Photo-elicitation method • Evolving research techniques

1 Introduction

This chapter offers an account of a methodological journey in which considerations to the changes involved in doing research along with children and young people became central to the development of a flexible ethnographic framework. The study *Mobilités et transnationalisme: histoires d'enfants et de jeunes dans la redéfinition de l'espace scolaire* was conducted in Ontario, Canada, by Diane Farmer and received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Farmer 2009–2012). Jeanette Cepin was a research assistant in this project and was actively involved in data analyses and research dissemination. (Several graduate students contributed to this study as research assistants over a 6-year period. Students were involved in various capacities, from assisting with the initial conceptualization and funding of the project to conducting a pilot study; engaging on site visits, data collection, and analysis; and participating in early dissemination of findings (2008 and 2014). They include along with Jeanette Cepin, Gail Prasad, Rosemary Falsetti, Alyssa Adair, Kevin Naimi, Gabrielle Breton-Carbonneau, Michelle Fazioli, Athena Madan, Ashley Inskip-Lavoie, Hind Morsli, and Reid Thomas.) The study, which constitutes the backdrop for the current discussion, investigated how students make sense of their diverse pathways at the heart of an expanding culture of global mobility (Farmer 2009–2012, 2012, [forthcoming](#); Farmer and Prasad 2014a, b; Farmer et al. 2015). This research envisioned young people's world as webs of relationships, where students interact with each other, with the adults in their world, and in the overall context of a local and global networked society. Informed by the social sciences “new mobilities” paradigm and social studies of childhood and young people, the project expanded conceptions of

mobility and immobility (infra)structures to the area of education. Given that students spend a considerable amount of time in school and on school-related activities, Farmer sought to explore how experiences of schooling informed and were informed by experiences of mobility. How significant is school for children and young people in their own pathways of mobility? How do the young as well as their peers who are less mobile experience being in class in the context of global mobility? How are connections made possible? To what extent do schools as institutional settings (or structures of immobility) foster a sense of belonging for young people? Could a focus on young people's mobile lives generate a renewed understanding of the role of schools and of the struggles currently encountered, in supporting complex movements of families?

This chapter discusses the idea of enabling methods in the context of researching with children and young people. In referring to "enabling" methods, the intent is to explore approaches to research and tools that young participants could confidently "make their own," that is, methodological approaches that would enable young participants to engage with research in ways they would find meaningful. These methods invite researchers to ask: what constitutes knowledge, how is it being produced, and who is authorized to do so and under what conditions? How can researchers facilitate a sense of inquiry among young people and a dialogue between young people and the research team? Farmer, the adult researcher, initially conceived the idea and mode of inquiry for this study. The idea was to provide a space in which it would become possible for young participants to reflect on questions directly affecting their lives. This perspective envisions children and young people as social actors capable of affecting their world. It also acknowledges that young people, in their everyday lives, navigate for the most part a world shared with adults. This is especially true in institutional settings. Schools, in particular, are social spaces initially defined *by* adults *for* young people in a given society. They are inhabited and transformed *by both* adults and students. However, acknowledging young people's world views has been largely neglected in education. The school ethnography presented in this chapter has been designed in response to this limitation. Farmer also recognizes that young people's experiences are embedded in relationships with adults as well as with their peers in the educational world (Bélanger and Farmer 2004; Farmer and Bélanger 2007). Therefore, methodological choices in this study take into account the relational aspect of the constitution of young people's world. The epistemological question then became one of understanding a shared world from different social locations and building shared knowledge on particular issues affecting young people's lives.

The chapter begins with an exploration of the literature on enabling methods and focuses on three interrelated themes: the use of creative visual arts-based approaches to research, key challenges in using visual methods, and building knowledge differently with children and young people. The following section discusses the design of the study and how tools evolved over a 3-year period. The project combined observations and interviews with exploratory creative visual research tools including visual language portraits and digital photography. These tools served as artifacts and supported students in group interviews. This choice of techniques

provided time, space, and visual means for young people to make explicit their understandings of migration, transnational familial connections, travels, and everyday experiences centered on home and schooling spaces. This second section asks: what could be expressed differently in a flexible research design that incorporates creative visual methods with an ethnographic approach? Finally, difficult questions arose in analyzing the data that emerged from the research process: How do researchers capture the complex terrain and multiplicity of students' imagination, narratives, expressive creations, and conflicting representations within their journeys? And how might these be analyzed in a manner that exhibits the complexity and fluidity of movements and experiences? Although many key questions raised in the chapter remain open to inquiry, the experience gained by this Canadian case study allowed the research team to explore many avenues in which young people and adults may engage in meaningful participation. This is illustrated by presenting who did what and how throughout the study. This contribution aims to reflect on research that involves young participants and creative visual methods and highlights the potential of engaging in research practices that are enabling, reflexive, and flexible in design.

2 How Is Approaching Research with Children and Young People Relationally, Reflexively, and Creatively a Challenge? Insights from the Literature

The interest since the late 1980s in listening to children perspectives and experiences in social studies has generated a methodological shift in research. O'Kane's account of seminal work by scholars who have largely contributed to and commented on this transformation describes this shift as one: "from approaches which view children as 'objects of concern', to methods which engage children as 'active participants'" (O'Kane 2008, p. 125). In the sociology of childhood, for instance, the literature focused initially on adults' understandings and constructions of childhood. Scholars then preoccupied themselves with children's status as a social group, that is, a minority distinct from adults, embedded in broader social structures such as race, class, and gender, yet experiencing these from their particular locations as children. Exploring children's own perspectives has now become a salient feature in approaching research (O'Kane 2008, p. 125–126 referring to a pattern noted by Hill et al. 1996).

This has been largely the case as well in studies on children and young people in geographies and the broader domain of humanities. Furthermore, shifting away from viewing young people as "objects" of concern in exploring their world views has led researchers to challenge the purpose served by research traditionally. Scholars have been asking questions such as: who is the research for or what can be asked of young people and to what end (Tilleczek 2011)? These questions and many more have led researchers to conclude that in "doing" youth studies the knowledge gained needs to be useful to young people. Thus, there is a transformative aspect *for the young* in knowledge produced *along with* young people. Attention to communication or

expressed differently to the dialogical relationship between researchers and young participants then becomes highly significant as a building block for transformation. "If we are to do justice to what is at stake in young people's lives, we have to find new ways of integrating empirically grounded and dialogical strategies of youth research" (Cohen and Ainsley, cited by Tillecze 2011, p. 46). While scholars in the area agree on the centrality of young people's perspective in research and the relevance of praxis in doing research along with children and young people, methodological debates are abundant in finding ways to accomplish this.

In this chapter, children are considered as co-constructors of childhood and society, in keeping with a relational perspective toward the categories of adult and child. This has implications for how children and young people are involved in the research process. Children and young people are understood to possess agency "which enables them to shape their world and construct meaning" (Adams 2014, p. 3). The statement implies that children are capable to speak on behalf of their lived experiences. It is well recognized (in the social sciences and humanities: sociology, geography, anthropology, history) that comparative and cross-cultural analysis reveals a variety of childhoods rather than a single or universal phenomenon (Alanen 2001; James et al. 1998; Qvortrup 1994; Fass 2007; Sirota 1998, 2006; Mayall 2002; Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007; James 2007). Through these theorizations children have also come to be understood as a part of the social relations and social structures that surround them (e.g., family or schooling) rather than existing "outside" of social relations. Furthermore, the social positions of adult and child are viewed as inherently relational, meaning that one cannot exist without the other (Alanen 2001; Mayall 2000, 2002; Qvortrup 2008). The methodological implications for research involving children and young people are examined next, and in keeping with a relational approach, the authors pursued a research design that developed "enabling" methods.

Enabling methods in the broadest definition offer more possibility to counter the often imbalanced power dynamic between the adult researcher and young research participants (Barrère 2003; O'Kane 2008). Enabling methods can include approaches that allow young people the space to describe and reflect on their worlds "with clout." Taking children and youth's accounts of their experiences in the social/physical world is an important step toward valuing and validating young people's inclusion and contribution to the research process. It is also about shifting the focus of research involving children and young people away from "research on" to "research with" (Oakley 1994; Christensen and James 2008; Soto 2005).

Enabling methods seek to disrupt the trend of adult insights and perspectives continuing to speak "on the child's behalf." Christensen and Prout (2002) place stress on the notion that children and young people are agentive and competent and reject their placement and treatment as "vulnerable" in order to facilitate a "dialogue that recognizes commonality but also honors difference" (p. 481). Similarly, Gauntlett and Holzwarth (2006, p. 82) describe enabling methods as "[an] approach that is optimistic and trusting about people's ability to generate interesting theories and observations themselves." This necessitates understanding that children and young people are capable, reflective, and reflexive beings (see also

Farmer 2012; Farmer and Naimi [forthcoming](#)). The use of enabling methods and multiple methods in research with children and young people is shown to offer some disruption to the reproduction, in research and in practice, of the adult perspective being imposed on children's lived experiences.

A review of research with children and young people that utilizes creative or arts-based research methods reveals that this research also often employs mixed or multiple methods (see Heath and Walker 2012). Visual and creative research approaches such as digital photography, dramatic performance, drawing, and mental, physical, or digital mapping are rarely used in isolation. Kingsley (2009) suggests that using photography in research may highlight the "voices, actions, and experiences of participants whose minor roles set them at the sidelines of action" (p. 545). These techniques, of which photography is most frequently used (see, e.g., Cappello 2005; Noland 2006; Prosser 1998; Prosser and Loxley 2007), are often methods applied in consort with some form of narrative expression, including for example, focus groups or interviews (Rose 2014).

Darbyshire et al. (2005) title and research question asks whether multiple methods in research with children and young people are about generating "clearer or more insight" or "just more." In response they write, "multiple methods increased children's opportunity to choose and have at least partial control about how to contribute and what to say, and helped engage and interest them while demonstrating that we recognized them as active agents in the creation of their worlds" (242). This again reinforces the notion that children and young people are active agents and need to be provided with the space in practice and research to exert and express their ideas, representations, and opinions, an idea that is supported by research in the domain of geographies of education and the area of "new sociologies of education."

2.1 Creative Visual Arts-Based Approaches to Research

The use of creative visual arts-based approaches to research is not intended to be read as advocating dismissing traditional methodological approaches of ethnography or interviews but rather combining these with new approaches. Heath et al. (2009, p. 126) offer that visual methods may "complement, extend or challenge our understandings of young people's lives as gained through conventional means." Collaboration between participants and the researcher(s) is argued to be important for research that combines people and visual images (Pink 2001, 2003). Reflexivity is process oriented and not an afterthought to research. Reflexivity is also ethically important in conducting research that incorporates visuals (Pink 2003). It allows for participants to retain ownership of their creative works. Leavy (2009) further describes arts-based research practices as "composing, weaving, and orchestrating – creating tapestries of meanings" (p. 254). Such techniques are particularly fruitful in studies where a multiplicity of understandings is sought. Arts-based research practices are understood as having potential and endless possibilities for moving and developing research that rewrites conventional research methods and forms of analysis. This is important for research that seeks to involve differently positioned

collaborators such as children and young people. It suggests that visual representations can be an effective means of communicating what might otherwise not emerge in interviews (see Soto's 2005 notion of visualizing voice). Rose (2014) terms this phenomenon of visual research methods as "uncovering the implicit knowledges in everyday practices" (p. 28).

It has remained the case that research involving children's experiences is as Greene and Hill (2005) observed "still prompted, designed and analyzed by adults" (p. 12). This renders the inclusion of children and young people in research as partial subjects rather than active beings with autonomy. When children and young people are included in research (researched with), the purpose or intent of the research is still not necessarily made clear to them (Mayall 2000). Thus, if creative methods offer some potential to provide children and young people with more control over the research process, as many have argued (see James 2007; Butler-Kisber 2010; Kingsley 2009; Cappello 2005; Matthews and Tucker 2000), then ethically and methodologically these methods should be explored.

2.2 Challenges of Using Visual Methods

Children and young people are themselves a hard to access group in research, since as Valentine (1999) and Barker and Weller (2003) describe, adults often play the role of "gatekeeper" to their lives and activities. A number of challenges emerge when the research involves components that are visual/material in nature. To whom do the visual/material objects belong, for instance? How is the research to be interpreted or analyzed? Is the child or young person positioned as a research participant, a collaborator, or co-researcher? Keeping these questions in mind through the research process is an important part of being reflexive and accountable for the work that is produced and circulated as a part of the research dissemination.

Gauntlett and Holzwarth (2006) caution that "artifacts," which they use to refer to visual or creative-based research production methods, ought not to be employed as a mere starting point for discussion. Interpretation of the artifact needs to be made by the creator of the material object. This raises the dilemma of what position the adult researcher then holds. Similarly, James (2007) holds that research with children and young people must extend beyond "recording and reporting" children's voice(s) in order for the researcher to delve into reflecting on the complexities of issues that children discuss. It is thus a dialogical and reflexive (Rose 1997) approach toward research with children and young people that is advocated in using visual research methods.

2.3 Building Knowledge Differently with Children and Young People

It is the case that the social sciences have shifted away from tracking, measuring, and drawing judgments about children and young people through adult-driven

research toward researching *with* children by observing, talking, reflecting, and engaging children and young people in research (Qvortrup 1994; Mayall 2002). An important element of this shift consists of the need to foster dialogue that supports “affective/emotional encounters” with children and young people in the research process (Hadfield-Hill and Horton 2013). Emotional encounters bring to light insights that young people have feelings and thoughts related to the research theme and allow them to find connections with matters relevant in their everyday lives. Relatedly, emotionally charged insights can occur as the researcher and participant are in dialogue but also when there is space for the participants to discuss, question, and share among each other. Mayall (2000, p. 121) suggests: in “talking with each other children firm up knowledge and learn more about aspects of their social world.”

Key priorities of visual research with children and young people revolve around uncovering realities and aspects of children’s and young people’s lives that may be difficult to articulate through dialogue alone. Communicating through photographs, for instance, “gives children ownership of the dialogue through selection of their own photographs” (Freeman and Mathison 2009, p. 122). It also enables researchers to gain access by proxy and, on the young participants’ terms, to spaces important to children and young people but which are usually restricted to adults, such as home/bedroom spaces (Heath et al. 2009; Clark-Ibáñez 2007).

3 What Could Be Expressed Differently in a Flexible Research Design that Incorporates Creative Visual Methods into an Ethnographic Approach?

The first section of this chapter laid out key elements for the development of enabling methods and practices when researching along with children and young people. This perspective re-situates the child or young person as a thoughtful actor capable of introspection and, in this manner, well positioned to provide valuable insights on the social world. It seeks to support a sense of inquiry from all participants and envisions children and young people as embedded in social relations rather than above (i.e., innocent and enlightened) or outside of the social dynamics at play in a given setting (i.e., having no influence or agency).

A case study will be introduced in order to illustrate what could be expressed differently in a flexible research design. This section begins by introducing how young people’s participation was conceptualized in the research. It then provides some contextual background to the study and discusses the manner in which researchers and participants were involved in building a shared knowledge on young people’s experiences with new mobilities. It concludes by highlighting key features in the research design, whereby children and young people were trained in being/becoming researchers.

3.1 Involving Children and Young People as Researchers

Power imbalance is presented as the biggest challenge in research involving children and young people (O’Kane 2008; Code and Evans 2008). One response to this challenge has been for scholars to develop methods with young people based on principles of participatory action research. This approach is valued for its potentially emancipatory and empowering influence on participants (Tilleczek 2011). Researchers and research participants become actively involved in the generation of data. The role of researchers are redefined and understood as active listeners rather than as authoritative figures. This approach recognizes that the research process involves issues of power, control, and authority. Participation does not limit itself to the application of a technique. It involves, rather, a process of dialogue, action, analysis, and change (O’Kane 2008).

But is participation always fitting? Roberts (2008) invites researchers to give consideration as to when, how, and under what circumstances are children invited to participate in research. “As researchers, we are still learning ways of involving children fully in every stage of the research process from identifying meaningful research questions, to collaborating with researchers and disseminating good practices” (Roberts 2008, p. 260). Noting, however, that children are being solicited by a variety of social actors, such as market researchers, the media, businesses, and policy makers, Roberts suggests examining the purpose of the research and how children might benefit from it when deciding to invite children as participants. “We cannot assume that those issues which we as researchers, or practitioners, or policy makers find compelling will hold quite the same interest for children and young people” (Roberts 2008, p. 273). Participating in research should at best be a positive experience and at worst, “does no harm to young people” (Roberts 2008, p. 273).

Freeman and Mathison (2009) question taken-for-granted assumptions that involving children is necessarily beneficial for them and improves the validity of the findings (p. 165). Conversely, the authors denounce a tendency observed in the literature to dismiss adult-led studies with children as necessarily oppressive. Both children and adults, the authors argue, can benefit or be harmed when participating in research activities. The quality of experience gained from participating will depend more broadly on the overall research design and working relationship developed between researchers and participants in given research settings. As well, different research designs will offer different types of experiences:

Inviting children to talk about and share their experiences on a topic of the researcher’s choice may provide a social context that enriches their lives in unexpected ways. Inviting children to develop and design their own research agenda will promote different experiences and outcomes than those fostered by research-led designs. (Freeman and Mathison 2009, p. 166)

The authors speak in terms of a continuum of possibilities for young people’s participation and categorize young people-adult research partnerships into the

following types: “adult-centered leadership” where the adult is in charge; “adult-led collaboration” in which adults are in charge and young people make some decisions; “youth-adult research partnership,” where adult and young people are given equal opportunity; and finally, a “youth-led collaborative approach” in which young people are in charge with limited or no adult involvement (p. 166–169). The study introduced in this chapter may be classified as “adult-led collaboration,” given that Farmer, the adult researcher, selected the theme for inquiry and designed the methodological framework. In presenting the manner in which students have been participating in the various stages of the research process, this chapter will illustrate the scope and complexity of their involvement as young researchers.

It could be argued that there exists a continuum of possibilities for research partnerships as illustrated through Freeman and Mathison’s typology and that the breath of such continuum can also be found within each of the categories of research partnerships. The authors of this chapter argue that our understanding of such possibilities is gained by paying close attention to how a research study unfolds empirically, by conducting more studies along with children and young people and by adopting a reflexive posture on the knowledge gained in these research settings. In other words, how do researchers and participants make sense of their own practice for inquiry through enabling research partnerships?

Children come into a research setting with their own knowledge and particular abilities. The relevance of using enabling tools and exploring visual methods as an approach has been discussed already in terms of how these practices offer potential for creative alternatives in involving young people in the research process. It is crucial to recognize that young people possess agency and to offer appropriate tools for inquiry in order to prepare children to develop and attune their skills as researchers. What does participation mean? What are the expectations? According to Freeman and Mathison (2009), learning to negotiate what participating may look like for the young is seldom addressed beyond the formal consent process.

Interviewing, for instance, is often used in researching children’s experiences, as is the case with the study on young people’s mobilities discussed in this chapter. Although it may simulate an everyday encounter, an interview is nothing but ordinary and serves previously defined research purposes, namely, that of developing a narrative together. Children are aware of this but may need practice in learning the expectations and rudiments of an interview. “It is important to remember that the interview is not an everyday interaction, and so socializing into ways of being and behaving in the interview is often necessary, especially with children who are likely to define it by relating it to other similar activities with teachers and professionals” (Freeman and Mathison 2009, p. 90). Training young participants has been an important component in the study featured here. Participatory approaches are understood as processes that take time (O’Kane 2008, p. 143). Learning takes time and support in order for young people’s participation to be meaningful.

Balancing the views of researchers and participants remains a key challenge in research. While children and youth’s participation in research is becoming more frequent, their involvement in the data analysis stage of research projects tends to be

limited (Code and Evans 2008). In the Canadian study on students' mobilities, Diane Farmer and research assistants took responsibility for developing the findings and conclusions of the analysis. (In research serving other purposes, such as in instances where children are setting their own agenda (Tilleczek 2011; O'Kane 2008) or where using research techniques like PhotoVoice is a basis for lobbying (Freeman and Mathison 2009, p. 123) Views on ownership will necessarily be different.) However, the manner in which students have been engaged in collecting data, deciding on emerging themes, and reflecting on the meaning of their findings through various activities constituted the building blocks of this study. Young participants were actively involved in that respect, through the construction of meaning, in a shared space for inquiry.

3.2 Children and Young People's Mobile Stories: A Canadian Case Study

The elaboration that follows stems from a 3-year intra-site and multisite ethnographic study (Milnes and Huberman 2003) conducted in the province of Ontario, Canada, with four classes of students ranging from grade 3 to grade 6 and a class of grade 10 students. The study was undertaken in three schools characterized by distinct socioeconomic background, including: a French international private school (Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12); a French elementary school, labeled as inner city (Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6); and a pilot study conducted in a French immersion elementary school, attended by low to middle-class income families (Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8). These schools were located in two mid-sized cities and a large city in southern Ontario. International and interprovincial migration as well as transnational movements of families characterized students' lives in each of the participating schools. The intent in selecting these sites was to allow for diversified stories, contexts, and representations from young people to emerge along with adult and other young people constitutive of their world (parents, teachers, and peers). Some 125 participants took part in the study including teachers and school administrators, professionals in education, parents, and students (71 students from the two French language schools and 20 students from the pilot study).

In Ontario, public school systems are organized on a linguistic basis distributed along the lines of English or French as the principal language of instruction, wherein the other language is taught partially to students (approximately 45–60 min of instruction daily). There are also French immersion programs and bilingual education programs geared to English-as-first-language students. Unlike most international contexts, the model developed in Canada is not one of bilingual education where students are progressively transiting from a linguistic minority setting to the national language of instruction. It is, rather, a parallel system, yet it operates on a considerably smaller size. In Ontario, there are some 450 French language minority schools across the province managed by 12 school boards; comparatively, there are 4850 English language schools, run by 60 school boards (Ontario Ministry of

Education 2015). Historically, French language schools have received the mandate to protect and promote the minority's identity through the curricula and extracurricular activities (Ministère de l'éducation de l'Ontario 2004). Today high levels of diversity and geographic movement characterize these sites. These recent changes have prompted school actors to reflect on their mandate and current ways of functioning as local institutions, in response to the rapid changes in family demographics. This research sought to explore this important shift by focusing on children's and young participants' stories.

3.3 Designing Creative Research Tools: A Multisited Visual Ethnography

The project combined observations and interviews with exploratory creative visual research tools. Farmer and a research assistant devoted 10 days in each school conducting activities with students as well as interviewing young participants in small groups, two to three times over the course of the study. The research team spent time as well (but to a lesser degree) doing observations in classroom settings, the schoolyard, and other locations, such as in the school hallways, the gym, the library, and the cafeteria. Interviews were also conducted when possible with parents, teachers, principals, and professionals in education (social workers, student services counselors). (Weekly 1-day visits were scheduled for a period of 3 months in the French international private school. Three visits consisting of a week stay per visit were planned over a 3-month period in the French public elementary school.) Endorsing a participatory approach meant that adult researchers spent more time interacting with students and teachers, while work on the project's activities took place. Students took part in the research while in class as well as outside of class time during school hours. They conducted additional activities in their own time at home and in the community. Teachers were present for the discussions held in class and supported the activities at home and in the community by facilitating the sharing of technology (such as digital cameras). They also shared spontaneously with the lead researcher their observations on the study.

In researching young people's experience with mobilities, Farmer and Prasad, the research assistant involved in the pilot study, chose to explore visual approaches. The intent was to provide young participants with research instruments that could serve as biographical tools. Farmer decided to make use of reflexive drawing techniques as a starting point for young people to explore their personal journey and supplement it with digital photography, to allow them to relate their journey to a broader context. This dual strategy served also to pull the research beyond the scope of the school setting.

The use of drawing as an enabling method was appealing for several reasons: drawing is a tool familiar to students in their everyday activities; it offers an

alternative to “telling” or “writing” one’s story, the latter constituting a chronological approach to biographies common in inquiries with adult participants. A visual approach invites students from diverse linguistic minorities to express themselves using tools in which they may potentially feel more competent and empowered. This constituted a major incentive for this study, given that most of the young participants spoke a language (or several languages) other than French at home. Drawing would also facilitate the inclusion of students who spoke a different variety of French than the one prescribed in formal Canadian schooling interactions (in oral presentations and written assignments).

These sentiments are echoed by others researching with children and young people who use visual methods. For example, Rabiee et al. (2005) found methods that incorporate visual dimensions when researching with young people that have communication impairments assisted in ascertaining the views of this group. Rabiee et al.’s (2005) research highlighted that disabled young people are often not provided the opportunity to express their own opinions due to the methods usually employed. Furthermore, Code and Evans (2008) explain that the use of creative visual and audio techniques were found to aid in the data analysis stage of the research process as these methods were the “most appropriate in engaging children with varying levels of literacy” (p. 48). These findings speak to the utility and empowering potential of visual research.

For this mobility study, in terms of drawing, students were asked to use the silhouette of a body map to illustrate the traces left by languages and cultures on their body parts. Sociolinguists such as Busch (2010), Krumm (2008), and Castellotti and Moore (2009) had initially developed what are described as language portraits. This technique has been used as a methodological tool in studies of languages as sites of power as well as in inquiries on language awareness, identity, and pluriliteracies. Inspired by Busch’s body mapping (Busch 2010; Busch et al. 2006; see also Krumm 2008), language portraits were developed to support nonlinear narrations of life. Busch explored this technique initially with teachers during the early post-Apartheid period. Teachers were asked to map on a body silhouette the languages used in their everyday life, using a different color for each language identified. Busch and her participants co-constructed rich language biographies through the representation of the body as a metaphor.

In Farmer’s project, students were invited to respond to the following prompt in French and English: “*Dessine sur la silhouette les langues et les cultures qui t’habitent.*”/“I draw on my silhouette languages and cultures that connect me.” To further clarify the scope of the statement, the research team added “*des cultures avec lesquelles tu as développé un lien au courant de ta vie*”/“cultures with which you have developed ties throughout your life.” Students were also instructed to use a color legend to capture the embodied experiences of mobility, language being one of the traces left while navigating different national (and linguistic) spaces. Children and young people were asked to choose their own legend and apply the colors associated with specific languages and cultures on their body map in whatever places they saw as “fitting.”

Furthermore, the research team adapted the techniques in the production of language portraits from Busch's initial representation. Busch used a "cookie cutter style" of mapping with adults or invited adults to draw their own silhouette. In conducting a pilot study, and through experimenting with digital technologies, a generic drawing of silhouettes was progressively replaced by a digital representation of the actual body silhouette of students (Farmer and Prasad 2014b).

This had a significant impact on students who understood the biographical work in progress as a unique and individualized metaphor to chart their own body/life experience. The research team noticed such impact through surprise and enthusiasm expressed spontaneously by participants when they received a copy of their individualized body map template.

Digital photography was used at school, at home, and in young participants' neighborhoods. Students were given the following indication: "*Avec cet appareil, je prends en photo des endroits, des personnes et des objets qui me branchent*" / "With this camera, I take pictures of places, people and things that connect me." As an opening statement to the many ways of making sense of personal mobility, the following prompts were included: How do I move? What moves me? Who moves (with) me? Again, photography is something very familiar to children and young people. The research team decided to provide digital cameras rather than disposable ones, as these allow for more flexibility in taking, editing, and deleting as many pictures as participants were compelled to take. Students were also given the option of doing a short video. The intent was for photos to be subsequently used in the context of an interview to unpack the subjective meanings of the images (see Capello 2005; Clark 1999; Jorgensen and Sullivan 2010). Photography, like body mapping, was introduced to support students' representations of mobility without limiting them from describing their ideas in words (Farmer and Prasad 2014a, b; Prasad 2013).

Through drawing and photography, children and young people engaged in uncovering and sharing their unique stories of multiple connections to the world. Grade 10 students from the French international private school illustrate this in the following examples of visual language portraits. Parents sending their children to this school had either a mobile family lifestyle due to their current occupation (French expatriates, diplomats, or at the service of international corporations) or else were established in Canada and had migrated a generation ago, for the most part, while keeping international family ties. Using these body maps, the students presented below communicated multiple languages they have familiarity with, cultures, and national ties. Thierry (all names are pseudonyms) had been in school since the beginning of the school year. He was traveling with his father who had been relocated to Canada (French expatriate). Linda was born in Canada. Her parents migrated from Eastern Europe (see Farmer 2012, for a more detailed analysis of the Grade 10 students' language portraits). These texts speak to a world of complexity that the students are both embedded in and actively involved in shaping.

Thierry, 15, Grade 10



On language portrait:

Thierry: Bon alors, comment procéder. . . les couleurs que j'ai choisi c'est assez représentatif du drapeau. . . pays, donc j'ai pris le bleu, le blanc et le rouge pour montrer la France. / [*So, how to proceed. . . the colors that I chose are pretty representative of the flag. . . country, I chose blue, white and red for France.*] (In interviews that were conducted in French, the authors provide the translation. When the interview was conducted in English the original verbatim of participants is provided.)

Donc je l'ai mis au niveau des pieds parce que c'est où je suis née. . . c'est la terre où je suis née. / [*So I have put it (French flag) on my feet because this is where I was born. . . the region where I was born.*]

Ensuite j'ai pris le drapeau anglais parce que c'est vrai qu'on est dans un pays anglophone. Je l'ai mis au niveau du corps parce que c'est comme a dit (nom d'élève) c'est une partie assez importante c'est là où je vis aujourd'hui, c'est là. . . j'essaie de m'expliquer. . . (rigole). / [*Then, the 'English' flag because it's true that we are in an anglophone country. I have put it (British flag) on my torso because like (name of another student) has already said it is a part (of me) that is very important, this is where I live now, . . . I am trying to explain (laughter).*]

Après j'ai mis donc le drapeau espagnol et le drapeau canadien à côté. Espagnol parce que c'est une langue que je parle mais on est obligé de la pratiquer et Canadien parce que je vis dans un. . . je vis au Canada. C'est vrai que je ne parle pas. . . québécois canadien (rigole). / [*Then I drew the Spanish flag and the Canadian flag, beside. Spanish because it is a language that I speak and but we need to practice (speaking it) and Canadian because I live in a. . . I live in Canada. It's true that I do not speak québécois canadien (laughter).*]

et j'ai mis le drapeau allemand parce que. . . ma mère est de nationalité allemande. Elle est berlinoise donc c'est vrai que j'ai la famille qui parle allemand . . . et c'est vrai j'ai cette

culture quant même. / [and I drew the German flag because. . . my mother is German. She is from Berlin so it's true that I have family that speaks German (pause) and it is true that I have this culture still]. (Interview Transcript)

Linda, 15, Grade 10



On language portrait:

Linda: Uh, okay, well. . . I only have three [cultural references] although, I should have probably put more. But I. . . started with. . . well the Canadian flag for English because I was born here also. . . and raised here but then. . . in my heart I'm Romanian also and then. . . so I put that in my heart and then on my hands I put French because well at school when I write or anything it's in French so, yeah. But I also could have put Hungarian because my mom is also half Hungarian and all of our family friends and everything are Hungarian so I also hear Hungarian. I guess I sort of understand. And. . . yup. That's about it.

Q: you left a lot of space white; L: "yeah, I guess for space for other cultures & languages to grow." (Interview Transcript)

In describing his language portrait, Thierry communicates a strong identification to his native country. His travel to Canada allows him to expand his cultural influences as he refers to English, drawing the British flag in similar proportion as the French and adding the Canadian flag to one arm. The reference to Berlin seems to appear as an afterthought and is discussed last, after a moment of pause. Linda's narrative describes the cultural connections, Canadian, Hungarian, and Romanian, as well as the biography of the student, "I was born here," and her family, "my mom is also half Hungarian."

Space was an important consideration in students' self-representations. Larger parts of the body were often equated with identification with a language, country, or culture. This is apparent in Thierry's portrait where French and English dominate and Spanish holds a marginal spot, "a language I speak but we need to practice (speaking it)." Sometimes, organs or body parts such as the brain, heart, or hands were used to express one's attachment or identification. Linda associates her heart with Romanian, expressing an affective tie, and associates her hands with French, which seem to indicate more of a working relationship or instrumental rapport. Both Thierry and Linda used their legs in reference to their national identity (France and Canada). These types of association – the hands (and brain in other drawings) in reference to the language used in school and the heart and legs to indicate the family's cultural heritage and nationalities – were often represented, especially with older students (Grade 5/6 and Grade 10) in the 60 language portraits prepared by students and collected in this study. At times students also attempted to expand their space by spreading their arms and, quite literally, take up more space to get beyond the confines of his/her silhouette to express their identity.

3.4 A Collective Reflexive Approach in Interviewing

Children and young people participated in group interviews. Grade 10 students took part as well in an individual interview. An interview guide was developed by Farmer and used in a flexible manner, following cues from young participants. Drawings and photographs as well as supplementary themes deriving from the literature on new mobilities were approached through open-ended questions. Interviews were conducted based on the "reflexive drawing" technique, a methodological device using drawings intended as dialogical and transformative (see Molinié 2014), in the like of other techniques such as photo elicitation (see Cappello 2005; on drawing techniques, see also Veale 2005; Punch 2002 quoted by O'Kane 2008). The technique used in this study consists of inviting participants to complete a drawing and participate in an exploratory interview. A dialogue takes place between the participant and the practitioner/researcher or peers (see Molinié 2014). This device has been elaborated in studies and interventions that seek to challenge representations of languages. The nature of the task in which participants were invited to take part in Farmer's study, however, had a strong sociological orientation that complemented the sociolinguistic foundation of this method.

The interview structure was also designed differently; groups of four students were asked to present their language portraits and pictures in pairs followed by a discussion. The intent was to create a collegial research climate between students and to provide a space for young people to reflect among themselves on their own life experiences (Mayall 2000). A student would start first by presenting his or her portrait (in the first interview) and photographs (in a subsequent interview). After this initial presentation by the student, the researcher would invite the other members of the group to ask questions. The researcher would ask additional clarifications only if needed. The following excerpts are illustrations from an interview with Marie and

Jacynthe, Grade 4 students in the private international school. In presenting their language portraits, these young girls gradually took on the role of co-interviewers.

Marie and Jacynthe, both 9, Grade 4

Marie and Jacynthe discuss their drawings. Marie's parents are teachers and held teaching positions in Europe, North Africa, and North America. They moved every few years. Jacynthe's parents work for an international private company and moved frequently as well in Europe and North America (interview transcript). The interview lasted approximately 30 min.

Marie: J'ai mis de l'espagnol (couleur jaune) un peu au niveau du genou, de la hanche des cheveux et de l'épaule, parce que j'ai souvent euh, bougé à des endroits où il y avait, où on parlait espagnol. / [I drew Spanish (yellow color) on the knees, the hip, the hair, the shoulder, because I often hum. . . travelled to places where there was, where people spoke Spanish.]

The interviewer encourages Jacynthe to ask questions on two occasions, while Marie continues with her presentation.

Jacynthe: Est-ce que tu as vécu au Maroc ? / [*Have you lived in Morocco?*]

Marie: Ouais, normalement environs deux ans. / [*Yea, about two years.*]

As Jacynthe presents her language portrait, Marie takes on an active role of co-interviewer.

Jacynthe: . . .et j'ai mis le rouge pour l'allemand parce que ma copine est Allemande, alors chaque fois, quand je vais chez elle, j'entends ses parents qui parlent (l'allemand). / [*. . .and I drew red for German because my friend is German, so every time, when I go to her place, I hear her parents speaking (German).*]

Marie: Mais pourquoi tu l'aurais pas plutôt mis vert. . .? T'aurais pu la mettre (référence à l'allemand au bas de la jambe) aux oreilles. Parce que t'entendais l'allemand. T'as pas vraiment bougé en Allemagne, t'as pas vraiment parlé allemand. / [*Why not in green. . .? you could had put it (reference to German placed on the bottom leg) on your ears. Because you heard German spoken. You never traveled to Germany, you didn't actually speak German.*]

Jacynthe: (soft voice) Oui c'est vrai. / [*Yes, that is true*]. Et le japonais, c'est parce que (nom d'une élève) elle parlait japonais alors quelques fois elle nous apprenait ce que ça veut dire alors j'ai mis un peu de ma chaussette et une barrette (pour représenter le japonais). / [*And Japanese, it's because (name of a student) spoke Japanese and some times she taught us the meaning of some words so I drew a bit (of Japanese) on my socks and my hairpin.*]

Marie: Parce que c'est bien la barrette, parce qu'elle est près de l'oreille. C'est comme si tu entendais le japonais parce que c'est près de l'oreille. / [*Well, it's a good thing, the hairpin, because it's near the ear. It's as if you heard Japanese because it is close to the ear.*]

In this excerpt, Marie is the one asking clarifications about colors and body associations while the adult researcher listens. Jacynthe continues along with her presentation, finding value to Marie's suggestions "Yes, that is true."

Finally, in presenting the photos taken at home and in their neighborhood, the researcher invited students to organize their pictures into categories (selected by the

students) expressing ideas of mobilities. Just as in defining a legend to qualify their drawings, students generated classifications on their own terms. The third section of this chapter provides an example of how students took up this task in an unexpected way.

3.5 Training Young Participants in Becoming Researchers

Children and young people along with teachers were gradually eased into the project and built a working relationship with the research team. As a starting point, the lead investigator (Diane Farmer) refrained from using the terms “immigrant” and “immigration” to describe the focus of the study. The idea was to avoid reproducing dichotomies that frame migrants in opposition to local citizens. The term “new mobilities” (Sheller and Urry 2006) seemed to better describe the fluidity of family movements in the current Canadian context. This required reaching an understanding with students and teachers on what this concept might refer to in school settings. The intent was to provide a space that would allow participants to explore on their own terms multiple meanings associated with experiences of mobile lives.

Training occurred initially in the form of brainstorming activities. The idea of “new mobilities” was introduced in the context of a classroom discussion with students and their teacher. The researcher asked students if they could provide examples of particular objects in the classroom that they may associate with “new mobilities” and discuss why or examples of family movement, the use of Internet, etc. Likewise, in order to prepare students in drawing their language portrait, the research team held a brainstorming session in which students drew up a list in class of languages and cultures found within their classroom and in the school. They were then offered time and material immediately thereafter to execute their portraits.

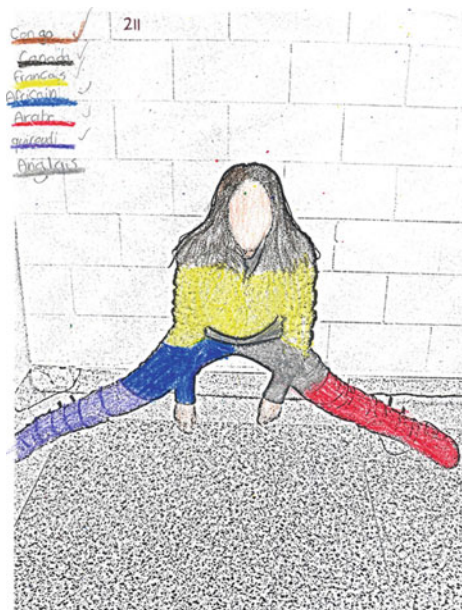
In preparing for the individual photo activity at home, the research team planned a similar activity in school in groups of four to five students. The intent was to provide students with an opportunity to get better acquainted with the concept under study, the indications (prompts), and the use of equipment. This initiation of the students’ own fieldwork was certainly formative but also triggered excitement and a strong commitment to the project. Students in the French public school, for instance, took photos of places in their school where they like “to go to” such as the gym, the computer lab, the library, the English lab, the hallways (where class productions are showcased), and the principal’s office (with whom some students had developed close ties). Farmer decided initially to have a member of the research team take a picture of students (which would then serve as the individualized template for the body map); this was done only in the Grade 4 class (where students are typically 9 or 10 years old) of the private school. Grade 10 students (who are usually aged 15 or 16) took their own picture. In seeing how these students would choose to present themselves in front of the camera, take each other’s picture, and negotiate where the picture was to be taken, Farmer realized that young participants should be given more control over the process. Therefore, students regardless of their grades in subsequent visits took pictures of each other. The following examples show young

participants in the French public school choosing to present themselves in movement (for a fuller description of Madeleine's language portrait, see Farmer et al. 2015).

François 11, Grade 5/6



Madeleine 11, Grade 5/6



Finally, a sequence of group interviews was scheduled throughout the research team's visit, first to discuss language portraits, then to talk about pictures taken at school, and finally to discuss pictures taken at home and in the community. The

increased familiarity with interviews through this sequencing enabled children and young people to gradually develop their own skills in the art of interviewing. The third section of this chapter will provide examples that serve to illustrate how important it was to have time to train children and young people as ethnographers (Prasad 2013). This influenced the quality of the narratives.

By being exposed to interview techniques on several occasions and by being engaged in collecting material for discussion (portraits and photos), students gained a better understanding of the focus of interviews and took greater ownership of the process. Throughout the process, students gradually became interviewers. The following excerpt from the end of an interview with four students, Matias, Cody, Leon, and Stephen, serves as an example of this transition. The students flipped the traditional role of adult interviewer and child interviewee round, as they questioned Farmer and Alexis about their future trajectories.

Matias: I have one question. . . Where do you see yourself in three years.

Diane Farmer: Where do I see myself in three years. I see myself in Toronto still. And you?

Matias: A teenager.

Diane Farmer: Oh yah, that's true.

Cody: I see myself in high school.

Leon: In three years I'll probably have a girlfriend.

Stephen: Thirteen and having a girlfriend? That's . . .

Leon: Actually in three years I'll be fourteen.

Cody: Alexis (Research Assistant, pseudonym), where do you see yourself in three years?

Alexis: Umm, I'm going to be moving back to Calgary.

Matias: Ok and I guess we are done now.

Cody: Ok goodbye.

(Interview transcript school 2, involving 4 male students grade 5/6)

In the following section, the practice of using reflexive methods is examined by discussing the benefits of approaching research as a process in which all the stages of a research design necessarily follow this framework, including during action and activities in the field, through the research analysis and in research dissemination.

4 What Possibilities Emerge in Using Enabling, Reflexive Methods?

4.1 New Mobilities: Stepping into the Imaginary World

The researchers provided students with a digital camera for a 3-day period. Prior to receiving the camera for home use, young participants had a "practice run" in small groups at school. Farmer was now asking them to further explore what mobility represents in their daily lives. Students tended to take pictures of their home; of where they like to hang out such as playgrounds, fast-food restaurants, and shopping malls; and of how they move and connect, taking the bus to school,

walking, and making use of the Internet (see Holt and Costello 2011). Additionally, many young people took pictures of their family and friends. This led some participants to reflect on their transnational ties, expressing concern for family members and raising broader social issues affecting their lives (Farmer and Prasad 2014b). The example discussed below from an interview with a group of young boys offers yet another angle to researching children's experiences. Visual methods allow participants to engage in research on many levels – narrative, emotional, expressive, consensual, and conflicting, for instance (Leavy 2009). This group explored how they made sense of mobilities through objects that hold particular meaning in their worlds.

In describing the process of taking home photos, Matias, one child, commented:

Anyway, so, I took this picture by holding it [a model aeroplane] really close to the camera lens and holding its tail just outside of the camera and its really nice because it looks like its actually flying. Plus it catches the sunlight on its wings. (Interview Transcript, School 2, Grade 5 Student)

Aeroplane



This statement is telling of the thought and creative process that some students engaged in when tasked with taking photos of aspects in their material world that conveyed something about mobility to them.

An excerpt of an interview between grade 5 and 6 children is drawn on below to illustrate the process of training and developing research skills among young participants. Young people demonstrated responsiveness to other classmates and knowledge building and showed steps toward attuning their capacity as researchers. In the following example, Cody and Stephen tapped into their imaginary world as a participant described photos from his home that were taken of action figures from a science fiction game and other crafted toys:

Cody: "My categories consist of things that remind me of movement, exploration of an abandoned castle, nature, things that I took on my way to school on my last day, and a

battle. I would like to start with my category called a goose. Up front I have this ratun, umm two a rattlegoon, and a scaven, scaven are sort of like ratun – except much more viscous and addicted to a powerdy substance called woods. . . Here I have clan pestilence fighting off clan mortar people of Gracia marching with his force
 Stephen: So then what's a Gracier?" (Interview Transcript, Grade 5/6 Students).

These images were used as a metaphor to support the student's narrative about mobility. Although the group seemed more inclined to share scenarios for their action figures, they did purposefully include explicit references to movement and mobilities:

Matias: "I especially like this picture, because I was able to capture it while spinning and uh, you can't even (see) that this is a handle it is totally upright." And a few minutes later as the interview progresses: (Matias) "This picture I took it in the mobility theme because I thought of the snow that is falling everywhere." (Interview Transcript, Grade 5/6 Student)

Even Cody interrupted his story to introduce pictures documenting his daily travel.

Cody: "I have a picture of my school. . . of the school we are currently in. . . One of the houses on the road that we live on. . . Up. . . a school on a road that is close to us. . . And more on the way. A truck. A house. And a car speeding past us. Speeding. It was speeding."

Interviewer: "Was it?"

Cody: "Yah."

Stephen: "Were there any cops chasing it?"

Cody: "Yes."

Stephen: "Oh Cody, stop making up lies!"

In this exchange, Farmer was being put to the test. And by bringing the discussion to the materiality of movement, it seemed to the researcher that Cody was signaling that he was capable of connecting with the theme of mobility in many ways. The comment from Stephen revealed his engagement and critical attention to Cody's account.

The particular exchange about fictional characters and their roles and appearance continued between the students and the lead researcher for more than 10 min. This seemed off topic to the adult at first, but it was clear that the students were engaged in the discussion as they questioned and interjected frequently during Cody's description of his images. It seemed to the researcher that this is the purpose of research involving children and youth, engaging them, being tested (Freeman and Mathison 2009), mentoring them to ask critical questions and develop a sense of inquiry. This discussion continued with the boy describing more of his photos and finished with him being appreciative of having been heard:

Cody: The rattlegun and the pack-master fighting back to back. The dead. And Gracier again. I am done.

Diane Farmer: Alright.

Cody: Thank you for listening to my blah, blah, blah! (Interview Transcript).

Research can become messy. In times of unexpected, awkward, and odd exchanges, research can still be meaningful and insightful. The principal investigator wondered during Cody's in-depth discussion of his sci-fi game and characters whether this interview was straying too far from the focus of mobility that it was not going to be "useful" to the project. However, by not steering the discussion so closely to the

topic of mobility or what the principal investigator conceived as related to mobility, a space for inquiry was opened up among the children. In the example above, the children were confident and comfortable enough to question the researchers. By giving children space to talk and question each other about their fantasy characters, it conveyed to them the message that they were being listened to, as evidenced from their comments. This made the exchange valuable to everyone involved.

Similarly, in the context of an exit interview, a Grade 4 group of students volunteered to comment on the study and how they valued their participation. This led to the articulation of comments illustrated by the excerpt presented.

Yanik, 9, Grade 4:

Yanik: Je trouve que ça m'aide à parler, je pense que c'est bon parce que je peux parler à quelqu'un de ce que je pense vraiment, et puis je trouve que c'est un bon programme et que tu devrais faire ça avec d'autres classes. / *[I find that it helps me to talk, I think that it (participating to the study) is a good thing because I can speak to someone about what I really think, and I find this to be a good program and that you should do this with other classes.]* (Interview Transcript).

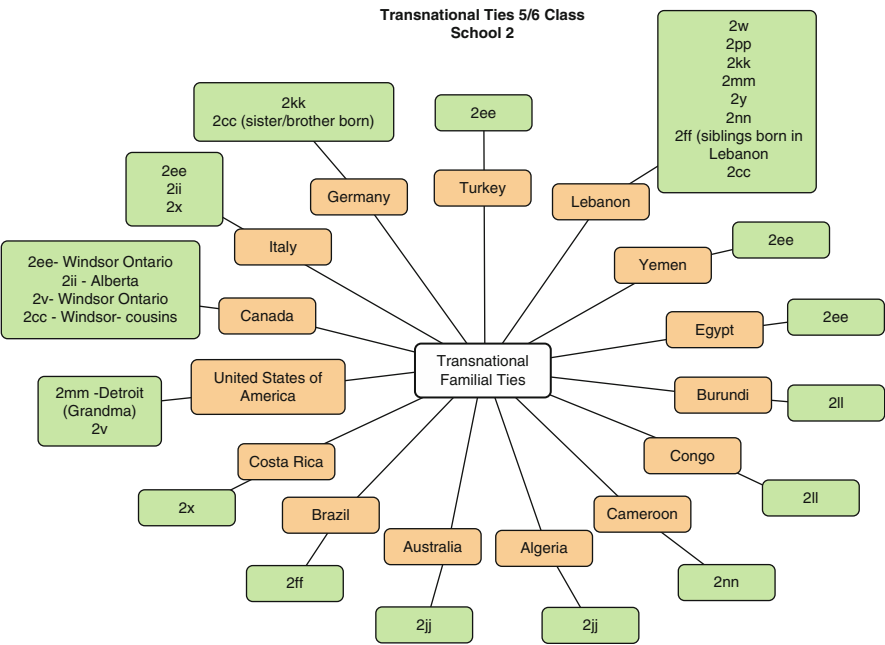
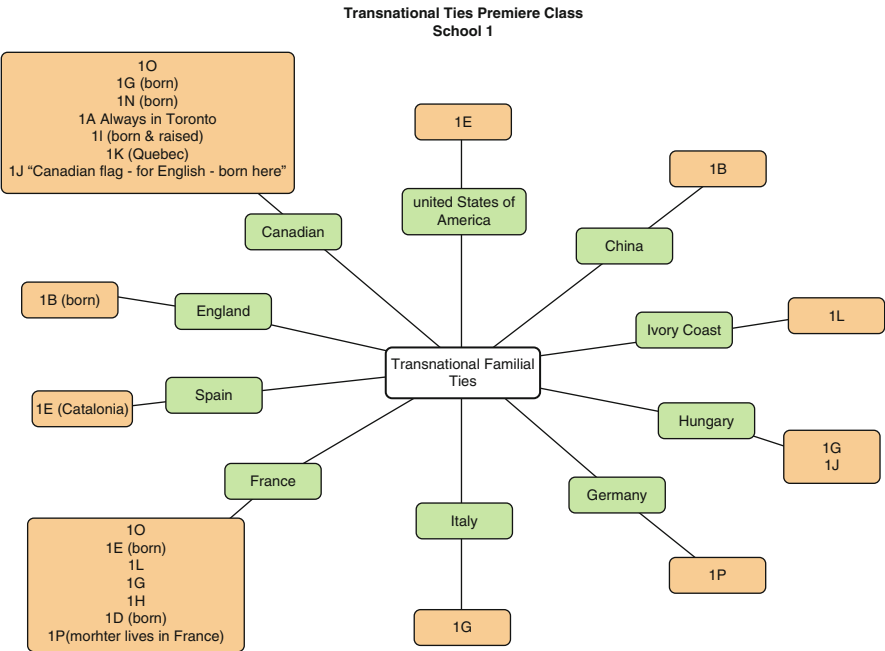
In this last statement, the student alludes to the benefit of engaging in a dialogical process "I can speak to someone about what I really think."

4.2 Mapping Collective Data

In the analysis stage, the research team, which met regularly once a week, discussed how to move forward and faced a difficult question: How do we analyze students' rich multifaceted narratives in a manner that exhibits the complexity and fluidity of movement? Coding themes through conventional computer software did not capture the web of relations the team felt captured the complexity of both individual and collective student stories. In using a combination of creative visual methods, rich stories emerged which motivated the research team to develop thematic visual techniques to convey the diverse array of networks participants form.

In seeking to find a way to treat this complex data that moved from looking at each student's story to a collective snapshot of the lives of students in global urban cities, the research team used a computer program for visual mapping to chart social relations. In order to refrain from drawing inferences about the choices students made, mind maps were developed that allowed for discretely plotting of common variables students spoke about in interviews. The networks mapped out included representations of transnational family ties and children's and young people's travel patterns and virtual mobilities. Since the project examined moves, including those that are physical, emotional, virtual, national, and intergenerational, these maps offered a way to draw on relations across and between different educational contexts. The example of transnational family ties from both the school sites involved in the research project are depicted below.

Transnational ties for Grade 10 (premiere class) and Grade 4/5 class



This word cloud image of key concepts was generated using interview transcripts and a computer word program that counts and weights the number of applications of certain words. This image speaks to the complex relationship that students engaged with languages (i.e., Français [French]) and cultures in this particular minority school setting. Rather than envisioning language, ethnicity, and culture as isolated from the broader social relations, the word cloud image makes references to families, places, languages, and other attributes constitutive of young participants' global journeys.

The booklets produced were highly valued by the students, parents, and also school administrators.

Book cover



Les lang et les cultures qui nous parlent en couleur
En images, en photos, en mots

The research team intended to produce a report that would be accessible to young participants that would value the artifacts generated throughout the project and that might generate additional reflections within the school community. The participants acknowledged the way these booklets captured the significant issues related to the experiences of mobility in a critical and transformative way. Schools took the initiative of holding events in order to showcase the work of students and share the visual research reports.

5 Conclusion

This chapter draws on a multisited ethnographic research project in order to display the research process as one that continuously moves. This is partially a pun since the research study drawn from focused on child and young people conceptions and representations of mobility. However, taken more seriously, this notion of a research

process as dynamic and not static allows for the transformation of research tools along the way, a point this chapter documents. The visual and interview data this research project generated illustrates the potential of multimodal research with children and young people.

Reflexivity is positioned in this chapter as central to the qualitative research process with children and young people and in using visual research methods (see for an expanded discussion Rose 1997, 2007, 2014). This chapter attends to how the research process was adapted during the course of this 3-year project, and in doing so through sharing excerpts from interviews and visual material created during the course of the project, the authors have highlighted the importance of using enabling methods in researching with children and young people.

Enabling methods allow for participants of all ages to be engaged in the research process and to provide some training in research techniques. The utility and possibilities for research that includes visual elements was shown to be of value beyond conversation starters or “just more data” (Darbyshire et al. 2005). Visually presenting data in an accessible medium such as the booklets Farmer created allows participants different means of accessing their productions from standard scholarly work that is often out of reach to participants. Farmer and Cepin see utility in continuing to explore how visually presenting data may help draw connections between multiple participants and their assemblages of experiences. In doing research with children and young people, creative visual methods when coupled with a caring research approach, that is, reflexive and flexible, can offer rich and meaningful data and experiences for researchers and co-collaborators.

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Abstract

This chapter offers a conceptualization of the types of methods that are suitable for use with young children and a framework of six steps for engaging young children in research. This framework, and a compendium of creative methods, was built through collaboration with a team of international researchers funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation (Johnson, V., Hart, R., & Colwell, J. (Eds.). *Steps to engaging young children in research: The guide, Vol. 1*. The Hague: Bernard van Leer Foundation. Available at: <http://www.bernardvanleer.org/files/Steps-to-Engaging-Young-Children-in-Research-vol-1.pdf>. Accessed 1 Feb 2015, 2014a; Johnson, V., Hart, R., & Colwell, J. (Eds.). *Steps to engaging young children in research: The researcher toolkit, Vol. 2*. The Hague: Bernard van Leer Foundation. Available at: <http://www.bernardvanleer.org/files/Steps-to-Engaging-Young-Children-in-Research-vol-2.pdf>. Accessed 1 Feb 2015, 2014b). The framework addresses key issues facing researchers wishing to engage young children in research processes and offers ways to overcome some of the challenges researchers may face. A selection of case studies is offered to show how experts working from a wide range of international contexts have worked with children. Examples have been selected for their particular relevance to geographers working with children.

Keywords

Voice • Rights • Participation • Research methods • Young children

1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on how to engage children aged 5–8 years in research. The assumption that all children are active competent participants in society who have full human value in the present (Mayall 2000) is held. When this standpoint is taken, involving children in research activities and decision-making is both desirable and necessary, particularly from a human rights perspective. Yet, embarking upon research with young children presents challenges which often lead to children being excluded from research. The six steps to engaging children in research presented in this chapter are designed to enable researchers to move away from what Clarke (2005) refers to as using adult “lenses” in order to conduct research *with* rather than *on* children (Mayall 2002). It may sometimes also be possible to enable research *by* children, especially for the older members of this age range (Robinson and Kellett 2004).

The six steps were developed in consultation with active researchers who have experience of participatory research with children about their lives and their environments (see Johnson et al. 2014a, b). The steps provide guidance for researchers, covering the development of ethical protocols and the importance of relationships with participants, selecting appropriate methods, and being aware of the challenges of working in different contexts. Discussions of these steps are framed by theory

from a range of disciplines from across the growing interdisciplinary field of childhood studies. A range of examples have been included to illustrate the creative adaptation of methods for a range of possible research questions and contexts that geographers might face.

1.1 Establishing a Rationale for Including Children's Voices in Research

The right for children to express their opinions about issues that affect their lives is specified in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989). This was the most progressive moment in the history of children's rights and set a great challenge for conventional practice for all of those international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) that had long worked as champions for children's rights (e.g., see Save the Children 1995). The degree to which young children's perspectives are listened to in research has also grown in academic research, influenced by the growth of the interdisciplinary field of childhood studies. As a result, there has been a steady increase in the degree to which NGOs, research centers, and universities find ways to listen to the perspectives of children (e.g., Boyden and Ennew 1997; Hart 1997; Hart et al. 2005; Hill 2006).

Conceptualization of children's participation has expanded to include consideration of other articles of the UNCRC, such as Article 15 on the right to freedom of association (e.g., see the Article 15 project www.crc15.org) and Article 5 that discusses the responsibilities of adults to children (Landsdown 2010). There has also been a growing sophistication in the thinking about participation in relation to the other identities a child might have beyond being a "child," such as their special needs or their minority cultural status. These can add further complexity to issues of social justice for children that need to be accounted for when finding ways to listen to them (e.g., Hanson and Nieuwenhuys 2013).

Learning about children's perspectives from the methods that we outline below can directly inform policy making and a wide range of practices related to children's rights, including improvements to the conditions of their living environment, service provision, protection from harm, and environmental planning and design (see, e.g., Mason and Fattore 2005).

1.2 Distinctions: How Does Research with Young Children Differ?

Researching children's perspectives on their lives and geographies through engaging with them as active participants requires researchers to be creative (Christensen and James 2008). For example, where more conventional interviews are not holding the attention of younger children, then creative games and prompts can be used in order to involve them. Visual and narrative approaches may hold the attention of both adults and children of all ages, but particular approaches, such as using three-dimensional

visual methods, may be developed to take into account the different thinking and communicative capacities of children (Hart 1998).

Whether children are involved as active participants or as subjects of the research process, there are particular ethical issues which need to be considered in order for research to be in the best interests of the children (Punch 2015). The steps the framework presented in this chapter therefore prioritize not only the range of engaging methods that can be used with young children but also the importance of considering the capabilities of the researchers, ethical protocols and procedures, and building trust and relationships with the children. Power relationships between adult or even older child researchers and child participants cannot be ignored (Mayall 2002). The researcher always has to think about what adult role they want to adopt with a child for it will affect how children communicate with them. Many researchers aim to use a “least adult role,” which is of course difficult to do with young children (Mandell 1988).

1.3 Consequences: What Happens When Children’s Voices Are Not Heard?

While the idea of children expressing their opinions has been recognized in international agreements as an integral part of realizing children’s rights, in practice children’s perspectives have still often been ignored or sidelined in research in international development interventions for children (Bourdillon 2004; Bartlett 2005). Johnson (2010a), for example, noted that children were not consulted in the development of a water program in Nepal in 2000/2001. This resulted in the water taps being built too high for the children to access them safely. This was particularly problematic as the children held the responsibility for collecting water within households. In order to reach the taps, they had to precariously swing off them. Involving children in the research and consultation process could have avoided the children being exposed to this danger. Fortunately, the subsequent involvement of children in an impact assessment of the project resulted in steps being built to enable children to reach the taps safely.

In this same research, Johnson (2010a) observed additional cases where the inclusion of children in the research and evaluation process would have been beneficial to development interventions. For example, an income-generating program for women in rural areas was initially deemed a success; however, children were not involved in the evaluation process. Further scrutiny revealed that the project had an unanticipated impact on children’s lives. As the adults’ daily routine changed, due to the program, they were no longer available to tend the livestock as they became involved in work outside of the family. Subsequently the children in the village bore the responsibility of this role and as a consequence their attendance at school dropped. Both examples demonstrate why it is important to seriously consider children’s experiences in planning and evaluation processes for development programs and to take into account children’s domestic responsibilities and contributions to the household economy (Evans 2010).

1.4 Challenges: Why Children May Be Excluded from Research Processes

While such examples highlight the need to include children in research, evidence suggests that children's voices are not always respected, that their reliability is questioned, and that concerns over the extensive time required to develop ethical processes may lead to children being excluded. Indeed, where children are included in the research process, their involvement does not necessarily lead to their voices being listened to or acted upon (Chawla and Johnson 2004). There are many examples from both the Global North and South that demonstrate the lack of attention given to children's views in understanding their "life worlds" (e.g., see Nieuwenhuys 2005). Often power dynamics are such that children, especially young children, are considered to lack the self-awareness and competencies required to express their needs in an appropriate and accurate way (Kutnick et al. 2008). Children's rights perspective challenges researchers to be competent in their interactions with children rather than focusing only on the competencies of the child (e.g., see Tisdall et al. 2009).

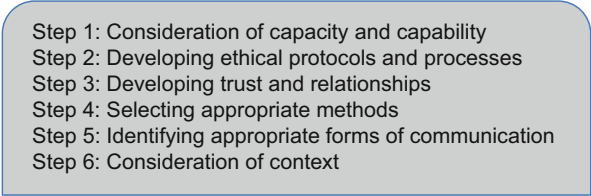
In addition to skepticism over the reliability of children's evidence, concerns over the ethical challenges that researchers face may lead to children being excluded from the research and development process (Harcourt and Einarsdottir 2011). Concerns over ethical protocols, enhanced criminal record checks, and suspicion about why adults want to spend time with young children may all lead researchers to conclude that the time and expense needed to overcome these challenges are a hindrance to including children in research projects.

If the rights of children, as laid out by the UNCRC (1989), are to be realized and if high-quality research, which seeks to understand the communities in which it takes place, is to be conducted, then children need to be included in research and these challenges addressed. In support of upholding children's participation rights, networks of practitioners and academics have continued to advocate for children's and young people's participation in both the Global South and North and have continued to discuss methodological challenges in seeking to do this (e.g., see Johnson et al. 1998). The six steps for engaging children in research, described below, are intended to address some of the key issues (Johnson et al. 2014a).

2 Six Steps to Engaging Children in Participatory Research

The framework of six steps for engaging children in participatory research was developed in collaboration with a team of researchers from the Global North and South. The researchers were intentionally selected from a wide range of professional as well as academic fields, including anthropology, childhood studies, therapy, education geography, psychology, sociology, social work, playwork, and streetwork (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Six steps to engaging children in participatory research

- 
- Step 1: Consideration of capacity and capability
 - Step 2: Developing ethical protocols and processes
 - Step 3: Developing trust and relationships
 - Step 4: Selecting appropriate methods
 - Step 5: Identifying appropriate forms of communication
 - Step 6: Consideration of context

2.1 Step 1: Consideration of Capacity and Capability

At the outset of any research, there should be a review of the capabilities of the research team in order to discover if there are areas where development or support is required. Several factors need to be taken into account. These include the experience the research team has of working with children (including their experience of implementing ethical protocols and procedures), the motivation for the inclusion of children, and their experience of using child-sensitive and participatory methods (Sargeant and Harcourt 2012). There are various guides for facilitating participatory methods for working with children that can help with this process (e.g., Boyden and Ennew 1997 and Johnson et al. 2013).

2.2 Step 2: Developing Ethical Protocols and Processes

Time needs to be scheduled into any research process to ensure that all members of the research team understand the ethical protocols which guide work with children, whether they be legal requirements, moral positions, or specific cultural requirements (Alderson and Morrow 2011). Additional time for training may need to be built into the research process.

Young children, of the age being considered in this chapter, cannot be expected to “own” the whole research process in the manner that older children and youth do with “participatory action research” projects. Nevertheless, there are many instances where children do want to collaborate with adults. In these instances children should be supported to participate in the different stages of the research from planning to dissemination (Johnson 2010b; Alderson and Morrow 2011). There will be issues confronting researchers in conducting ethical research including power, authority, accountability, and responsibility that may be even more marked when involving young children in research (Morrow and Richards 1996). Where there is more limited participation, researchers need to be aware of the level of participation they are aiming for and be clear in their accounts of research processes. Levels or degrees of participation can be understood using a variety of frameworks including Hart’s (1992) “ladder of children’s participation.” The ladder specifies different types of nonparticipation and participation from “manipulation” and “tokenism” to adult-led initiatives in collaboration with children, to child-led processes with adult support. The research should always be voluntary, transparent, and relevant to the children’s lives (Hart 1992, 2007; Johnson et al. 2014a).

When developing ethical protocols and processes, there are a number of issues which need to be considered. The following list of considerations may be a useful starting point (see Johnson et al. 2014a, pp. 25–28):

1. Ensuring children have, as far as is possible, ownership of research throughout the process.
2. Making clear from the outset the level of participation children will have.
3. Protecting all those involved in research from harm including researchers and children.
4. Building trust and relationships with children in research so they feel supported.
5. Understanding power relationships including between children and their peers and between children and adults.
6. Including relevant processes of informed consent so children of differing ages understand why they are participating. This includes both informed consent from children and from their parents/guardians/responsible adults.
7. Respecting privacy and maintaining confidentiality so children are not put at risk.
8. Following child protection policies and ensuring procedures are in place to support children at risk of psychological or physical harm.
9. Taking into account issues of difference between children to enable all children to be included in the research process.
10. Ensuring there is adequate feedback to children and that children's questions are answered appropriately.

When developing ethical protocols and procedures in research, ethical guidelines drawn up by academic and professional bodies can be useful to follow; these may be particularly useful for those working in contexts in which there is little in the way of existing policies or procedures. Such ethical guidelines can also eliminate some of the time and expense associated with the development of ethical procedures for working with children, as they are often rigorously developed. Examples of such guidance are provided by the British Sociological Association (2002), the National Children's Bureau (2003), and UNICEF's Ethical Research Involving Children (see childethics.com; Graham et al. 2013). While such guidance offers hugely valuable advice, it is crucial that local contexts are sufficiently considered to ensure research is conducted in a culturally appropriate manner (Coles and McGrath 2010).

2.3 Step 3: Developing Trust and Relationships

Positive and supportive relationships are a prerequisite for the development of understanding (Kutnick and Colwell 2009), since such developing trust and respect between researchers and children is fundamental to the research process. In order for children to open up, they need to trust researchers and feel supported by them (Punch 2002). If a safe and enjoyable environment can be built (see Colwell et al. 2015), children usually feel more able to share their opinions freely. Such an environment

can be established in three progressive stages: building trust, developing communication skills, and problem solving (Kutnick et al. 2008). Such a process has been shown to lead to children being able to be more honest when sharing their opinions, while also developing the language needed to express their opinions, something which they may not often have the opportunity to do. This is also likely to contribute to the reliability of the information collected from children.

As researchers spend time with children developing their relationships, they also have the opportunity to understand the language of the children and the spaces which they inhabit. As such, researchers may better understand the evidence collected (Johnson et al. 2014a,b).

2.4 Steps 4 and 5: Selecting Appropriate Methods and Identifying Appropriate Forms of Communication

These two steps are considered in tandem (Johnson et al. 2014a, p. 35). Selecting appropriate methods and tools for collecting data will require that what needs to be understood is considered alongside the range of possible methods that are culturally and developmentally appropriate. The methods have been clustered by the different forms of communication they involve:

- Interviews and discussion
- Child-led tours and other in situ methods
- Visuals used with free expression or structured visual methods
- Narrative and performance
- Play and games including the use of dolls

Although some of these methods are discussed in academic literature, many have been developed and used in nonacademic practitioner settings and so are written up in gray literature. This includes applied participatory research with children conducted by staff in nongovernmental organizations. A good source of published literature on some of the more participatory and visual approaches to engaging children in research is the journal *Participatory Learning and Action*, previously *PLA Notes* (particularly special issues 25, 42, and 50; see Chawla and Johnson 2004). These clusters of methods are discussed more fully in the following section of this chapter.

Selecting appropriate methods and tools is key to ensuring that data is of a high quality and that it meets the requirements of the research. Personal, professional, and ideological assumptions by those funding or requesting the research, as well as by researchers, will need to be carefully considered (Crotty 2005). Perspectives on what “counts” as evidence may differ between various stakeholders, and so during the planning phases, the research team will need to determine what kinds of evidence will be valuable, which methods may generate the most appropriate form of data, and whether decision-makers will be prepared to accept evidence from children’s perspectives (e.g., Eyben et al. 2015). All too often children’s evidence can be ignored

or the value of their data queried at a later stage and so sidelined in preference to other forms of data from adults. It can therefore be valuable to work with funders and decision-makers during the planning and development phase to highlight why children's evidence should be taken seriously and how their evidence will be used (Johnson 2015).

2.5 Step 6: Consideration of Context

Research that engages with children needs to be relevant to their lives. Therefore, attention must be given to the particular political, cultural, and institutional context prior to any data collection processes. As part of this analysis, researchers need to consider the local power dynamics, attitudes toward children, and beliefs about their capacities. How children will participate will depend in part on their interactions with others and what they feel is expected of them. These issues will all affect how children feel about contributing to evidence about their lives, feelings, and opinions (Johnson 2015). Taking into consideration the spaces that children inhabit and the reality of their daily lives, including how they spend their time playing, learning, and working, will be crucial when seeking to plan appropriate research. Researchers should therefore be mindful of the variety of roles that children typically fulfill, such as their contributions to the household economy through farming and paid labor or working in factories, as well as unpaid domestic and care work (Evans 2010). Recognizing this everyday context and children's roles in this context is essential to finding ways to enable children's perspectives to be taken seriously in the research (Mason and Bolzan 2010).

3 Methods for Engaging Children in Participatory Research

This section offers an overview of the clusters of participatory methods noted in step 5 above and highlights some of the benefits and challenges of these methods. Some examples have been provided as case studies to demonstrate how these methods have been used in a range of contexts to understand children and young people's lives and the spaces and places that they inhabit. The case studies may be particularly useful to those researching children's geographies. Further details of the case studies and additional examples can be found in Johnson et al. (2014a, b).

3.1 Interviews and Discussion

While interviews may often seem to be the most obvious choice for research purposes, they may require special attention to make them appropriate for use with young children. This includes making interviews less formal than they may be when used with adults, using certain props or materials alongside interviewing or by combining interviews with other methods of engaging children, for example,

interviewing children as they draw (Kanyal, in Johnson et al. 2014a, b) or using toys and models (Hart 1976).

In addition, rather than directing a child to answer questions in an interview format, practitioner researchers who spend sustained amounts of time with children are able to situate themselves as observers of children's activities over a period of time and engage in "listening to children" (Clark and Moss 2011). These opportunities to observe and listen may be carried out in a child's everyday environment. In their own familiar setting, in a childcare setting, for example, it is often possible to talk to young children as they engage in familiar activities. However, the setting should be carefully considered. For example, if research is in a school, where children are commonly led to believe there is a correct answer for everything, they may be unlikely to express opinions which they feel do not align with adults' expectations, particularly if they fear they may be reprimanded. Spending time with children and developing a trusting relationship may make a difference to how comfortable children feel and thus how open they are within the interview.

It has been found that young children's early concepts commonly take the form of "scripts" and that they are able to express their thoughts more fully in the form of a narrative than in the question and answer format traditionally used in interviews (e.g., see Engel 1995; Greene and Hogan 2005). Indeed, the narrative inquiry approach is becoming more common as a method for listening to research participants of all ages, and there is a growing literature on the subject (e.g., see Daiute 2014). As such, researchers may find it beneficial to find ways to support children to tell stories about a phenomenon they are interested in. Of course this may lead to children diverging from the topic. The task of a skilled researcher is to listen to a child's narrative, since there may be a relevant message within it, and then gently guide a child back to the research topic.

Whether interviews are conducted with individuals or in groups depends upon the research topic, the requirements of the project, and, crucially, what is deemed most appropriate for the child(ren). When the research questions concern children's shared experiences of a common space such as a playground or a shared experience of an activity, interviews with dyads or with small groups may be useful. Group interviews often create a more informal setting that brings out a fuller account of children's relationships to the space or activity and may help researchers to verify information or understand consensual views (Lewis 1992). However, with some research themes, sensitive issues may be raised in a group interview, and so it may be more appropriate to interview children individually (Robson 2001) or to combine both group and individual interviews (Lewis 1992).

Case 1: Children's Agency in Addressing Water Supply in Tibet A range of methods, including group interviews, were used to help address water supply problems in Tibet (West in Johnson et al. 2014a). The project involved working with children on how they would like to participate in a water and sanitation program run by Save the Children. Children were consulted throughout the process, and a variety of tools were developed with children's participation. The researchers found that using a range of techniques, including drawings and models, to support the discussions

helped the children to remain involved in the process. Particular to this context, the research team found that conducting the discussions in both English and Chinese increased children's participation as these were the languages with which they found most comfortable expressing themselves. Through involving children in discussions over time, their understandings and confidence grew, and they were able to contribute to the planning of the water and sanitation program. This in turn served to change adults' ideas about children's agency, and they were able to involve children directly in local environmental actions.

3.2 In situ Methods and Child-Led Tours

Conducting research with a child *in situ* can place them closer to the experiences that are being discussed than interviews conducted in a more conventional interview setting (Kusenback 2003). The term *child-led tours* (see Case 2) describes mobile interviews carried out by a child or group of children. The child(ren) takes a researcher through a space to describe experiences that happen(ed) in that space or to annotate aspects of the space that mean something to the child(ren). These mobile interviews or child-led tours can be particularly useful for understanding the geography of children and how they access and inhabit their environment (e.g., Hart 1976; Lynch 1979; Driskell 2002; see also Ponto's chapter in this volume). Mobile interviews have also been used to understand children and young people's roles in household chores or in work contributing to the household economy (Johnson et al. 1995). Taking children away from groups where other familiar adults are present will require specific consents, planning, and safe guarding.

Photography with still cameras or videos can help to document child-led tours (e.g., the work of "photovoice" (www.photovoice.org; Murray in Johnson et al. 2014b)). The use of photographs taken by children has been used for many years (e.g., Hart 1976), but the method has dramatically increased with the arrival of inexpensive disposable and digital cameras. The method quickly enables children to begin to show their worlds (e.g., see Einarsdottir 2005; Evans 2006), but it is not without challenges: it is worth taking a critical stance on what children want to say rather than focusing too much on the photograph itself. There is an increasing body of research building on this method, such as audio-recorded annotations of photographs and exhibitions and booklets made by children with commentaries. A valuable example of how deeply the method can take a researcher into the worlds of those children who might normally have little or no opportunity to share their perspectives is offered by Luttrell (2010).

Audio equipment can also be used to capture children's opinions as they show researchers through a space or place, but it is often difficult to link the sound to particular places. If a transect or set route is used, then different perspectives can be gathered about the same places. This idea of children leading a researcher through a space can also be very effectively applied in a simulated form, such as when a child takes a doll through a model of a space or place to express their feelings about this (see Nallari in Johnson et al. 2014a).

Case 2: Child-Led Tours in India Group child-led tours were conducted in order to understand existing and redeveloped slum areas in Mumbai and Bangalore (Nallari in Johnson et al. 2014a). These tours showed where children play, what services they knew about and could access, and how they and their caregivers use local common spaces such as parks. The tours involved four boys and four girls between the ages of 6 and 16 years; adolescent girls were rarely allowed to leave their houses, so they did not participate often. Tours were recorded by researchers with handheld video cameras, and children would lead and stop when they wanted to discuss a particular place. Nallari (in Johnson et al. 2014a) noted that the method worked well and children's voices were captured. It is important to note that when working with children of mixed age groups, as was the case here, it is necessary to use a method that is understood by the youngest members of the group so that all the children's perspectives can be heard.

3.3 Visual Methods Including Mapping

A range of visual methods have been used for many years by both anthropologists (e.g., Boyden and Ennew 1997 and Reynolds 1991) and geographers (e.g., Hart 1976, 1997 and Young and Barrett 2001) to understand children's everyday lives and how they interact with their environments in urban and rural settings. Visual methods may be considered within two groupings: those where children have complete freedom to express themselves with the medium and visuals that are structured in some way by the researchers (Johnson et al. 2014b).

Visual methods for free expression include drawing and model making using different media, including sand, clay, and other available resources. Model making has benefits for some types of representation, such as mapping (see Case 3), because, unlike drawing, the materials can be easily moved around until the child is happy. Drawings however require a commitment that is not so easy or flexible to erase (Hart 1976, 1997). For a similar reason, model making is more suited than drawing for group use. Because of these benefits, models have been used very effectively in urban planning processes that simultaneously include people of a wide range of ages (e.g., in planning for real: www.planningforreal.org.uk). Model making can also be valuable for surmounting barriers for nonliterate children who are not comfortable using pens and paper.

Visual methods and templates have been used for many years by international organizations working in development in the form of "participatory appraisal." PA also incorporates ideas and methods from anthropological ethnographic research and diagrams developed for appraisal in agroecosystems analysis. Visuals can, however, be used in extractive as well as participatory ways so the PA approach has been rife with tensions about the way in which structured visual methods are applied in research processes. Some state, for example, that participatory appraisal methods need to take more account of power dynamics in order to achieve more transformative development (e.g., Hickey and Mohan 2004).

The use of the PA approach spread rapidly over several decades and was often effectively developed for community use by practitioner researchers working in the field of international development as well as by social scientists (e.g., Chambers 1983, 2003; O’Kane 2000). PA methods have been used with adults and also, less extensively, with children, to understand community development interventions and impact (e.g., Guijt et al. 1994; Johnson et al. 1995; Johnson 2010b). Occasionally PA has been used with very young children to explore issues in the early years. For example, research on childcare with Save the Children Nepal used household mapping to understand the different perspectives of both caregivers and children of their living spaces and the quality of housing (Arnold et al. 2000). As well as being trained in early childhood development, researchers were trained in carrying out participatory methodologies with children.

Examples of visual participatory methods include participant-drawn maps and “physical mapping” using local materials such as mud or stones. Maps can be drawn or constructed by individuals or groups of participants and be the focus for further discussion on issues, such as safety; places where people work, socialize, and live; the use of services and support networks; likes and dislikes relating to public and private spaces; and territoriality. They can also lead to planning changes that participants would like in their communities. It is also possible to use base maps to enable children to express their views, including conducting evaluations of their communities. This involves providing a map and asking the child to take the researcher on a journey through that map, akin to the child-led tours previously described. Urban planners have also used visual mapping methods to understand neighborhoods and the use of public spaces by different people, including children in order to inform planning and design (Chawla 2002). In addition, with technological advances there has been an increase in the use of mapping with mobile devices and video cameras.

While mapping has obvious appeal to children’s geographers, there are also other visual diagramming methods that can help to understand children and young people’s roles in households and societies and the ways in which they use and manage environments. These include transects, daily activity charts, seasonal calendars, preference ranking of activities and experiences, network diagrams, and flow charts (Kindon et al. 2007; Kesby 2000; Johnson et al. 1995). Visual diagramming can help to overcome unequal power dynamics between children and researchers especially in cultural contexts where, for example, girls may not feel that their opinions would be valuable (Sapkota and Sharma 1996). In a UK project, visuals, including physical mapping, food/mood lines and diaries, and drawing of the last meal eaten, were used as a way for those who had been marginalized in society and decision-making processes to participate in research which fed into the regeneration planning of their communities (Johnson and Webster 2000). Detailed ethnographic research can also be combined with the use of PA visual methods, as Case studies 3 and 4 show.

Case 3: Multiple Visual Methods to Examine Children’s Roles Within Nepal Rural Communities Research was carried out with ActionAid Nepal to explore gender

differences in children's roles in households and societies (Sapkota and Sharma 1996). Interviews and observations while accompanying children (aged 5 years upward) were combined with visual methods such as mapping, seasonal work calendars, preference ranking, and flow diagrams. Mapping was used to understand the local environment and the resources and services available in the area. Mobility mapping recorded how far children traveled and where boys and girls visited each day in order to collect water and fuelwood, look after animals, help with farming, and carry out paid work for their household. Preference ranking was used to understand the type of work that girls and boys least liked, including heavy digging and collecting wood. Flow diagrams helped to explore environmental and social changes and the impact on children's lives.

Together these tools provided a deep understanding of the children's experiences and how the lives of boys and girls differed. Power dynamics associated with gender rooted in cultural systems of dowry and traditional beliefs and roles in households varied in different caste and ethnic groups, and unpicking these was essential to gaining an understanding of the children's experiences. To this end, the research with young children was carried out in parallel with research with other members of the households and community using interviewing and participatory visuals.

Case 4: Mapping Children's Environments in Japan Kinoshita (e.g., 2009) has used mapping with young children to understand their experiences of play spaces. Kinoshita developed maps with young children and compared these with the maps of adults from different generations. This allowed an understanding of how the use of spaces has altered over time. Kinoshita was able to use similar mapping techniques across the generations. For the youngest children, subtle differences were made. In the first instance, children were encouraged and given space to talk about their play. As they spoke, their parents helped them to indicate where the spaces they mentioned featured on the map. It was important to ensure that the child was allowed to speak and that the parent only indicated the spaces the child referred to, rather than adding to the discussion. In addition Kinoshita found that if the child was first given time to draw their play spaces and activities and then add them to a map with their parents' support, it allowed them greater control and involvement in the research process.

3.4 Performance and Narrative

There is an important difference between the words in a narrative that children construct in response to an interviewer's research questions and the narratives that children's use to describe their everyday lives that researchers can observe and record (Engel 2005). Narratives in the form of stories, performance, and role-play by children can be used to understand children's lives or their perceptions about different issues. They can be an excellent means for obtaining a rich understanding of children's experiences, and many children find these methods enjoyable. Narratives have the benefit of being something that children use in their everyday lives,

and they allow children to communicate richly without being forced into a question and answer format.

Performance activities may include dramas, role-plays, poems, and puppets. There can also be silent drama, mime, and dance that can also be used to portray feelings about places, people, and things, which can be a particularly inclusive approach in involving some children with special educational needs. Drama generally means that there is some kind of a structure and story in advance, compared with role-play which is a more free form of communication, designed to reveal how children feel about a particular situation or incident.

When working in different cultural settings, there needs to be an empathy with participants so that both children and adults involved are prepared for the use of performance in research (West et al. 2008; Belloni and Carriero 2008). There also needs to be cultural understanding of the use of drama and narrative in the local context so that researchers understand when children are following set formats or when they are freely expressing themselves. In order to write up and analyze evidence provided in narrative and performance, it is important that researchers understand not only direct translations of words but also the overall context of the discourse including the setting and actions that accompany the delivery. Experiences of the language and culture are vital to this process.

While performance and narrative can be used to understand children's feelings about their experiences, these are also effective methods for gathering evidence about interactions between different people and groups within societies as perceived by children. Given the range of situations in which they can be used and the fact that children are often familiar with and enjoy such methods, these methods are extremely valuable tools for a researcher.

Case 5: Critical Self-Reflection About Group Organization by the Children's Clubs of Nepal This project was designed to document how the highly participatory Children's Clubs of Nepal functioned (see Rajbhandary et al. 1999). It used methods that could be used simultaneously by a large number of children across a wide age range. The research team found that it was important to recognize that when working with children of mixed ages in groups, young children are often able to think and have dialogue with older child participants at a higher level than they can have in groups made up entirely of their own age group. This can be very beneficial when considering research with young children. While the research involved a number of methods, the particular method described here is the use of what the authors called "scenario skits."

The research team suggested different scenarios and asked the children to create a play about each of them. One scenario, for example, was for the children to discuss what to do when children in the club cannot come to agreement on an important issue, such as some bad behavior by a club member. The dialogues generated during the performances were then analyzed and discussed by both the child actors and the child audience to gain an understanding of the issue. This method is flexible as the research team can select the topic of the performance. The children used all aspects of performance, including dance, to express their views.

They however rejected the use of puppets as they found that these constrained the process for them.

Valuable data was collected using this method. The research team reported that the incorporation of physical activity seemed to greatly increase the youngest children's interest and participation. However, they also found that it was beneficial to separate the children into age ranges for discussions of the data to allow each group of children to have an opportunity to speak.

3.5 Play and Games

Play and games provide a developmentally appropriate way to carry out research with young children because it is what they choose to do most of the time (Green 2007). Piaget referred to play as the language of childhood and suggested that children needed to "play things through" in the way that adults may think things through (Piaget and Inhelder 1962, p. 57). Observing play and games can help researchers to understand children's thinking and their preferences (Foreman and Hall 2005) while also providing a developmentally appropriate way to carry out research and understand issues about children's lives (Boyden and Ennew 1997; Green 2007).

There are various different types of play that are identified in contemporary psychological literature: physical play, play with objects, symbolic play, pretense and sociodramatic play, and games with rules (Whitebread et al. 2012). Many of these forms of play resonate with the clusters of methods already considered within this chapter. Play that uses objects can be useful for social scientists who want to understand how children feel about decision-making (Alderson 1993). Symbolic play with objects can be used for children to represent people and things as they act out issues in their lives or recounting painful experiences as in the case of children's experiences with conflict (Ennew and Plateau 2004). Observation of children in symbolic play, in which objects are used to represent places and things (see Cases 6 and 7), can be particularly useful in geographic research for gaining insights into children's knowledge and experience of the physical environment (e.g., Hart 1976; Katz 2011).

Case 6: Using Persona Dolls in South Africa Persona dolls are large (72 cm tall), lifelike, culturally sensitive dolls. They are dressed like children and may have props to extend their personas, for example, by wearing a Muslim headscarf and glasses or using a wheelchair. Larger dolls have more impact as they are more lifelike. Dolls can easily be improvised and be made from cardboard and paper clothed.

Biersteker and Smith have used persona dolls to initiate discussion and explore children's opinions and feelings about different topics, such as children's perceptions and experience of difference including race, class, ability, and disability (see Biersteker with Smith in Johnson et al. 2014b).

The research process followed distinct phases to ensure that the young children were comfortable. In the initial sharing of the dolls, the children were supported to

engage with the dolls – greeting, hugging, or stroking and speaking to them. They also enjoyed telling the facilitator and other children what they thought the doll was saying when they imitated it whispering into their ears. The children were asked to guess the doll's name, family structure, language, where they lived, what they would like to do while visiting at the preschool, and what would make her/him happy or sad.

In the following phase, the children were told the doll had a problem. Through the example of the doll, the children then discussed their own experiences, feelings about this, and advice they would give the doll. One example of a problem was that the doll had been chased from the doll corner where he wanted to play nurse. Because he was a boy, he was teased by some of other boys. Using stories in this way helped the researcher to document children's responses to situations and plan to support their development.

Persona dolls provide an open-ended stimulus for discussion on a range of topics of interest to children and so can be a hugely valuable research tool. Biersteker and Smith found there are some challenges to this method. They found that it is important that the doll has as few characteristics as possible. This helps to ensure the child's view is not shaped by any stereotypes. They also found that there can be some differences in the way children of different genders approach the task. They observe that this relates to stereotypes and often what is considered (in)appropriate, e.g., boys playing with dolls. This may need to be addressed at the outset of the research to ensure all children participate.

Case 7: Medical Dolls in Canada Hospital play dolls or medical dolls are highly adaptable soft cloth dolls that come in a variety of skin shades and are normally used with children who have chronic medical conditions. They provide opportunities for emotional expression and mastery over healthcare experiences. These dolls can be used to initiate dialogue and gain children's perspectives regarding medical and social conditions. As well as being used to educate, they can also explore children's emotions, social responses, and fears, for example, see Koller (2007, 2008). This makes them a potentially useful tool in a variety of contexts and purposes.

In Canada and the USA, Koller (ibid) has used medical dolls to help children in hospital to share their feelings and experiences. Initially the children completed the dolls by using a variety of materials such as markers, paint, fabric, beads, etc. giving them a personal connection with the doll. This method can be used with individual children or small groups of about four children. Similar to the persona dolls, these dolls can become quite animated or "lifelike," for example, the children can whisper comments to them or may be asked to tell the facilitator/researcher what the doll was saying. For research questions involving children's understanding of medical conditions or their healthcare experiences, the dolls provide a social context in which to directly address these issues. Children can point to the doll to explain, for example, pain or procedures such as surgeries and stitches and then talk through their feelings using the doll as an intermediary. Having this intermediary can help young children by having a "body" to guide them through the discussion and help them to explore their emotions with some degree of distance.

4 Conclusions for Engaging Young Children in Research

In attempting to fulfill the rights of children to give their perspectives on issues relevant to their lives, many researchers working with children have developed creative participatory that enables young children to communicate their experiences and concerns. This chapter has described approaches used by researchers in both the Global North and South, working across a range of academic and practitioner settings. The chapter has developed a compendium of methods which is broader than what is typically considered in research with young children. These methods can be accessible, fun, and even playful for young children while also providing new insight about children and their environments that can impact on their lives. There is currently a great deal of experimentation taking place, both within and outside of academia, which is not always published in academic journals. This chapter has sought to contribute to the sharing of experiences and approaches about how best to effectively support research with young children, which should help to improve the development of policies and interventions to realize child rights internationally.

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Abstract

Over the last decade, participatory action research (PAR) has been increasingly used in geography in an attempt to move away from identifying and theorizing problems toward engaging with social action, impact, and empowering local communities. Participatory research is seen by many geographers to produce more relevant, nonhierarchical, and morally aware forms of social geography, and it can act as a “lever” and subsequent indicator in the cohesion and engagement of young people in community development. Drawing on these debates, this chapter critically explores the use of focus groups and other group-based methodologies with young people through the lens of a participatory action research project undertaken in a “disadvantaged” neighborhood in the town of Reading, UK. It explores the ways in which participatory focus groups, and associated group-based methods such as “go-alongs,” can offer tools for understanding young people’s *group* behaviors, interactions, and norms, particularly as part of a multi-method approach to community-based field research. Using the project as a lens

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for understanding youth engagement, this chapter also seeks to address the intricacies, complexities, and messiness of researching *with* young people in order to understand how methodologies learned in the classroom can be transitioned to the field. Following a discussion of PAR and community engagement, the chapter critically explores the strengths and weaknesses of using focus groups with young people before examining other more mobile ways of doing group research. It then provides a discussion of the logistics of planning, recruiting, and facilitating focus groups and concludes by offering some simple yet effective ways of engaging young people in social action.

Keywords

Participatory action research • Young people • Focus groups • Community development • Go-alongs • Social action • Public engagement

1 Introduction: Engaging Young People in Community Research

In a community context, there has been a universal move toward more participatory research techniques that attempt to redress issues of unequal power and positionality that can occur while undertaking research with “hard-to-reach” social groups and young people (Kindon 2003; Kindon et al. 2007; Cahill 2007; O’Kane 2008; Tilleczek 2011; Blazek et al. 2015). Over the last decade, participatory action research (PAR) has been increasingly used in geography in an attempt to move away from identifying and theorizing problems toward engaging with social action, impact, and empowering local communities (Pain and Francis 2003; Kesby et al. 2005; Askins and Pain 2011; Mason 2015). Participatory research is seen by many scholars, particularly feminist geographers, to produce more relevant, nonhierarchical, and morally aware forms of social geography, and it can act as a “lever” and subsequent indicator in the cohesion and engagement of young people in community development (Kundrani 2007; Grant, ► Chap. 13, “Participatory Research with Children and Young People: Using Visual, Creative, Diagram, and Written Techniques,” this volume). As discussed elsewhere in this collection (see Evans forthcoming; White and Tyrrell, ► Chap. 9, “Research with Children Seeking Asylum in Ireland: Reflecting on Silences and Hushed Voices,” this volume), participation inherently implies a two-way process whereby information moves between researcher and participants toward a mutual goal of shared knowledge creation and collaboration (Pain 2004). This approach can disrupt the traditional processes and hierarchies that have shaped the engagement of academia with communities in the past (Pain and Francis 2003), democratize the research process, and help dissolve traditional boundaries between researcher and subject (Stringer 2014). An essential component of participatory research is the careful consideration and acknowledgment that young people hold “extensive knowledge” about their communities (Torre and Fine 2006), but exploring and understanding this

knowledge remains problematic. This chapter aims to show how doing participatory group-based research, particularly focus groups, can offer an informative and potentially empowering tool for gathering community knowledge and engendering youth engagement in local projects.

Until recently, there has been little focus on the relationship between youth engagement and community development in a global North context (Barnett and Baugh 2007; Jupp 2008, 2013). This interconnection has been strained in the past, with adults considering the presence of youths in community and public places “polluting” and a possible danger to public stability (Cahill 1990). However, recent trends suggest young people are increasingly visible and active components in community spaces (Brennan 2008), and their role is changing as they undertake more significant roles in shaping the development of *their* communities (Huber et al. 2003). Research from the National Centre for Social Research (NCSR) suggests that young people are the primary targets in government recruitment and retention initiatives relating to community-based activities such as volunteering (NCSR 2011) and yet they are often still excluded from real decision-making in community development initiatives. Jupp (2013) has identified the need for youth to have “a sense of community” as a vital component within interventions in community spaces, particularly in more disadvantaged neighborhoods, and engaging youth in community research activities can provide a pathway for helping young people to shape more inclusive “senses of community” (Brennan 2006). Related is the facilitation of vital links for young people to engage within their own communities (Kegler et al. 2005), enabling them to transition to problem solvers and decision-makers (Brennan 2008). Chawla (2002) identifies many benefits in engaging youth perspectives through research, including the challenges of social exclusion, redistribution of youth power, and increased capacity of youths to change their lives positively, and yet, much community-based research still circumvents young people due to logistical and ethical challenges around finding effective and meaningful methods of participation.

This chapter explores the ways in which participatory focus groups, and associated group-based methods, can offer tools for exploring young people’s *group* behaviors, interactions, and norms, particularly as part of a multi-method approach to community-based field research. Focus groups, also referred to as “group depth discussions,” are group-based conversations typically lasting from 1 to 3 hours and are conducted with around six to eight participants. Focus groups can be used as a “stand-alone technique,” but they are most commonly employed as part of a multi-method approach to field research (Smithson 2000). Despite the popularity of the traditional focus group as a tool for researching with youth in a variety of contexts (Krueger and Casey 2000; Hyams 2004; Bennett 2009), there is still a lack of awareness in community research of the diversity of methods offered through participatory group research that extends far beyond the traditional format of a timed group conversation. This chapter seeks to offer insights into more mobile ways of engaging with youth as coproducers of their own knowledge and praxis (Leyshon 2002; Hastadewi 2009; Lushey and Munro 2015). The logistical and emotional challenges of researching with groups of hard-to-reach young people

often call for a more innovative methodological approach than the standard focus group used in many community projects.

Drawing on these debates, this chapter critically explores the use of focus groups and other group-based methodologies with young people through the lens of a participatory action research project undertaken in a “disadvantaged” neighborhood in the town of Reading, UK. Through a community-led research partnership called the “Whitley Researchers,” local sixth formers, resident researchers, and undergraduate students worked together to design and operationalize research that explored the everyday travel and mobility experiences of families in South Reading, as part of the Whitley Big Local’s £1 million initiative (Lloyd-Evans et al. 2015). This participatory action research project, aimed to explore the everyday mobility needs and experiences of communities in Whitley, identifies travel barriers and suggests ways of addressing unmet needs that could be targeted by the Whitley Big Local £1 million (a National Lottery initiative). The idea for the research into everyday mobility came from the community as they felt isolated and disconnected from other parts of the town, and the author was invited to collaborate in the venture to help shape the research. A further outcome of the project was the development of a new community research training program and partnership network to tackle isolation and social exclusion. In order to engage with young people in the community, the project sought to train and employ university students, local residents, and local sixth formers in designing and creating the research tools. Sixth-form students and staff from a local sixth-form college in South Reading played a key role in designing the research and offering digital training to the University of Reading students on ways of engaging local children and youth in the research via social media. Focus groups and go-alongs were also used as a tools for exploring their views on transport, feelings about everyday life in their community, and higher education. An overlapping project, undertaken by one of the University of Reading geography undergraduate student interns in collaboration with third-sector organizations in Reading, also explored young people’s views of volunteering and views of community development, place, and belonging (Avis 2016).

Using the Reading project as a lens for understanding youth engagement in research, the aim of the chapter is not only to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the focus group methodology but to explore simple yet effective ways of engaging with young people in a wider range of participatory and inclusive collective spaces. Although the focus group remains a core method in understanding group behaviors and attitudes, this chapter will also explore other ways of “doing” collective research that may be more effective in engaging with young people in different community and cross-cultural contexts. Here, the focus may be on the street or days out through mobile methods such “go-alongs” or walk-alongs (see also Ponto, ► Chap. 6, “Ethical Complexities of Mobile Interviews with Young People,” this volume) and active group learning in digital spaces. Although methodological literature has, of late, focused on pushing the boundaries of qualitative methods, there has been little consideration of how these ideals play out in practice through lived community research projects. This chapter seeks to address the intricacies, complexities, and messiness (Morris-Roberts 2004; Hyams 2004; Bennett 2009) of researching *with*

young people in order to understand how methodologies learned in the classroom can be transitioned to methods in practice in the field. It starts with an exploration of the strengths and weaknesses of using traditional focus groups with young people through a brief critique of their application in academic research before exploring other more mobile ways of researching with groups. It then provides a discussion of the logistics of organizing and moderating focus groups with young people as part of the Reading participatory action research project.

2 Critical Reflections on “Doing” Focus Groups with Young People

Focus groups have always been portrayed as a means of generating information on public perceptions and viewpoints (Kitzinger 1994; Crang 2001; Hyams 2004; Krueger 2008). They can be used as a “stand-alone” method, but they can be more commonly used as an ancillary method to other qualitative and ethnographic techniques or for triangulation (Laws et al. 2003). The person or researcher that convenes the group interview is often called the *moderator*, and their role is to *facilitate* interaction between members of the group rather than control the discussion. In the Reading project, young people and students took turns in moderating and facilitating the group as part of a more participatory and engaged approach to the research (see also Mistry et al. 2015).

According to Bloor et al. (2001, p. 90), “focus groups have become part of a mixed economy of social research, one component in multi-method strategies, where multiple methods are themselves an emblem of methodological rigour.” Focus groups can be used for a wide range of qualitative research aims and objectives, but they are commonly used to ascertain information on *collective* views of social issues, such as young people’s perceptions of crime and violence, to explore *group contradictions* and uncertainties, or to assess the relative success of a particular strategy or project (Smithson 2000; Lloyd-Evans 2008). In a multicultural or development context, they can provide data on the meanings that lie behind group assessments and perceptions or on group processes that underline particular behaviors or viewpoints. The interaction *between* the groups is a key difference from the semi-structured interview. What are young people’s collective feelings about where they live and how are their identities related to place? How do they react to each other when asked to talk about their school or where they live? In summary, focus groups provide a good environment for understanding *collective social action* and accessing group beliefs, understandings, behaviors, and attitudes that might be overlooked in in-depth interviews and questionnaires.

Individual human behavior is influenced by collective behavior and thought, and the focus group can be as important as the in-depth interview in understanding the importance of codes of behavior and “ways of doing” in relation to a wide range of political, social, and economic activities that impact on young people’s lives. They are an excellent tool for highlighting the uncertainties, tensions, and contradictions that must be played out before “collective decisions” are reached, and as such they

have many advantages in the participatory development process. As Giddens (1991) poignantly argues, understanding the extent to which individual and group identities and motives are influenced by different factors and other social groups is of fundamental importance in social science. In the author's recent research on young people's attitudes toward how a £1 million investment should be spent in their local community, group discussions highlighted the power of peer pressure and collective views on being stigmatized that shaped, and often constrained, young peoples' ideas about their futures (Lloyd-Evans et al. 2015). Focus groups also provide an occasion for young people to engage in what Bloor et al. (2001) call "retrospective introspection," which is to explore taken for granted assumptions in their everyday lives. It is not uncommon for young participants to speak of how they have never reflected on why they act in a particular way or maintain a daily routine. This reflexivity can often release anxieties and emotions within groups, and it is important for community projects to embed opportunities for further discussions and support when needed rather than leaving participants alone to work through the feelings released by a focus group (Bennett 2009). Thus, the data produced by focus groups can be distinct from that produced by other types of qualitative techniques, but they also have their limitations as will be discussed later.

There are multiple reasons as to why focus groups can be a favored method for researching with children and youth in a community context (Lloyd-Evans 2008). Firstly, focus groups are conversational, relaxed, and informal in nature, and they can be more attractive to young participants than the more intense semi-structured interview. Local secondary school students stated that the word "interview" is often associated with a stressful situation such as "seeing the head teacher" or "applying for a job" and not something they would volunteer to engage in. Young people can also take turns in shaping and facilitating the conversation, which can destabilize traditional power relations and engender a more inclusive feeling. Secondly, children and adolescents often feel more comfortable taking part in research alongside their peers and are more likely to engage in a group event. Although this has its limitations, as we will explore later in the chapter and elsewhere by Punch and Graham, ► Chap. 10, "Interviewing Children at Home: Exploring the Use of Individual and Focus Group Interviews," this volume, in relation to private spaces of the home, group discussions are often perceived as safer discursive spaces than other methods, particularly for young women and diverse cultural groups. In the Reading project, small focus groups were an effective way of engaging with young Muslim women about their attitudes to travel and mobility as individual interviews were seen as "prying," "too intense," and "intrusive." These young women had rarely been asked for their opinions on how they would like to see their neighborhood improved. Group discussions are particularly good for researching with people whose voices are often missing in policy debates, offering rich and insightful testimonies that can destabilize traditional power relations (Dwyer and Buckle 2009; White and Tyrrell, ► Chap. 9, "Research with Children Seeking Asylum in Ireland: Reflecting on Silences and Hushed Voices," this volume). The concept of "voice" is viewed by many scholars as an expression of power relations (Hyams 2004) and researchers

have argued that the focus groups can be an informal and friendly space for listening and learning from younger participants that have relatively little power. As Reinhartz (1988, pp. 15–16) argues “if you want to hear it, you have to go hear it, in their space, or in a safe space. . . . In other words, if you want someone to tell it like it is, you have to hear it like it is.”

Thirdly, group discussions are less focused on an individual’s stories and experiences which can be useful when researching sensitive issues as participants can talk about general attitudes or “things that have happened to their friends” rather than themselves. This can be particularly important when researching personal or controversial issues. This broad methodological approach exposes “private” attitudes in more anonymous environments and can help engage marginalized voices in the “remaking” of public space (Nagar 2000). Group discussions can also provide a certain degree of anonymity and safety in numbers. In fact, many of the young people we approached had refused to take part in previous community research as they felt uneasy and intimidated.

Finally, a group discussion can provide both the starting and end points for using a range of participatory and visual techniques that may be more insightful in exploring feelings, attitudes, and ideas than just talking, as discussed elsewhere in this collection (Grant, ► Chap. 13, “Participatory Research with Children and Young People: Using Visual, Creative, Diagram, and Written Techniques,” this volume; Blazek, ► Chap. 12, “Participatory Video with Children and Young People,” this volume). The use of photos, games, videos, performance, or social media as “enabling methods” can provide more powerful and rich data sets than individual conversations alone, particularly in an ethnographic context (Garrett 2010; Farmer and Cepin, ► Chap. 15, “Creative Visual Methods in Research with Children and Young People,” this volume; Evans *forthcoming*). In their research in Cambodia, Garrett and Brickell (2015) use participatory video to tackle the often hidden and silenced dilemmas facing young women around domestic violence, though as Kindon (2016) reminds us, researchers should be cautious over claims that using video is always empowering. The use of participatory techniques such as mapping, drawing, and creative arts with children and youth are now well established, particularly in the global South (Kesby 2007; Evans *forthcoming*). In the Reading project, local sixth formers and students took it in turns to provide techniques training in methods that would help facilitate a more inclusive working relationship and also contribute to coproducing knowledge. While the undergraduate students took the lead in facilitating groups on writing newspaper articles and data collection, the sixth formers wanted to showcase their digital skills at using video, social media, and paperless working. These lively, interactive, and “messy” sessions provided spaces for young local residents to take ownership and lead on aspects of the project that were relevant to them, and they particularly enjoyed the fact that they had better digital literacy skills than a bunch of university undergraduates. The group also worked together on producing a reflective blog (see Box 1). These encounters also provided reflective spaces for the geography students to critically reflect on their own journeys through education and how they engaged with communities “back home.”

Box 1: Extract from the University's Intern's Blog: Working with Local College Students to Develop Digital Materials, 2014



The students at NTA have been working on increasing the use of social media for the project in Whitley and they have created pages on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Their primary use is to share information and keep the local community updated with the project but they are also handy for sharing pictures, posting links and sharing our latest ideas. In our meeting with NTA this week, the other student interns and I, shared our own ideas with the students and then worked with them to see how they could be implemented. The ideas for the social media included: 100 days of Whitley, a Whitley project hashtag, regular updates and engaging with the Whitley public.

It has been so interesting working with the girls at NTA and I have learned so much from them already! The school is very tech-savvy and they have told us all about Google + and Google Drive. Although this is not necessarily directly linked with transport, it has definitely proved useful for communicating with the other interns and Sally. As part of the University and through the internship, I have gained a lot of technical knowledge and insight into the local community.

Working with NTA has been really beneficial for the academy as well and next week, the students at NTA have been invited to the University with the rest of the team working on the Whitley project. This day at the University will involve a talk about University life and research training on focus groups and analysing questionnaire data as well as a tour around the Whiteknights campus.

As with all methods, focus groups have their limitations particularly around the “messiness” of the data they produce (Bennett 2009). They are often inappropriate for exploring in-depth individual motivations or behaviors (see Punch and Graham 2016), and researchers often make the mistake of making assumptions about individual’s lives from the stories they tell during group discussions. Secondly, as focus group research is often intended to be participatory and benefit the “group,” it runs the risk of evoking a misguided notion of a “homogeneous community” or “group consensus.” It is important to remember that the material collated in focus groups is a reflection of the views of the group at that given space and time, and they are often subject to wider geopolitical factors. Groups can fail to show the real tensions and contradictions between participants, particularly when dominant or more powerful voices overshadow controversial views. Likewise, it is equally dangerous to hope

that focus groups will provide the authentic “voice of the people” as the group environment can actively shape and alter group understandings in situ (Smithson 2000). This is particularly relevant when researching with friendship groups, as highlighted in an extract from one of the undergraduate student interns’ research diary from a focus group that explored young people’s views on community development and volunteering within the Reading project (Box 2).

Box 2: Extract from Field Diary, Sam Aviss, September 2015, South Reading (Aviss 2016)

“What soon became apparent was the effect that other participants had on each other. This was particularly significant within the focus groups, where the “observer effect” became apparent, whereby participants based their responses on their peer group and what they thought was socially acceptable, or what they had heard before but didn’t necessarily know or think. This was especially pertinent amongst teenagers (16–18 years old). A common feature of the quieter participants was agreeing with others, with responses such as “*yeah. . . I agree*” and “*I would say the same thing.*” This fear and/or uneasiness of being involved in group discussions can relate to social acceptance and desire to not alienate their peers.”

Although focus groups can be useful for researching sensitive topics, problems can arise if the topic is politically volatile or controversial. It is not uncommon for local communities, or powerful individuals, to explicate a different research agenda to that of the external researchers or “experts.” I have worked on projects in the UK where community leaders have attempted to regulate the research process to serve their own political interests, and focus groups can easily fuel community tensions and even promote unrest and outrage. As the next section will discuss, focus groups can easily be biased through their recruitment, moderation, and analysis.

Focus groups are most commonly undertaken at a fixed time and space, maybe in a youth center or local organization, but increasing attention focuses on the use of more mobile collective methods that interlink with participant observation. Multisited ethnographic ways of researching with youth, such as active participation in activities such as shopping or cooking, playing sport, go-alongs around a neighborhood or community event, or taking part in the journey to school, can also be seen an extension to the collective research toolkit (Busher and Urry 2009). Plate 1 shows students working on group mapping exercises at the local summer fun day.

3 Journeys Between Focus Groups and “Go-Alongs”

Understanding the microgeographies of young people requires use of a variety of techniques that they find culturally credible and that allows them to talk freely about their lives and how they are situated among other narratives (Leyshon 2002; Brown and Durrheim 2009). Much of the work on “walk” or “go-alongs” tends to focus on

Plate 1 Intern, Emma, “doing” research at a community fun day (Source: Author 2015)



their role within a multisited ethnography where time and space paths are shared by researchers and participants (Evans and Jones 2011; Ponto, ► [Chap. 6, “Ethical Complexities of Mobile Interviews with Young People,”](#) this volume). Kusenbach (2003) defines this type of mobile interview as a “go-alongs” when:

Researchers accompany individual informants on their ‘natural’ outings, and – through asking questions, listening and observing- actively explore their subjects’ stream of experiences and practices as they move through, and interact with, their physical and social environment. (Kusenbach 2003, p. 463)

Group discussions in situ or go-alongs (see also Anderson 2004; Sclater and Lally 2014; Hemming and Madge 2012) provide an opportunity for the researcher to temporarily “live the life” of participants, unlike traditional focus groups which are stationary. This method can help to readjust the balance of power between researcher and participants, as the researcher becomes the follower and relies on the participants to decide where they go and what they reveal. This positioning as a “novice in a new world” (Anderson and Jones 2009, p. 300) can open up a sharing of everyday lived experience and help young participants illustrate in nonverbal forms the practices of their everyday lives. Context can be demonstrated in a powerful way through this technique and enable subtle emotive experiences and differences between the participants to become apparent. Go-alongs, as discussed by Ponto, ► [Chap. 6, “Ethical Complexities of Mobile Interviews with Young People,”](#) in this volume, provide further opportunities for complex geographies of “growing up” to be uncovered, imagined, and contested, particularly when researching issues around belonging, place, and identity. Talking to young people on a journey around town can be far more informative than a group chat in a community center.

When engaging with young people in research projects, it is crucial that methods respect the time commitment of young people and their ability to participate. Joining

in activities or outings that are already arranged can be less intrusive. Although “go-alongs” cannot always replace in-depth participant observation or ethnography in their depth and insight, they can highlight the challenges of traveling to a nearby town, or go to college, scheduling around sporadic bus timetables (difficult to access without the Internet), and the logistics of caring for a smaller siblings. In this way, dialogues around the challenges of the everyday can come to life. In the Reading project, go-alongs with young parents between the community center and a children’s play area highlighted both material and nonmaterial obstacles that prevented use of the park, such as the difficulties of carrying shopping and toddlers through traffic, litter, and anxiety over safety, that brought the “everyday” into the lives of the researchers.

More mobile ways of working with young people bring their own challenges, and it is also important to recognize the challenges and weaknesses associated with go-alongs or walk-alongs (Woods 2010; Lew 2011; Busher and Urry 2009). Despite being a useful methodological technique in eliciting detail on everyday lives, it is also highly subjective and open to interpretation by the researcher. It’s more difficult to record group conversations on the go and therefore, go-alongs require the research to collect and record data in different ways. The lack of traditional transcripts for analysis can raise concern over the validity of the data. For example, critiques of a doctoral researcher’s reliance on go-alongs and group outings as their main methods for researching with teenage parents (Foy-Phillips 2014) raised important and timely debates over what constitutes “authentic” and “proper” research within social science. Although Foy-Phillips (2014) found that accompanying young parents to supermarkets, children’s services, or the park offered a more meaningful and insightful way of exploring their everyday lives, feelings, and aspirations, such methods are often criticized as less rigorous as the data is often more “messy” than an interview transcript (Bennett 2009). Other scholars have interrogated the ethical questions around participants’ emotions during mobile research, the extent to which they may feel pressurized or stressed, or unable to “leave” the go-along if they felt uncomfortable or uneasy (Hadfield-Hill and Horton 2014; Ponto, ► Chap. 6, “Ethical Complexities of Mobile Interviews with Young People,” this volume). These dilemmas are not easily solved, but participatory approaches to coproducing the research with participants can help build the trust and emotional security that helps to create a more inclusive research space where such ethical challenges can be discussed and where participants feel empowered to question, change the research, or walk away when it suits them.

Illustrating vignettes of participants’ lives, taking photos, and the intensive use of voice recorder field diaries that allow the reader to draw their own conclusions about the research can also help address power imbalances. Increasingly, new ICTS are offering new exciting and dynamic ways of recording experiences and collecting data that can be discussed in a more traditional focus group setting later on. Mobile voicemail and video is much easier now due to capacity of mobile phone technologies and social media (see Ponto, ► Chap. 6, “Ethical Complexities of Mobile Interviews with Young People,” this volume). There are new apps for mapping group outings and recording places of significance, but in reality, the challenges of

Table 1 Strengths and limitations of using focus groups with young people

Strengths	Limitations
They generate excellent data on group views, beliefs, and reasons for collective action	Evoke misguided notions of a collective or community consensus
Groups can be participatory and empowering as participants find strength in numbers and feel in control of the research process	Groups can be subject to peer pressure and dominated by powerful “voices” – controversial views can be silenced
Good for discussing sensitive topics among people whose lives are influenced by the same issue	Not good for understanding individual motivations
They can lead to collective action as a result of people sharing their experiences	Recruitment can be difficult, time-consuming, and unsuccessful
A good platform to use PRA/PLA techniques such as rankings, mapping, and other visual methodologies	Moderation/facilitation is a skilled technique and requires practice
Can generate rich and abundant data	Data can be difficult to analyze
Accessible to people who have literacy difficulties	

Source: adapted from Laws et al. [2003](#); Lloyd-Evans [2008](#)

this approach included writing complete notes both during and after the interviews, as well as ensuring that they accurately reflected the commentary, particularly in a group context. Overall, many researchers believe that the benefits of increased participation of young people in mobile group methods outweigh the limitations of the challenges associated with not having traditional transcripts of the discussions to analyze. In many cases the strengths and challenges are one and the same (DeLyser and Sui [2013](#)), and they tend to be similar to the weaknesses of more traditional focus groups in terms of data analysis, the politics of voice, and group consensus (see Table 1).

4 Young People’s Participation in Focus Groups: When, Where, and How

As previously discussed, focus groups and more mobile methods such as “go-alongs” are often used as an adjunct to a range of qualitative field research methods. In circumstances where in-depth ethnographic work is likely to be difficult (and infeasible), due to time restrictions or safety in the field, the focus groups will provide the researcher with some insight into community relations, identities, and understanding group feelings about a particular topic. However, it is important to understand that as atypical, controversial, or extreme opinions are less likely to be explored in a group situation, focus groups are best used alongside other qualitative methods, such as individual in-depth interviews or participant observation (Krueger [2008](#)). Focus groups are commonly introduced at three different phases of a research project, but there are no set rules for their application.

Firstly, they can play an invaluable role in gaining coproduced information on a research topic or provide an overview for more in-depth ethnographic research. They are frequently used in *pre-pilot studies* to explore issues that require further examination or to gain background data on a particular issue. The stories and anecdotes that invariably come from group discussions can provide rich material for devising questions for in-depth interviews or for defining research objectives. They can also be used to explore *differences in the use of language and vernacular terms* that social groups feel most comfortable with. When conducting research with teenagers, for example, is it appropriate to use slang or will it offend anyone? These questions are also adequately explored in pilot studies for in-depth interviews, but the focus group can sometimes offer a more accessible method when time in the field is limited.

Secondly, as focus groups encourage a “reflexive capability” (Bloor et al. 2001), they are often employed to qualify or explore issues in depth that have been raised elsewhere in the research process, maybe in a more structured survey. They are an excellent tool for gauging young people’s attitudes to events, campaigns, policies, and social issues such as evaluating attitudes to the use of mobile phones in public spaces (see Conradson 2005).

Thirdly, and as in the Reading project, focus groups are often used to engender co-public participation as part of participatory action research (PAR) and are commonly used to facilitate public and community participation in development projects (Mosse 1994). They can offer an effective tool in communicating research agendas and findings with communities in order to encourage groups to take ownership of the research and coproduce outputs. The focus group is often the starting point for the use of PAR methods, but it is important to note that focus groups are not always participatory as they can be facilitated in a non-reflexive and controlled manner that regards group participants as passive objects. Studies argue that the inclusion of young people as partners in research shows them as “agents of change” (Ginwright and James 2002), highlighting that listening to young people is fundamental in encouraging participation in social change.

Community-led participatory research relies on careful design, and it is important to set aside sufficient time for the selection, recruitment, and organization of the groups. This process can be a lengthy and complicated experience, particularly if the methodology involves coproducing data and knowledge in collaboration with local communities. Engaging with young people can be particularly challenging if young people feel excluded from existing community spaces and researchers may need to work with local organizations and institutions as a starting point. In the Reading project, local organizations played an important role in working with the undergraduate interns in a range of community events to help them engage with young residents (see Plate 2).

4.1 Planning and Recruitment

Focus groups are not determined through a random sampling technique, so there are a number of basic issues that the researcher needs to consider when recruiting

Plate 2 Undergraduate interns, Daniel, Danni, and Beth, presenting their community research (Source: Author 2014)



participants (Smithson 2000). As group interaction is the main advantage of the focus group method, the researcher must carefully consider the social composition of the group. For example, would it be better to convene groups of a similar age, ethnicity, or gender? Groups can be convened on a wide range of social criteria such as age, gender, religion, ethnicity, occupation, a shared interest, life stage, or geography. Is the research aimed at understanding a wide range of viewpoints or is it hoping for some group consensus on a particular issue? Here, issues of power and social status must also be considered if the researcher wants to encourage participants to speak freely.

There are no set rules for the recruitment of focus groups as there are many contradictory processes that shape the social dynamics of group interactions. Focus groups can consist of strangers or of preexisting social groups based on family or kinship ties and social or community networks such as churches or cooperatives. The use of preexisting groups will be advantageous if the research is exploring a sensitive topic or if a particular characteristic is the basis of membership of a group, such as a disability or medical condition (Laws et al. 2003). Young people are more likely to turn up to a focus group if they are in the company of friends, but peer pressure is more likely to shape the dynamics of such a group (Bennett 2009). Preexisting groups can also be problematic, particularly in community situations where participants may not want friends or neighbors to “know their business.” In the Reading research, the majority of the young participants wanted their participation in the Reading projects to remain anonymous due to concerns over potential stigmatization in the neighborhood. Although video and visual methods were used in the groups, they did not want photos or video clips to be publically available so this chapter only contains photographs of the university interns. The use of photos in disseminating local community-based research raises many ethical issues around confidentiality, and researchers must ensure that they seek permissions from participants to include photographic material.

One of the Reading focus groups consisted of mainly Muslim female students from the same college program as they felt more comfortable talking in a single gender group (Hyams 2004). These structures ensured that women were comfortable among their peer groups in terms of their levels of experience and would feel able to contribute freely to the discussions. The author has convened mixed gender groups of teenagers only to find that some male members of the group intimidated female participants, but this depends on the context of the research and issues to be explored. Diversity might encourage spirited debate, but it can also lead to conflict and contradiction. Conducting a focus group with participants from rival schools or neighborhood groups, for example, will probably fail to produce any meaningful discussion and may even result in confrontational behavior. Such methodological considerations are paramount to the success of focus group research and other collective methods.

In participatory research, where there is usually a community focus, participants are often recruited from local networks, clubs, sports groups, or existing social groups. In the wider Reading Project, local residents were employed as co-researchers and trained to undertake the research themselves, but this is not always possible. Another effective strategy can be recruitment through an intermediary, such as a community leader or teacher, but the researcher must ensure that research ethics and positionalities are subject to critical reflection. In South Reading, many team meetings have been spent discussing the ethical issues of using local facilitators (see Mistry et al. 2015), the researcher's positionalities, and how their situated identities shifted during the course of the project. Focus groups can be time-consuming to organize, and there will always be occasions where participants will not show up. Consideration must also be given to where and when the groups will be held. Familiar, but neutral, quiet meeting places such as sports centers are usually a good place to convene groups. In the Reading project on community participation, some focus groups were held in local schools with teachers present, and it was interesting to note that students appeared to be quieter and more constrained under the watch of their teachers than in the community settings. Similar consideration should also be given to the timing of the focus group as not to place participants in a time-stressed situation.

The use of incentives in research has been subject to debate, but it is increasingly recognized that researchers have good ethical practice to value their participants' inclusion in a research project by offering an incentive or gift of some kind, particularly in lower-income communities in which people's time is limited by income-earning activities. In the UK, it is common for respondents to be given book tokens or vouchers as a token of appreciation. In a development context, views on the appropriateness of incentives are varied; while some view this as an ethical responsibility to thank people for their time and contribution to the research (Evans forthcoming), some researchers and NGO staff are apprehensive about this, particularly when recruiting only a small number of participants and where resources are limited. Who do you leave out? This is a matter for personal consideration in the field, and experiences will be different depending on the research context. In the

Reading project, young people were given a voucher to use in a local shopping center as a way of thanking them for facilitating and participating in the project.

4.2 Facilitating Focus Groups

In the early phase of the Reading study, focus groups were used to inform and include communities in designing the research questions and training participants in research techniques, such as focus group facilitation and digital skills. Group discussions centered on key topics around education, social isolation, and mobility and generated contextual data such as stories, rumors, or historical references, all of which were valuable to the research. From the outset, the project was two-way: sharing and disseminating knowledge and experiences with events held at both the college and university, as well as in the local community. “Go-alongs” around the community and university campus were a good way to get to know each other but became clear from the outset that young people felt more comfortable and engaged with the students than the university staff and other adults. Group discussions moderated by 19-year-old undergraduates were more successful in encouraging younger participants to talk about their feelings and reflect on their experiences even though they came from different ethnic and social backgrounds. Furthermore, group research is also influenced by individual social and emotional qualities, “personalities rather than positionalities” (Moser 2008, p. 383) of the researcher as well as other social signifiers such as gender and generation. These factors can significantly alter the way in which research participants engage with a researcher. In reality, not all researchers will produce the same findings as their unique individual biographies affect their “way of seeing” and understanding of the world. Definitions of personality vary and generally stem from psychology, focusing on particular aspects such as being enduring, distinctive in terms of patterns of behavior, thoughts, and emotions, and characterizing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that distinguish one person from another. In short, they affect how people respond across different situations (Moser 2008; McAdams and Pals 2006) as social identities that are highly dependent on context.

It is standard practice for researchers to devise a discussion guide for moderating the group. This can be as structured or informal as desired, but it is always a good idea to think about key questions, activities, and issues to be raised in the discussion. In the Reading project, student interns and sixth formers coproduced the discussion guides, taking it in turns to facilitate groups and jointly exploring their knowledge of, and attitudes to, mobility and use of neighborhood space, opportunities, and barriers that shaped their everyday feeling of belonging and views on where improvements might be targeted. In some instances, stimulus material such as display boards, vignettes, images, video, or music can be used to provoke discussion. As discussed earlier, focus groups can also provide a good environment for more innovative participatory techniques during the session, and it is often a useful idea to encourage

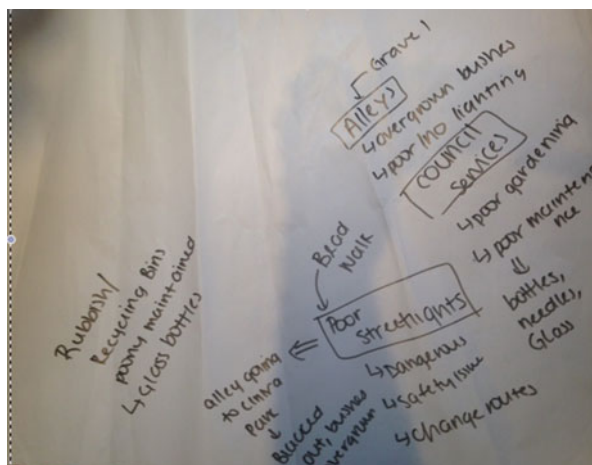
participants to put their ideas on paper, draw images or maps, devise flow charts, respond to images, take their own photographs with disposable cameras, or use ranking exercises (Farmer and Cepin, ► Chap. 15, “Creative Visual Methods in Research with Children and Young People,” this volume). Visual exercises and games provide a focus for talking about issues, and they also play a useful role in encouraging quieter members of the group to take part in the research, as highlighted in Plates 3 and 4 where young parents mapped their everyday mobility experiences.

There are no set procedures for moderating focus groups with young participants, but there are a few basic principles that will help facilitate a successful group discussion and enable the group to gain agency over the process. As part of the

Plate 3 Young parents’ maps of their everyday journeys
(Source: Lloyd-Evans et al. (2015))



Plate 4 “Going to the park”: Observations following a “go-along” (Source: Author 2015)



research training, participants discussed different ways of doing focus groups and Box 3 provides a basic set of guidelines used in the Reading project for the planning and moderation of focus groups. It is often helpful to remind participants that they should feel free to be able to debate, disagree, and critique and that there is no right or wrong way of thinking. Participants should be asked to introduce themselves to the group. It is usual for the introductory discussion to evolve around a familiar background issue in order to make the group feel at ease and start with “how” questions that allow all members to make a contribution before moving onto more sensitive or difficult “why” questions when more confident and empowered. Ethical considerations in focus groups are similar to those presented in other research methods, such as the in-depth interview. Groups are perceived to be a conducive environment in which to discuss a sensitive issue, such as violence, on the premise that people feel more relaxed and communicative among friends. The ethical issue here is not whether the group encourages frank discussion but whether such a discussion in an open forum is in the interests of the participants or whether individuals feel intimidated or uncomfortable with the topic. In her interesting discussion on the “politics of voice,” Hyams (2004) encourages facilitators to give as much attention to “listening” to the silences, awkward gaps, and hesitant moments, than the dialogue. A good moderator is one who facilitates discussion among the respondents but who does not dominate or lead the group, although this can be difficult if participants are reluctant to talk as highlighted in Box 4.

Box 3: A Quick Guide to Focus Groups (Adapted from Laws et al. 2003; Lloyd-Evans 2008)

Location – find a suitable safe neutral space that young people will feel safe and comfortable with.

Difference and Diversity – social composition is of paramount importance; think about whether it is appropriate to use existing groups who know each other or strangers, single or mixed gender and ethnic groups, and participants of similar age/generation or life stage.

Quantity of Groups – a single focus group will rarely be sufficient to provide a valid representation of people’s points of views, somewhere between four and eight groups is often appropriate.

Ethics and Consent – similar to other methods of researching with young people but remind participants about their obligations regarding confidentiality of the stories raised; it’s useful to talk about this at the start.

Researcher’s Approach – make people feel at ease with an informal and pleasant approach (this is not a test); coproduce the discussion schedule and take it in turns to facilitate different activities.

Focus Group Schedule – plan how you will structure the group, what questions will you ask, and what activities or games can you include; do not

(continued)

Box 3: (continued)

forget to plan any resources; mobile methods such as go-alongs may be more appropriate and engaging.

Participants – encourage everyone to participate and give them equal chances to speak; pay attention to group dynamics, body language, and silences as well as the conversation.

Peer pressure – try to stop dominant members of the groups from pressurizing others to agree with their viewpoint and encourage the quieter voices; games and exercises are useful ways of engaging.

Data – remember that data comes in many forms and can include visual and digital forms; the data collected relates to the group and not individuals (do not attempt to start pulling out individual stories as you may get it wrong).

Analysis – transcription of focus groups discussions is time-consuming and data produced from go-alongs can be hard to record and “messy” (keeping a reflective field diary, videos, podcasts, and other visuals methods are useful). Coproduction involves reflecting and analyzing the data with the participants.

Dissemination – an end of project group is a good way to discuss findings and ways of presenting the research to the wider community; continue to engage young people in any further projects or social action that results from the project.

Box 4: Extract from Field Notes from a Focus Group with Teenagers About Attitudes to Community Volunteering in South Reading (Avis 2016)

“Some respondents did not give sufficient responses, prompting me to facilitate and lead the discussion, often suggesting something in order to set up a response or dialogue. I had to take care when doing this so as not to upset or unfairly influence the answers given. The final limitation evident was the large amount of dialogue produced and the technical limitations that came with using a Dictaphone. This was particularly prominent in the focus groups, with the larger amount of participants (3–7) interacting, sometimes all at once, at varying times and with different volumes, often making it hard to decipher and making transcribing an even more time consuming process. This all had an impact on the analyses of my data.”

The moderator should also keep an eye on the group, try to involve members, and make sure that any “group consensus” is valid for all participants. Involving the participants in the data analysis and dissemination is also essential in participatory approaches (Evans [forthcoming](#)). In comparison to other methods, focus groups can be particularly difficult to analyze, and they present challenges in terms of the management, organization, and analysis of data. Analysis of data should draw on established qualitative methods, but researchers must be aware that focus

group data are unique because the group, and not the individual, is the unit of analysis (see Laws et al. 2003; Conradson 2005 for good discussions of analyzing qualitative field data).

5 Conclusion

Recently, there has been growing interest in participatory research and coproduction among geographers (Pain et al. 2011; Pain and Raynor 2016). Yet, despite the excellent contributions made by children's geographies there remains a greater need for policy approaches that motivate and empower young people to actively participate in community decision-making and social change. This chapter has drawn on a community-led PAR to show how focus groups and other collective methods can actively engage young people in the everyday matters that affect them. It has suggested that they are also useful in demonstrating that there is rarely such a thing as a single "community viewpoint" which can be universally applied in public social policy. Focus groups can be particularly powerful in engendering transformation if they are embedded within in-depth ethnographic and participatory fieldwork as they can provide important spaces for enabling young people to be listened to. However, as the students and community researchers in the South Reading project have learned together, focus groups can be challenging and difficult to design, facilitate, and analyze. Ultimately, one of the greatest challenges for the focus group researcher is to find ways of incorporating focus group methods into truly participatory research and development.

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Children's Drawings in Ethnographic Explorations: Analysis and Interpretations

18

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Abstract

Children are the best informants on their own lives, and their abilities to interpret, express, and communicate their lived experiences should not be underestimated. This chapter reflects upon experiences with the method of using children's drawing in ethnographic explorations. Ethnographic fieldwork has been acknowledged as particularly suitable in research with children as it allows the researcher to learn about children's symbolic and social worlds from the children themselves. This chapter concerns research with bereaved children and shows how drawings, as part of ethnographic explorations, provided insight

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into children's experiences of loss and bereavement. It discusses drawing as a meaning-making activity that helps children reflect upon and negotiate their memories of the past and those they have lost, their life in the present, and their prospects for the future.

Keywords

Ethnographic methods • Children's drawings • Emotions • Bereavement • Zambia

1 Introduction

Children have been acknowledged as meaning-producing persons whose voices should be listened to and respected (James and Prout 1990; Jenks 1982). This has encouraged social scientists to explore children's lived lives and meaning-making through a plethora of participatory methodologies and innovative techniques, including visual methodologies, such as videos, photos and photo novellas, and drawings made by the children themselves (Punch 2002; Fragas-Mallet et al. 2010). Drawing is used to establish rapport and gain trust with child informants, to elicit replies and buffer distress in interviews, to aid the children narrating own experiences, and to explore the socio-spatial environment from the children's point of view. It is argued that drawing may provide children with a higher degree of control of their own expressions and may therefore be more effective in bringing out the complexities of their experiences.

The use of children's drawings in empirical research poses, however, a number of methodological and theoretical challenges. Children's practices of drawing vary with culture, class, education, and individual skills, and the method may become a rather unfamiliar and uncomfortable experience for children lacking the necessary resources and competence (Serpell 1979; Mohan 1999). That the method fosters a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere, establishes trust, good rapport, and mitigates distress cannot be assumed *a priori*; it would depend on the individual research situation. Therefore, the method requires that the researchers are sensitive toward the cultural and social contexts of children's practices of drawing (Ansell et al. 2012). Also, to engage children in conversations about their drawings in order to elicit meaning from their point of view is easier said than done. Children's drawings may concern emotions difficult to express verbally, or concern issues that they are restrained culturally and normatively to talk about. Verbalization may also be impossible because the drawings represent ideas, categories, and notions taken for granted, naturalized, or implicit. After all, most knowledge is "nonlinguistic, tacit and generated in practice" (Mohan 1999, p. 45). The fact that participatory research with children relies heavily on linguistic knowledge is one of the method's major challenges.

This chapter outlines core theoretical and methodological themes of using drawing in social research with children and provides a case from ethnographic fieldwork that raised some of the major challenges. The case concerns childhood

bereavement – based on research with children who have been orphaned by AIDS or lost a sibling – in a poor township in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. Cultural norms and values restrain the children from expressing verbally their grief, and the method of drawing was employed to establish rapport and explore children's experiences and memories of those they have lost. Through the children's drawings, the researchers discovered that flowers were significant markers of social-spatial differences between the poor township and adjacent affluent residential areas. In their drawings, the children situated and negotiated their memoirs of the past, their perception of their present living conditions, and their prospects for a better future through images of flowers and the socio-spatial distinctions between the rich and the poor areas.

The chapter suggests that drawing should be one of several methodological approaches to the meanings children make of death, grief, and bereavement. However, this requires intimate knowledge of the sociocultural context in which the children make sense of their experiences. Long-term ethnographic field research – participant observation of everyday life, command of local languages, and sensitivity toward cultural expressions and morals – is necessary to understand the contexts children use to interpret, reflect upon, and negotiate their memories and emotions.

2 Children's Drawings and Meaning-Making

In psychology, children's drawings have for a long time been acknowledged as important empirical data, particularly in relation to research on children's cognitive development. Central to this theory has been the Draw-a-Person test, in which the child's drawing is considered to reflect cognitive, developmental, and emotional functioning. In the past decades, this theory has been questioned both from within and outside the field of psychology. The universality of the theory has been challenged by researchers arguing that it represent "Western" perceptions and presumptions (Court 1989; Cox 1998; Cox et al. 1999). In a given culture, there are genres of children's drawings; children may copy each other's styles of drawings and motifs, and in some cultures, for instance, it is more common to draw animals than human beings. Moreover, a child may convey a particular meaning with portraying a person, different from what the adult researcher would expect. It has been noticed that a focus on "realism," in the sense of a child's ability to make a realistic representation of an object may overshadow abstract and symbolic meanings and artistry (Golomb 1999; Matthews 2003; Cox 2005).

There are perspectives, however, particularly in the field of education, which acknowledge the more abstract and symbolic nature of children's drawings. Drawing may help children to "bring shape and order to their experience" (Cox 2005, p. 115) and to reflect upon and play with complex notions and ideas, such as those of time, spaces, and relations (Brooks 2009). Drawing is here seen as a meaning-making activity in which reality is construed and defined. Children's drawings should thus be evaluated and analyzed on their own terms (Costall 1995, p. 24) and not only be seen as indexing or reflecting objective realities.

If social research wants to take children's meaning-making seriously and avoid imposing adult interpretations of their drawings, researchers have to listen to the children's own interpretations. Researchers therefore often interpret the children's drawings through conversations with the children themselves (Mitchell 2006; Boyden and Ennew 1997; Cox 2005; Ennew 2003). This approach was originally developed within the new social studies of childhood, in which the social agencies of children are acknowledged, and children are recognized and valued as capable and competent research participants (James and Prout 1997). It is now broadly agreed that researchers would learn most if the children are allowed "to play an active role in the research process, shaping the agenda, speaking out about matters that concern them, and themselves reflecting upon our methodology" (Thomas and O'Kane 1998, p. 346).

There are, however, a number of challenges related to "listening to children" and "giving children a voice" when interpreting their drawings. Besides the fact that knowledge is tacit and emotions may be difficult to articulate in words, there may be language barriers and asymmetric power relations between the adult researcher and children. Participatory methods do not necessarily transcend asymmetric power relations, class, and cultural differences between children and adults. Many children may not be used to being treated as equals but assume adults to hold a position of power (Punch 2002; Robson and Fumoto 2009). This may be a greater challenge in hierarchal societies in which orders of seniority and according elders' respect and obedience are significant cultural values. For children, saying "no" to a researcher's request to do a drawing can therefore turn out for them to be almost impossible.

3 Emotions Expressed in Drawings

Psychology was the first field to recognize drawings as an important way in which children can express their emotions and provide researchers with insights into the children's "inner world." Children's drawings have become an important tool for therapists and counselors aiding the children to discuss topics that are difficult, or impossible, for them to verbalize. Theories about how children's emotional lives may be interpreted on the basis of their drawings often revolve around elements of sizing, placing, inclusion, and omission (Malchiodi 1998; Thomas and Jolley 1998). Children may be seen as exaggerating the size of that which is important and desirable to them and leaving out less desirable images. If portraying themselves with others, they may place themselves closer to people who are important to them. In some contexts, these important aspects hold to be true. For example, in a study of Bosnian refugee children, Wilson (1995) discovered that the children would refuse to include the soldiers in their drawings or draw them very small. What they enthusiastically drew, however, were idealized pictures of the homes they used to live. However, the assertion that children's emotional lives may be interpreted on the basis of sizing, placing, inclusion, and omission has been criticized for not taking into consideration the multiple dimensions of children's

practices of drawing (Dennis 1966; Steward et al. 1982; Malchiodi 1998; Thomas and Jolley 1998). There are potentially numerous ways to interpret the drawings, and there is no common census on how to interpret them. For instance, children may draw persons who they fear as small, but they might just as well draw them as large and scary.

Psychological theories about emotional expressions in children's drawings are largely based on Freud's original argument that difficult memories, which have been forgotten or repressed, are likely to find its expressions in artwork. A lack of public forums, which allow children to express their emotions, can have harmful implications, intensifying feelings of depression, anxiety, guilt, anger, or powerlessness (Bowlby 1973; Boyd-Franklin et al. 1995; Doka 1989; Freud 2001 [1917]; Geis et al. 1986; Lindemann 1944). Anthropologists have questioned, however, the focus on the inner self of individual persons as a locus of emotions, disentangled from cultural categories, social identities, and moral values (e.g., Briggs 1970; Levy 1973; Shweder and LeVine 1984; Lutz and White 1986; Abu-Lughod 1986; Middleton 1989; Rosaldo 2004).

Ethnographic inquiries from various cultures show that people conceptualize and value emotions differently, and that there is great variation in the morality of expressing these. In many societies, troubling emotional experiences are regarded as being better controlled if silenced. In Tahiti, negative emotions, such as grief, should be controlled, and inappropriate emotional displays are met with shame and embarrassment (Levy 1973). The Toraja of Indonesia downplays distressing aspects of events and situations "to avoid both the inner experience and outward expression of intense emotion" (Wellenkamp 1988, p. 491). While they express grief openly in funerals, they expect the feelings of grief to subside shortly after. Incessant grief, expressed in everyday contexts, may cause illness and insanity, even death. They encourage fellow community members who become preoccupied with grief to avoid memorizing the deceased.

Forms of silencing troubling emotions have also been reported from African societies. In a study of war refugees in Sierra Leone, Michael Jackson (2004) was struck by the way people accepted and endured adversity. The refugees emphasized that the past is better left in the past. They should not dwell on their suffering by talking about it with others, but rather endure their suffering through silence. As a local saying went, "Speech burns the mouth; silence heals it" (2004, p. 56). Jackson concludes his study by encouraging researchers to,

Learn to value silence, seeing it not as a sign of indifference or resignation, but of respect. This is not shocked silence—as when one is struck dumb by events that beggar belief, or cannot be narrated—but silence as a deliberate choice. For there are certain events and experiences of which we choose not to speak [. . .]. Such silence may be, as in Africa, a way of healing and reconciliation, and not a way of evading or repressing an issue. (2004, p. 56)

Norms and values of silencing troubling emotions, or, conversely, of articulating them verbally, are imposed socially and culturally. Realizing that people's responses to death and bereavement are culturally constructed should prevent us

from making assessments based on preconceived ideas of how bereavement best should be related to, recounted, and dealt with (Basso 1970; Saville-Troike 1985; 2003).

These studies have methodological implications for the study of how children express emotions through drawing. Children tend to draw things that are socially and culturally accepted, and in a context where bereavement is silenced, one may assume that children's drawings will reflect these norms and values. The researcher must therefore be sensitive to wider social and cultural dimensions in their interpretations of emotions in children's drawings. In addition, these studies also point toward ethical dilemmas of what the researcher can ask the children to draw and talk about in cultures that consider grief and bereavement better handled with silence. Drawing is not necessarily a more "child-friendly" method than talking as drawing may spur vivid memories, thoughts, and desires that can be difficult to handle for the children themselves, the researcher, and other adults.

4 Background to the Study

This chapter is based on 22 months of fieldwork for a doctoral project conducted by the first author and supervised by the second author who have extensive field experience in Zambia. The authors also conducted some of the field research together. The research was part of a tripartite collaborative research project between the University of Zambia, Dilla University, and Norwegian University of Science and Technology entitled "Children, Young People and Local Knowledge in Ethiopia and Zambia" and sponsored by the Norwegian Program for Development, Research and Education (NUFU). Most of the fieldwork was carried out in a poor township in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. Comparative research was carried out in rural areas, in Mbala District in Northern Province, and Luangwa District, Eastern Province. The field researcher followed up 16 orphaned children in the township on a day-to-day basis, whereas an additional 30 orphaned children were followed up on a more sporadic basis. They were aged between 6 and 16, and two thirds were girls. Most of them belonged to ethnolinguistic groups from Eastern Province, in particular Chewa and Tumbuka. At the beginning of fieldwork, the researcher got to know some of the children through a community school for children orphaned by AIDS, and the headmaster became an important gatekeeper. At a later stage in the fieldwork, most of the children were not selected by the researcher: they asked to take part, offering their friendship and sharing their knowledge. To protect the confidentiality of the children, pseudonyms have been used throughout this chapter.

"Children orphaned by AIDS" refers to those who have lost one or both parents. As is common in sub-Saharan Africa (cf. Chirwa 2002; Meintjes et al. 2010), they were cared for by the extended family. State politics and popular opinion in Zambia assert that the extended family is the best solution to the problem of orphan care,

and Zambians do not put such a strong emphasis on biological parenthood in the upbringing of children in the way that Europeans and North Americans often do. There are no words in the local languages that fully reflect the meaning of the English word "orphan." In Nyanja, the *lingua franca* of Lusaka, words used to denote "orphans," such as *masiye* and *mlanda*, translates as "left behind," "abandoned," "to be lost," "to be astray," and "to be alone." These words connote economic and social marginalization and are used for any person who has few relatives or lacks a social support network.

Engaging the township children in conversations of their loss was challenging. Many adults and caretakers emphasized that they tried to avoid reminding the orphaned children about their loss, and both adults and children were hushed from talking about the past and bereavement. In their opinion, this would cause unnecessary stress; the children would feel better if they focused on their surviving family to which they belonged.

The children differed in their opinions with respect to conversations about the past and their deceased parents. Many would not discuss such matters at all because it provoked difficult memories, while others really wanted to do so. Foreseeing difficulties in establishing relations of trust with the children, and expecting that they would have difficulties in articulating verbally experiences of bereavement, the field researcher initially focused on, and participated in, the children's affective and expressive cultural practices, such as songs, riddles, dances, play, and games. Drawing was selected as part of this approach. Paper and color pencils were always kept at hand while interacting with the children. Frequently, the children would gather, on their own initiative, in groups to make drawings. During these sessions, they sketched whatever they fancied, or the children would come up with a topic themselves for the whole group to draw. The researcher occasionally organized drawing sessions in smaller groups and with specific topics. Examples of such assignments would be to draw their family before their parents died, and the family with whom they stayed at present, or draw the house in which they lived with their parents and the house in which they lived now. Children were also encouraged to make drawings during or after individual conversations and interviews. When the children drew, the researcher would also make drawings. This was partly to avoid the division "children draw while adults do not draw," a division that may reinforce the power relations between the adult researcher and the children (Mohan 1999; Punch 2002). The researcher would often use her drawings to encourage conversations and sharing experiences.

During fieldwork, only one girl did not want to draw, explaining that she would prefer to talk. She was 16 years old and had spent limited time at school because she had to take care of her grandmother and younger siblings. The girl openly shared her experiences and reflections and stood out as an important reminder that drawing is not necessarily suitable for all children. On a general basis, however, letting the children draw during interaction and conversations contributed to create a friendly and less restrained interaction, and, at the end of a session, they would often ask when they could meet again to draw.

5 A World Full of Flowers

Images of flowers figured in most of the children's drawings. When they drew whatever they desired, many just drew flowers, and when given particular assignments, flowers were a conspicuous part of the motifs. Some covered the whole paper with flowers (Fig. 2. is one such example). Some of the girls also made flowers out of the papers. They colored a sheet, tore it in strips and coiled them into stalks, petals, and buds. Others drew people and houses surrounded by flowers, while some depicted their late mother or father surrounded by flowers. Many pictured their late parents in a lush garden or in a house decorated with flowers. Out of the 178 children's drawings collected in the township, 113 contained flowers either as a single motif or as part of other motifs. Of the 65 drawings without flowers, 18 depicted trees. In total, 74% of the drawings depicted plants; 62% were made by girls, 38% by boys. Many of the drawings that did not include flowers or plants pictured football matches, sketched by boys. In comparison, only 5% of 132 children's drawings collected in rural areas contained flowers.

Figure 1 was sketched by Given, a 12-year-old girl, drawing an image of her own choice. In the drawing, she fuses an image of a human being and the image of leaves and flowers. Sarah, a 10-year-old girl, drew Fig. 2 during an interview in which she narrated how her life used to be when her parents were alive.

The children in the township did not articulate verbally, however, the motifs of the flowers beyond the statement that "flowers are nice." Nevertheless, it was

Fig. 1 A drawing by a 12-year-old girl, made by her own choice, in which she fuses an image of a human being with images of flowers



Fig. 2 A drawing made by a 10-year-old girl during a conversation on how her life used to be before she lost her parents



puzzling to the researchers as to why they focused so much on flowers. The answer to this question is complex. Flowers are easy to draw, beautiful, and colorful. Children's drawings are also influenced by what other children and adults say and do. When several children are drawing together, they co-construct the contents and meanings of the drawings. Children may choose to make drawings within the same genres, with similar content, style, and composition, and copy their friends' drawings. In a study of Bolivian children's everyday lives at home, Punch (2002) noticed that children tended to draw rather stylized images of objects such as flowers and trees. Drawing on Hart (1997), she interpreted these to be "... stereotyped images that relate to what they have learned to draw, which in turn is often an expression of a limited range of objects emphasized by the particular culture" (Hart 1997: 162, quoted in Punch p. 14).

However, copying and reproduction explain only partially why children in the township drew flowers. The researchers decided to pursue flowers in the study of the community and the children's everyday practices and experiences, scrutinizing their use and signification in different contexts. Using flowers, so to speak, as a leitmotif in the observations in the township opened up a completely different and, to the researchers, novel perspective on the community and its history and on the signification of vegetation as socio-spatial boundary markers. For the children, the flowers gave form and order to complex and abstract ideas about their lives and to their memories of the past, experiences of the present, and hopes for the future. The flowers had become to them a material metaphor, "good to think with" (Lévi-Strauss 1962).

Lusaka is an increasingly stratified society, with a complex socio-spatial structure between rich and poor residential areas and business/industrial areas. The affluent residential areas are often located side by side with poorer townships, and the township in question shares borders with three such affluent areas. For people in the poor township, the affluent areas constituted a labor market, where they work as servants, security guards, and gardeners. The contrasts between the crowded and noisy poor township and the spacious and quiet rich areas are striking. With their wide avenues and huge, well-kept gardens, the affluent townships are lush green with rich and varied vegetation, including exotic flowers and imported trees. At times, children from the poor township stroll the avenues of the affluent areas to discover these. The rich fence their houses with tall security walls, and their gardeners keep a relative wide lawn between the street and the fence tidy and on which they plant decorative trees and beds of flowers. To the children, the well-kept lawns outside the fences are indexical (Peirce 1955) of beautiful, lush gardens behind the walls. People in the poor township also keep flowers outside their houses, and these flowers were admired and commented on by both children and adults. The flowers, particularly if they are comparable to the beautiful flowers of the affluent areas, indicate that the owner of the house works as a servant or gardener in the rich areas. Flowers had become a symbol of employment or industriousness and signified, if not riches, at least a stable economic income and that things are kept in order. Listening to the orphan's comments made us realize that beautiful flowers by the entrance indicate to them a loving and caring woman who keeps her house well. The flowers epitomize stable living conditions imperative to the emotional well-being of bereaved orphaned children whose life situation is often characterized by uncertainty.

6 Memories of the Past and Desires for the Future: Flowers, Orphaned Children, and Bereavement

Mwapen was one of the children who liked talking about his late mother. Mwapen's mother was sick for a very long time before passing away, and Mwapen witnessed her becoming increasingly weak. When talking about his mother's illness, he once asked if he could make a drawing. Deeply focused, Mwapen drew his mother walking among huge flowers (Fig. 3).

Mwapen did not depict her as ill. He placed her in a lush, tranquil environment, and her body and face did not look gaunt. Rather than focusing on how she slowly withered away, he created a joyful and pleasant image of his mother.

Memories are not a part of the mind only, but embedded in the temporal and spatial dimensions of our social and material environment. Remembering and recollections of the past are interpretative practices shaped by our experiences of the present (Connerton 1989; Halbwachs 1992; Nora 1996), and places, events, and material objects function as mnemonic devices; they trigger recollections and help us structure our experiences of the past. Evidence of the significance of flowers to children in the township, in this regard, is that children

Fig. 3 Mwapen's portrait of his late mother, seen to the far left



not only draw flowers, but flowers figure prominently in their plays, songs, and oral narratives.

The last memory another boy, Harry, a 9-year-old single orphan, had of his mother was of the flowers on her grave. In response to a question about what he remembered about the funeral of his mother, he answered, "Not much! I was so sad, crying all the time. The worst was when I saw my mother in the coffin and when I placed flowers on the grave." Harry was not reluctant to speak about the funeral. The interview took place in his father's house with his father and grandfather present. They did not hush him when he spoke about his late mother and had allowed Harry and his brother to participate in the funeral. Not all children participate in the funeral of their parents, as their relatives try to spare them from grief and troubling emotions. Together with his father, Harry continued narrating the events of the funeral, chronologically, until they and the mourners had "left the grave," as Harry said, "covered with flowers." In his narrative of the funeral, Harry focused mainly on the flowers; the flowers that surrounded the coffin in the church, recollecting that he had put a flower on the grave, and that he left his mother's grave covered with flowers.

A decade ago, people in Lusaka began changing their burial practices, in which flowers came to take on a greater role. Formerly, it was common to leave on top of the grave a few objects the deceased was very fond of, or used daily, such as cups and plates. However, robbers began looting these objects and to avoid looting, many began leaving broken objects instead. Some also began placing flowers, in particular roses, on the graves. This soon became commonplace and took a distinct ritual form. After the grave is closed, each member of the immediate family kneels down and pegs a stalk of roses into the burial mound, an act followed in distinct order by the deceased's relatives, in-laws, work mates, neighbors, and other friends. The mourners line up according to these categories, and the practice is a ritual manifestation of the social network of the deceased, making a last goodbye (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4 Mourners place roses on the burial mound (Photo: Sesilie Smørholm)

Young Harry and his brother were the first to put roses on their mother's grave, and the grave decorated with flowers is what Harry remembers best. By focusing on flowers, Harry seems to have chosen the image he wants to maintain of his mother; through flowers, he interpreted and negotiated his memories of her.

The drawings children make may also reflect their conception of the afterlife. Like most of the other children and their caretakers in this study, both Mwapen's and Harry's families belonged to a Roman Catholic Church located in one of the adjacent affluent areas. During Sunday services and funerals, the church is decorated with tall bouquets by the entrance and around the altar. The statues of Virgin Mary and Jesus are also decorated with white lilies and red roses. Flowers are also associated with paradise. In The Old Testament, paradise is described as a garden; the Garden of Eden. In the township, children's songs also describe paradise as a place full of flowers. A line from a popular funeral song performed by the children goes, "It's a world full of flowers were my mother has gone, it's a world full of laughter." In a roundel dance popular among the children, they sing: "Let's follow the bright land of flowers. There is a bird in my mum's field." In many of the stories and songs, birds are usually associated with the spirits of the dead. Moreover, flowers played a prominent role in children's drawings of how they imagined paradise to look like (cf. Fig. 5 below), and one child drew her late mother as a person made up of elements from flowers, Fig. 1 (notice the cross in the left, lower corner). This suggests that flowers not only demarcate borders between the rich and the poor but also between the world of the living and the world of the dead. A world

Fig. 5 Drawing of paradise, made by a 13-year-old girl during a session in which the children drew whatever they fancied



of flowers is where those they have lost have gone, manifest in the church, the songs, the burial mound, and their drawings.

The children used images of flowers not only to structure their memories of the past but also to reflect upon their present situation. A number of orphaned children were asked to picture how their life used to be and how it was today. Houses and domestic spaces are particular condensed material spaces for remembrance (Bahloul 1996), and the children were asked to picture the house of their parents and the house and family with whom they lived at present. They were also asked to picture the house in which they thought they would stay when they had grown up. The basic socio-spatial differences between the affluent and poor residential

areas were characteristic of the drawings, and the children positioned themselves differently within these spaces with respect to their past, present, and future.

Abel, a 13-year-old boy, had lost his father when he was 8. His mother had not remarried and looked after her children by her own means. Recollecting the past, Abel narrated, "Life was good when my father was still alive; we ate well and never had to worry about school fees." After his father had passed away, Abel had dropped out of school for periods of time because his mother could not manage to pay the school fees. At times, he also complained about being hungry. When asked to make a drawing of his late father, he sketched, with great enthusiasm, his father outside an affluent house watering huge flowers. He had also pictured himself seated by a table eating the staple meal of maize, *nsima*, and meat. He also drew a pot of *nsima* on the brazier in an indoor kitchen, a TV, and a nice cupboard (Fig. 6).

"So your father used to water the flowers outside the house?," the field researcher asked. Abel looked surprised, burst into laughter, and answered, "No, not really!" In fact, some of the orphaned children in the poor township had lived with their parents in the servant quarters in the affluent residential areas and had moved to live with relatives in the poor township following orphanhood. In such cases, the



Fig. 6 Abel's portrait of his father, seen in the *bottom far right*, with the sprinkler watering the flowers

images of affluent houses with lush gardens were an accurate representation of their previous living space. However, many, like Abel, had never lived in the affluent areas, and his drawings are just one of many in which the orphaned children located their past life with their parents within the affluent areas. Comparably, when they pictured their life at present, they typically drew the poorer houses in the township and often without images of flowers. Moreover, when they pictured their future life, they sketched pictures of houses in affluent areas.

By situating their past, present, and future within these different socioeconomic and spiritual spaces, they comment on, negotiate, and interpret the memories of those they have lost, worsened living conditions, and their goals and desires for the future, a future in which they attend school, dress nicely, and go to bed without being hungry. As such, they echo the new generations growing up in Lusaka, who use the contrasts between the rich and poor residential areas to narrate and reflect upon social mobility and aspirations for the future (Hansen 2005).

The final case below shows another situation and a set of norms and values that impede a child's ability to articulate in words his/her views and emotions. It concerns a girl who blamed the death of her siblings on the marital differences between her parents.

7 Narrating and Interpreting Conflicts and Grief Through Multiple Drawings

In 2010, when Lucy was 12, she sadly lost her twin brothers, Ignatius and James, who were only 10 months old. Lucy had always shown great affection for them and used to care for them. One night, Ignatius fell ill and the parents took him to the hospital. Sadly, he passed away a few days later. As is the custom when the first of a twin dies, only a few elder women buried him in a private funeral because they fear that the second twin also would die since he had lost his other half. The parents thought it important to protect James from mourners and expressions of bereavement. They feared that if he saw his caretakers cry a lot, he would become dispirited and "follow his late brother in the grave." To keep James from mourners, Lucy looked after him at a neighbor's house and brought him home to the mother only for breastfeeding. "I also cried a lot," Lucy explained, "but I would make sure that James did not see me crying." Still, she felt that James cried more than usual. She denied the field researcher's suggestion that it was because James missed his mother, and said, "He just missed his brother, and he knew that something was not right." James became so accustomed to Lucy's care that he cried when she tried to pass him to their mother. Wistfully, the mother related that James did not want to be breastfed anymore; he did not even want her to hold or carry him. He just wanted to be with Lucy. Like Lucy, she said, "He knows that something is wrong," and continued in a low voice, "he was used to eating together with his brother, now he is afraid of me."

Sadly, 2 weeks later, James also fell ill and died. Contrary to his twin brother, he was buried in a public ceremony. Since both twins had suffered from diarrhea and

had been vomiting, an elderly church member explained to the mourners at the gravesite that both of them had died from dehydration. A couple of days after the burial, Lucy moved to live with her aunt, dropped out of school, and began assisting her aunt at the market. The mother begged Lucy to return home so that she could resume school and help with the domestic chores, but Lucy refused. As a response to questions as to why Lucy would not return home, her mother became pensive: "You know, both her brothers passed away. I think she is angry with us," she said. She was reluctant to elaborate on the reasons for Lucy's anger, however, just as she had been when discussing why James had become afraid of her.

After staying with her aunt for 2 months, Lucy finally returned home. The field researcher met Lucy a few days after her homecoming and discussed the events of the past few months. Lucy had vivid but painful memories of her late twin brothers. Nevertheless, like her mother, she never spoke about James's fear of the mother or about her own anger toward her parents. When asked, she replied, with downcast eyes, lowering her voice, "I wanted to get away from home, and I enjoyed being at my aunt's place." Due to the sensitivity of the issue, the researchers found it unethical to make further inquiries. However, the researchers came to learn much more through the drawings Lucy did. Lucy was very fond of sketching, and after their first meeting following her return, the researcher left her with a few sheets of papers and pencils and encouraged her to draw whatever she remembered about her brothers, their illness, and the funerals.

Lucy shone with happiness and assured that, "I will finish quickly, so you do not have to wait for many days to come and look at them!" A few days later, she had completed so many drawings that she had run out of paper. Her father had given her some ruled sheets of a notebook to use, and when the field researcher came to visit and view the drawings, the mother proudly commended Lucy for being so industrious.

Lucy had made several drawings picturing herself carrying and playing with the twins. The purpose was to make them "feel nice" when they were sick, she explained. She had also made drawings of her twin brothers as older children, playing older children's games. She adorned all the pictures of her lost twin brothers – how she used to care for them and how she imagined them if they had survived – with flowers (Fig. 7).

Lucy had also made several drawings of her parents, but they contained no images of flowers. This suggests that flowers figure exclusively as a positive value; children make no flowers when they sketch motifs related to negative or bad experiences.

At first glance, the researchers thought Lucy had pictured her parents at the funeral of James, crying and comforting each other. The posture, in which the father sits in Fig. 11, with his arms crossed over the chest, is a conventional expression of grief people in Lusaka observe at funerals. However, discussing the drawings with Lucy provided a more complex understanding of the situation. Lucy explained that Fig. 8 depicts her mother accusing her father of committing adultery. Figure 9, which was rather incomprehensible without Lucy's explanations, shows her father chasing her mother. "He wanted to beat her because she claimed that he had a

Fig. 7 One of Lucy’s drawings showing how she cared for her twin brothers. The images of flowers are on the *left*



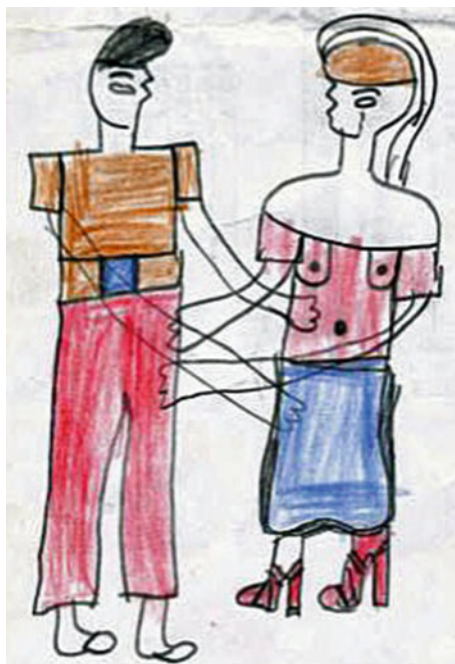
Fig. 8 Lucy’s drawing of her mother, crying and accusing her father of committing adultery



Fig. 9 Lucy's drawing of her father who, upon being accused for having a mistress, started chasing the mother



Fig. 10 Lucy's drawing of her parents fighting



mistress,” Lucy explained. Figure 10 shows the parents fighting over the alleged adultery, and Fig. 11 shows her father pleading for forgiveness for his adultery. Lucy’s interpretation of the drawing (Fig. 11) came as a surprise to us; it was this drawing that initially had provoked the interpretation that the drawings depicted mourning the death of the twins. It was true that the drawing showed her parents at

Fig. 11 Lucy's drawing of her remorseful father pleading her mother for forgiveness



the funeral, but the significance for Lucy was that the father admitted to adultery and pleaded for forgiveness.

By using the different pictures she had drawn to construe a chronological narrative of events, Lucy also began speaking more directly about the sensitive and troubling issues surrounding the death of her twin brothers. It became evident that she blamed the death of the twins on her parents' domestic differences, which motivated her escape to her aunt's house. Asked explicitly about the relationship between the parent's differences and the death of the twins, she looked surprised at the field researcher's ignorance. To her, this was self-evident, and she replied, "Yes, of course! They were just babies." On further inquiries about the details of her parents causing the death, she just replied quickly, "Like I said, they were just small babies," and paid attention to other matters.

It is understandable that Lucy blames her loss on and directs her anger toward her parents. It is possible to interpret her drawings as a critical comment on her parents' domestic differences, communicating her impatience and sadness with their quarrels and that she wants them to stop. Relating the death of the twins to domestic differences and adultery was, however, not Lucy's private opinion. Long before the first twin had fallen ill, her mother had accused her father of adultery. The neighbors knew about these accusations, and as soon as Ignatius fell ill, they began speculating about infidelity as the cause for his illness. Breach of sexual morals as the cause of infant deaths is a commonplace cultural notion in Zambia (Kaspin 1996; Maimbolwa et al. 2003). Besides referring to possible transmission

of HIV, the notion refers to complex ideas about pollution and human reproduction (Liddell et al. 2005). Breach of sexual morals is potentially perilous to innocent third parties such as, in the case of a husband's adultery, his wife and their children.

The children in the township are not ignorant to the notion that a breach of moral behavior and misdeeds may cause infant death. Several folktales exist about such deaths, and, in chilly evenings, the children often sit around the charcoal stove to warm themselves and exchange such tales. The explanations of pollution, however, are beyond what they can know. They learn more about such ideas and observations of interdictions from seniors during rituals at the onset of puberty, at marriage, and at childbirth. Nevertheless, Lucy's insistence on the domestic differences, which had spurred anger and despair in her own life, guided the researchers' explorations in novel directions, making inquiries among adults and elders about the relationship between infidelity and infant death.

8 Conclusion

There are no simple answers to how researchers should engage children in conversations about the images they make. Each field research situation may be unique in this regard, in the sense that the research is situated within particular localized cultural and moral universes. The researcher must not only be conscious about research ethics and the power relations between researcher and child but also sensitive to local moral discourses and ideas of what should or should not be expressed in words in front of the children or by the children. Lucy, who was convinced that her parents' marital differences caused the death of her twin siblings, could not verbally confront or accuse her parents. By moving to an aunt's house, she expressed her anger in actions rather than words. It was not difficult for her to express it in words, as a matter of cognition; her silence was an expression of a moral code of behavior. Normatively, a child should not engage in such topics, especially with their parents. With respect to the young people's bereavement, the norms and values of silencing troubled emotions was common in the township, but not appropriate for every child who grieved, and not all adult caretakers participating in the research followed such norms. An outside researcher cannot always anticipate the specificities of the moral and cultural environment that configures research settings. Through employing visual, participatory methods, the researchers became aware of the cultural complexity of children's bereavement and morality of verbal and nonverbal communication of emotions.

Epistemologically, the images the children made also made the researchers become aware of the complex space-time dimensions of their worldview and cultural imaginations and the contexts in which they interpreted their lives. The motifs of flowers served as a boundary marker not only for socioeconomic spaces but also between the world of the living and the world of the dead. The children used these spaces and boundaries as objects of thought to interpret and negotiate their memories of the past and of those they had lost, their lives in the

present, and their prospects for the future. The children's drawings and meaning-making enabled the researchers to perceive the community in ways that they otherwise would not have been able to imagine. In other words, children are valuable contributors to researchers' explorations, interpretations, and representations of society and culture. Rather than being singled out as a separate field of studies, children and their visual expression should be an integral part of any ethnographic inquiry. Only then can one claim to have perceived and valued children as informants and actors in their own right; only then can one claim to have endeavored to imagine the world from children's point of view.

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Abstract

This chapter outlines how children's geographers have used archival fieldwork and engaged with historical material as a research method. The chapter considers several questions: What is an archive? What are the central ways children's geographers have engaged with archival fieldwork? What are some of the ethical and methodological challenges of archival research? How do wider practices of collection and display represent past childhoods? And what possibilities do digital technologies and social media afford children's geographers seeking to research the "past"? Overall, the chapter uses a number of examples to showcase the potential for diverse archival engagements and encounters that can stimulate current debates in children's geographies.

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1 Introduction

In 2009, a widow from Aberystwyth, mid-Wales opened a secret padlocked chest belonging to her late husband. This chest contained a “treasure trove” of prewar childhood toys, and the story captured the attention of local and national press. Aged 7 years old, Dewi Rowlands had locked his toys away to protect them during the war and continued to keep them secretly hidden away in his garden shed his entire adult life. After his death, his wife Brenda described how “curiosity got the better of her,” and she uncovered a selection of unique toys including a clockwork helicopter, train set, and wooden zoo animals. Brenda also described how she found “a small tin containing marbles, broken toys, nuts, and bolts – just the things which might have been found in the pockets of a small boy during the 1930s” (BBC 2009). This unique collection of original toys was then donated to Ceredigion Museum and are displayed today “for other children to enjoy” (BBC 2009).

This opening example highlights a number of connections between childhood, memory, and the past (Brannen 2004; Horton and Kraftl 2012; Jones 2003; Karsten 2005; Philo 2003) and is a useful starting point for this chapter. Ultimately, the question this chapter poses is: could the contents of this old chest be considered an *archive*? If so, how might children’s geographers engage with such material? To inform this discussion, the chapter outlines how children’s geographers have used archival fieldwork and engaged with historical material as a research method. In doing so, this chapter builds on some of the author’s ideas in an article on “animating” archives (Mills 2013a) and a short “viewpoint” on the methodological and ethical challenges of archival research (Mills 2012), to provide a fuller, richer, essay-style narrative on “archival fieldwork and children’s geographies” specific to the aim of this volume. It is structured in five sections that consider: What is an archive? What are the central ways children’s geographers have used archival research? What are some of the ethical and methodological challenges of archival research? How have wider practices of collection and display represented past childhoods? And finally, what possibilities do digital technologies and social media afford children’s geographers seeking to research the “past”?

Archival material has been used by researchers in several disciplines – mainly history and the social sciences – to explore and analyze a wide range of topics across diverse historical epochs. Despite the partial and fragmented nature of historical research, it remains a valuable means of “thick description” and allows researchers to follow particular lines of enquiry in great detail, building a picture of events and individuals. The practicalities of undertaking archival fieldwork are covered in a number of core human geography method textbooks and review articles by historical geographers (e.g., Baker 1997; Baker and Billinge 1982;

Black 2003; Ogborn 2003a, b). This chapter will therefore not be a “how to” guide, but rather a series of reflections on the role of archival research in children's geographies and how archives have been used by other researchers of childhood and youth. It will highlight some of the methodological challenges and ethical considerations involved in historical research as part of a broader trend within historical geography to share experiences and emotional reflections of archival fieldwork (e.g., Ashmore et al. 2012; Bailey et al. 2009). Finally, while this chapter uses a range of examples, most are UK based, reflecting the author's encounters and experiences with various archival platforms and related exhibitions.

2 What Is an Archive?

There are diverse types of archive and alternative spaces where one can encounter historical material. Archives can be considered as both site and source, public and private, formal and informal, yet generally refer to “a collection or ensemble of material that documents the past” (Mills 2013a, p. 703; see also Ashmore et al. 2012; Burton 2005; Cresswell 2012). While national archives, library collections, and record offices are the most familiar archival spaces one might engage with, increasing numbers of personal or private archives are being utilized by researchers. For example, a national archive or specialist library may have pristine copies of a children's fiction book series, where a researcher could temporarily access these objects via a set visit, numbered request slip, and white cotton gloves. Conversely, the same objects could be accessed in a more fragmentary approach via secondhand book shop purchases, eBay bids, and donations from family or friends, as well as through the researcher's own childhood collection. Although both routes would enable useful data collection for a scholarly study – for example, on gender and children's literature – the latter more personal archive may also reveal “traces” of lived childhood(s), for example, a *This book belongs to...* scribble on the first page or an accompanying birthday or Christmas gift message. These traces position such objects within a web of wider socio-spatial relations, hinting at their owners and usage (Fig. 1):

In terms of formal archives, contents are often grouped thematically around a topic, region, time period, or organization and usually contain multiple collections housed within one building. Although these are professional and organized spaces, with trained archivists acting as invaluable gatekeepers (Ghosh 2005), all archives are fragmentary and incomplete due to the politics of the archive (Harvey Brown and Davis-Brown 1998; Moore 2010). Indeed, through the very preservation of certain documents and objects, a series of judgments have been made: what to keep, what to discard, what is (in)significant, and whose stories are told/silenced. Methodological engagements with archival material therefore requires some critical reflection on how an archive has been created and accessed, as well as a more general awareness, as Ogborn states, that “not everything that happens leaves a record (in writing, sound or image)...and not every record that is made survives and is stored away for later use” (2003a, p. 104).



Fig. 1 “This book belongs to...”

The politics of the archive can shape and influence the “place” of children within archival collections, which can also vary enormously based on the availability of material and thematic topic. For example, diaries written by young people in different time periods tend not to make it through into public records and archival collections due to the private nature of the material itself or the assumption by potential donors that this material is not “valuable.” An important project by the Bishopsgate Institute (2014) seeks to address this gap in the historical record with a work-in-progress catalogue of over 2000 diaries. Furthermore, there are a growing number of sound archives that catalogue or document the everyday lives of children and young people, as well as an increased appetite for making and recording oral histories. In one of my recent projects on children’s playground folklore in postwar Britain, I accessed recorded tapes of playground songs, rhymes, and ditties. This was an opportunity to go beyond written accounts and *listen to* (past) children’s voices. It is worth noting some of the ethical challenges involved in these types of archival encounters, a topic I return to later in this chapter, but here issues of intimacy, voyeurism, respect, and dignity are important to recognize and have been discussed by Gallagher and Prior (2014) in their recent review of sonic and phonographic methods. The characteristics of source material are intimately linked to questions of representation. In relation to the above archival fieldwork on children’s playground folklore, I was constantly encouraged by the archivist to read the transcribed sheets that an archive assistant had typed up for preservation purposes, rather than the original tapes. However, I was scared about missing context, phrasings, and all the other more-than-representational-“ness” that I presumed would be on those tapes. Indeed, *reading* that a 10-year-old child said “My big fear is rhinos and big fat Carole” makes it humorous and brings a smile.

However, on the tape, the clear emotional fear in that child's voice – the whisper and stuttering in a broken voice – takes all that humor away and shifts meaning, context, and ideas about representation. In this case, my desire to *listen* necessarily caused a bit more hassle for the archivist to get out the tape player, headphones, and tapes each day – and made me as a researcher more “noisy” – pressing buttons, rewinding tape back, messing with the plug. These are *tiny* sounds in everyday life, but amplified in an archive room of presumed yet unrealistic silence.

Following on from ideas of young people's “voice” in archival records, recent trends in cultural and historical geography include more creative ways of engaging with “representational” sources as conveyors of historical “performance” (Gagen et al. 2007; Griffin and Evans 2008; Mills 2013b). This chimes with some current work by interdisciplinary scholars on diverse encounters “with” (past) young people in the archive. For example, a recent study by historian of children's literature Lee A. Talley on “Operation Pied Piper” – the UK government's World War II evacuation program – draws on material and correspondence between children and parents that goes beyond written text. For example, she charts how some of the children's letters contained objects such as “baby” teeth sent home to their biological parents – a literally embodied record of childhood and example of scholarship that “fleshes out” the experiences of children through archival fieldwork. Talley states how “research on evacuation, regardless of discipline, has almost exclusively focused on adult recollections or on the perspectives of adult observers or caretakers,” and through engaging with such original archival material, Talley explores how “child writers” “used narrative in a distinctive form of self fashioning” (2013, p. 10). A wide range of researchers are analyzing both written and non-written material from archival collections, for example, some historical geographers are experimenting with diverse archival “objects” to enliven understandings of past imperial contexts (Griffin and Evans 2008; Lorimer and Whatmore 2009). The “treasure trove” belonging to Dewi Rowlands introduced in this chapter's opening vignette could therefore be conceived of as historical “data” in the context of this recent creative scholarship and methodological experimentation.

Questions of “truth” and hermeneutics can shape and underlie most research methods, but are particularly important to reflect on when using historical material. Historian Antoinette Burton argues that:

the most popular archive stories of the new millennium are shaped by a belief in the capacity of material evidence to create and sustain tests of verifiability. . . the archive (as a trope, but also as a ideological and material resource) has acquired a new kind of sacral character in a variety of contemporary domains. (2005, p. 5)

This supposed certainty and legitimacy surrounding archival research is dangerous, identified by Burton as “one of many Enlightenment legacies to modern Western historical thought” that is still visible in the contemporary fascination with forensic science television programs and novels, demonstrating “the power of science to get at truth” (2005, p. 5). The similarities between forensic science and

archival research are noticeable: searching for clues and piecing together fragments to answer “bigger” questions. However, the politics of the archive and its construction both complicate and blur the boundaries between knowledge, information, authenticity, and “truth” (see Ginzburg 1990). There is a need for researchers to therefore employ reflexivity and delicacy, as well as awareness that archives do not have a natural claim to objectivity and absolute truth. Furthermore, in the context of this volume, there is no such thing as a singular experience of youth or “universal” account of childhood; indeed they are social constructions that vary over time and space (Ariès 1962; Gillis 1974; Holloway and Valentine 2000; Jenks 1996). However, archival fieldwork has been utilized in a number of research projects to elucidate themes in children’s geographies and to think through ideas of agency, power, and representation. As Elizabeth Gagen states, “while children are the conspicuous subjects of evidentiary material, the degree to which those texts speak of their experience is curbed by the representational politics of the archive” (2001, p. 53). In her work on US playground reform in the early twentieth century, she outlines how her aim is not “to reproduce an unmediated account of children’s experience of playgrounds,” but rather “to approach the texts of playground reform as an opportunity to look for moments of children’s agency” (2001, p. 55; see also Gagen 2004). However, Gagen is keen to stress that while her research is highlighting children’s active involvement in how playground spaces were produced, she does not wish to “over imbue children’s actions with political intent, nor as both Barnett (1997) and James Duncan (1999) warn, take these necessarily partial fragments of text to represent disproportionately significant acts” (2001, p. 62).

This section has mapped out some of the different types of archival collections and material utilized by researchers and introduced ideas surrounding the politics of the archive – pertinent to all historical research, not just that which focuses on young people. The chapter now turns to an overview of work on the historical geographies of childhood and youth, as well as a personal reflection on some of the above themes based on the author’s fieldwork.

3 What Are the Central Ways Children’s Geographers Have Engaged with Archival Fieldwork?

It is safe to say that using archives has been a less popular method for children’s geographers than some of the diverse – often participatory – methods discussed in this volume, simply as there is more focus within the subdiscipline on the everyday geographies of contemporary youth than of “young ghosts” (Mills 2012). Indeed, Elizabeth Gagen noted back in 2001 that “children’s history is methodologically problematic and therefore seldom undertaken” (p. 63). However, there has been some excellent work seeking to examine the historical spaces of childhood and youth as part of research programs on nationhood, gender, and education. This includes (but note this is not an exhaustive list) Elizabeth Gagen’s work on US playground reform (2001, 2004) discussed in the previous section; Teresa Ploszajska’s research on Victorian schooling (1994) and geography fieldwork (1996, as part of a

special issue of the *Journal of Historical Geography* on geography education); Laura Cameron's research on a 1920s experimental school in Cambridge, England (2006); Elizabeth Brown's work on the Seattle juvenile court (2011); and Richard Phillips' work on children's adventure fiction and imperial masculinities (1997). Cultural and historical geographers have also used examples of "youth spaces" in wider research projects, for example, David Matless' work on landscape and citizenship draws on case studies such as the Youth Hostels Association (1998). In terms of historical geographies of childhood and youth that seek to uncover the (past) everyday lifeworlds of children and young people, there is still great scope for further geographical research and scholarship. Our focus here however is on methodological debates, and so this chapter now turns to a series of reflections on one of the author's research projects to bring together some of the themes discussed thus far.

3.1 Be Prepared: Recovering the Story of the "Red Scout"

As part of a research project on the historical and cultural geographies of the UK Scout Association (Mills 2013b), a combination of relevant written texts, images, objects, and oral histories found in a number of archival collections were analyzed. This produced an original and extensive data set on the cultural politics of scouting in the context of broader debates on youth citizenship, identity, and the geographies of (informal) education. The project had a clear focus on linking the institutional with the intimate through "uncovering" the role certain (often young) individuals played in the Scout Movement, partly inspired by work on biographies and life histories by cultural geographers (Daniels and Nash 2004; Lorimer 2003). By considering the ways in which people's lives and personal narratives blurred with more traditional "official" accounts of events and occurrences, this study used source material housed in diverse archives. Instead of claims to absolute "truth" that archival research is often seen as possessing (see previous section), the aim in this project was to "open up" space for alternative readings and understandings of scouting as a practice, organization, and method. Indeed, geographer Caitlin DeSilvey argues that "a poetics of suggestion and conjecture recovers stories that might not allow themselves to appear through more direct methods." (2007, p. 420). The recovered stories in the context of this research project were most clearly demonstrated in the example of the "Red Scout" – Paul Garland – a 19-year-old from Bristol who, in 1954, was excluded from the Scout Movement due to his communist beliefs. The full case study is explored in depth elsewhere as part of an argument about the politics of scouting and communism (Mills 2011); however, two key observations are made here in relation to this chapter's focus on archival fieldwork.

Firstly, this example is a clear illustration of how an individual excluded from the "official" history of an organization "appeared" within diverse and fragmentary archival sources. Due to the controversy surrounding the case, Garland does not feature – perhaps understandably – in the official histories and in-house published material on the organization consulted prior to fieldwork. The theme of communism did not appear in the online catalogue summaries used to plan visits to the Scout

Association Archive or during conversations with the archivist. Indeed, this fascinating case study was only discovered via a process of reading every handwritten catalogue card from A to Z, finding the entry “Garland, P.,” and undertaking a close reading of material relating to individuals. After mapping out the various actors involved in Garland’s story, subsequent visits were then undertaken at the Archive of the Communist Party of Great Britain, Manchester; Girl Guides Association Archive, London; Parliamentary Archives, Westminster; and the BBC Written Archive, Reading, Berkshire, in order to gain a “thicker” description and account of the events of 1954. Each archival collection had its own politics regarding the material that was “saved” on the “Red Scout,” and yet these fragments uncovered a period in scouting’s history that had been marginalized in scholarly research and more “public” histories of the organization.

Secondly, this example highlights the ways in which young people in archival collections can be conceptualized as both present and absent. Most of the accounts of Garland’s exclusion and subsequent appeal were written by adults: through press editorials, memos, and correspondence between the Scout Association and Young Communist League. His own voice is decidedly “absent” within the collections, apart from a few quotes solicited from local and national press and a handwritten note. As a researcher, there was great excitement upon finding that Garland had recorded an interview with the BBC appealing against his exclusion. This was a chance to hear his “voice” within the space of adult-authored accounts. However, this voice was silenced in both a political and methodological sense. In 1954, the recording was banned the night before it was due to air after complaints from a number of Conservative MPs. This fragment of evidence was important and added another layer to the geographical argument about the politics of scouting (Mills 2011; Philo and Smith 2003). However, there were also no copies of the original recording in archival collections. This highlights the difficulties in accessing young people’s “voice” within archival fieldwork and demonstrates how Garland was both present and absent in historical records. Unfortunately, Paul Garland passed away in 1999, and so an oral history was not able to be conducted. Oral histories are championed by social historians and increasingly used within the social sciences, yet bring their own methodological challenges (Riley and Harvey 2007; Charlton et al. 2006). However, the act of including Garland within the research project and drawing on the fragmentary archival sources that were available is a response to DeSilvey’s 2007 call to “recover stories.” Overall, this snapshot of fieldwork relating to one case study within a larger research program highlights some of the key points in the chapter so far on both the politics and practices of archival research.

4 What Are Some of the Ethical and Methodological Challenges of Archival Research?

Archival fieldwork can challenge many of the ethical and methodological “norms” of children’s geographies. There is an obvious difference between contemporary and historical research in terms of the media involved (your own tape recordings or

someone else's recorded tapes; fresh participatory artwork or dust-covered diaries) and a different retrieval process (direct embodied research with young people or deferred connections in another building, time, and place). I have already hinted at the methodological challenges in terms of availability of sources, the fragmented nature of historical research, and the potential absence of children's "voice." However, there are a number of other challenges in "doing" children's geographies when the young people involved are "ghosts" of past childhoods.

In this context, the methodological and ethical "good practice" when working *with* children outlined by Matthews et al. (1998) – including establishing ground rules, providing a comfortable setting, communicating clearly, or listening and responding – no longer appears relevant. In many respects, I would suggest that during historical research, these practices and techniques become *deferred* to the relationship with an archivist as the "guardian" of material that "contains" children and young people or with family members now acting as gatekeepers to personal archives. These proxy or alternative research relationships can also be extended to ideas of consent. In the social sciences, research projects involving those under the age of 18 will seek permission to participate from a parent, carer, guardian, or other responsible adults. With archival research, there is a unique temporal "distance" at play that challenges these ideas so familiar to children's geographers. First of all, many of the "young ghosts" locked within archival material would now be adults and over the age of 18, but more likely, they (and certainly their parents) would no longer be alive due to the time periods focused upon by academics. If the time period was more recent, for example, projects engaging with spaces of childhood in the post-World War II period, there would still be huge methodological challenges to overcome in identifying and tracing "young ghosts" – especially as written material often refers to children by their first name, surname, or nickname alone, as I discovered in my historical work on youth organizations. These issues have not been widely considered or reflected upon by scholars engaged in archival fieldwork and have the potential to open up a methodological can of worms. Indeed, archives and record offices are the guardians of annual reports, newspapers, and photograph albums, not the (future) adult selves of children frozen in time within such documents. However, it is perhaps reassuring that archivists trained in the complex web of copyright and permission law *do* act as guardians surrounding private and sensitive material relating to children and young people that may be deposited as part of national or institutional collections. In one of the author's recent projects on a youth club in postwar Manchester, a young person's diary offered a unique "first-hand" account of life as a teenager during the early 1970s. However, there were some copyright and permission guidelines enforced by the archivist in relation to ethical concerns and the contents of this material (not deposited by the author of the diary) cannot be cited in published research. This is therefore an example of a young person's "voice" being present within an archival collection, yet illustrates the challenges of working with sensitive historical data relating to children's (past) lives. With the advent of the Data Protection Act (1998) and advancements in copyright and permission law, contemporary organizations, local authorities, schools, and other institutions must now outline how information recorded about

an individual under the age of 18 will be stored and/or destroyed. As such, a potential research project in the future on the institutional geographies of the Scout Movement in the *twenty-first* century would (in theory) be consulting records and photographs to which parents had given written permission for the local Scout Group, District, and by extension the national organization to retain and store as appropriate.

Institutional research ethics committees and ethical guidelines for working with historical material are piecemeal (Tesar 2015). Often, it is assumed that there are no ethical issues to consider if human participants are not involved; however, this is naive in terms of the potential impacts that “bringing up” the past can have for living adults (and their children and/or other family members). Indeed, Matthews et al. (1998) list “dealing with distress” as a consideration for those working *with* children in their research projects, and this can be usefully extended here to consider how to handle sensitive historical data. Clearly, concerns about causing distress to children in the here-and-now and appropriate safeguarding procedures (e.g., a code of conduct around disclosure within interviews) outweigh any potential deferred distress in the uncovering of hidden histories, but these are still worth acknowledging and reflecting upon. Francesca Moore (2010) has written about the ethical dilemmas in her archival fieldwork researching the historical geographies of abortion in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Lancashire. She discusses the issues surrounding the sensitive data she collected, which in some cases related to criminal activity, noting that “historical geographers are sometimes privy to unpublished personal and perhaps revelatory information” (2010, p. 264; see also Cameron 2001). While I have not engaged in historical research on such a sensitive topic, I have adopted an approach in my more recent work where I use pseudonyms for young people named in historical material. The concept of using pseudonyms to ensure anonymity, or giving young people the opportunity to construct their own fictitious name or nickname for use in publications, is standard practice for children’s geographers engaged in participatory research. However, how we name and represent those who are “co-opted” into our fieldwork via archives is perhaps a practical consideration that deserves more critical reflection by historical geographers.

5 How Have Wider Practices of Collection and Display Represented Past Childhoods?

In addition to discussing archival encounters, it is important and timely to reflect on how original archival material is often used to inform and shape contemporary engagements with the past – through museum exhibitions, library displays, and community workshops. In this chapter’s opening vignette, a very private childhood collection (hidden even from a spouse) became public through its display in a museum space. Practices of collection and display can themselves be the focus of academic enquiry (Cutler 2013; Geoghegan 2010; Miles 2011) and yet are marginalized within children’s geographies research. This is surprising as most museum exhibitions, crossing diverse social, political, or economic histories, usually have at

least some acknowledgment about children's role or experiences in the context of the wider topic. For example, a recent exhibit entitled "The Second World War in 100 Objects" at the Kunsthal Art Gallery in Rotterdam was brought to life through the discovery of some of Anne Frank's toys, recovered from an old neighbor. On the surface, a few marbles belonging to a child can be seen as banal and mundane – in the same way that the marbles belonging to Dewi from Aberystwyth might be perceived – but the power and significance of Anne Frank's story affords these objects with a greater significance. In describing the marbles, book, and tea set donated to the museum, head of collections Teresien da Silva stated that they "are a reminder that she was just a little girl" (Kedmey 2014). Clearly then, the lives of children and young people have – at times – been woven into the "retelling" of the past, and these types of cultures of representation would be interesting for children's geographers to critically analyze in the context of wider subdisciplinary debates. The lack of research on museums within children's geographies is also surprising as several high-profile exhibitions explicitly focus on themes of childhood and youth, for example, the 2013–2014 "Why Children's Books Matter" exhibition at the New York City Public Library. Here, the exhibition itself was structured into sections based on dominant historical and philosophical "visions" of childhood – for example, the "natural" child and "romantic" child. The exhibit displayed material from the Library's own archival collection to illustrate and critically consider the connections between children's books and "the societies that produce them. . . across cultures and time" (NYPL 2014). A recent project by Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery in the UK entitled "Children's Lives" has also used exhibitions, in tandem with blogs and young people's school projects, to explore "the relationships of children with their families and peers, the experiences of children in school, at work, and at the hands of various welfare institutions, and the ways that children have imagined the world" with a focus on "the diversity of the city in all its forms, for example, ethnicity, gender, class, and disability" (BMAG 2012). Clearly then, there is scope for a critical geographical reading of these types of exhibitions, akin to research by cultural geographers on other museum spaces (Geoghegan 2010; Cutler 2013). Museum exhibitions are incredibly powerful sites for dissemination activities and collaboration, and it is encouraging to see recent engagements by geographers with the V & A's Museum of Childhood in London. This branch of the V&A houses a national collection of childhood-related objects and exhibitions, with recent displays including "Are you sitting comfortably?" (on designs, environments, and architectures of learning) and "Confiscation Cabinets" (objects confiscated by a London school teacher). There have been three recent AHRC collaborative doctoral awards between the V & A's Museum of Childhood and the School of Geography/School of Languages, Linguistics and Film at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL 2014). Furthermore, a project led by geographer Tara Woodyer on the geopolitics of war toys has also collaborated with the Museum of Childhood (Woodyer et al. 2014).

Some of the examples discussed in this section highlight the enduring interest, intrigue, and fascination with objects or traces from "past" childhoods. Collecting or accumulating items is not however a research *method* (Lorimer 2009) but, rather,

diverse historical data and sources can be drawn upon and analyzed in relation to research themes and current academic debates. Archival research is increasingly utilised, and while it is usually associated with researching the lives of strangers, it can also include reflections on our own childhoods and youth (Brown 2012; see also Horton and Kraftl 2012). Exploring the connections between “other” childhoods and our own is potentially more accessible now than ever before with the advent of online archives and social media, as the next section examines.

6 What Possibilities Do Digital Technologies and Social Media Afford Children’s Geographers Seeking to Engage with the Past?

Most archival fieldwork – as outlined throughout this chapter – involves visits to various collections, as well as potentially engaging with personal archives and diverse non-written material. However, the characteristics of archival fieldwork have shifted in recent years with the emergence of online digital technologies and social media. Firstly, there are a number of archival collections that are now digitized online, enabling preservation and also wider public access and engagement (Lorimer 2009). High-profile examples include the British Library’s manuscript series and British Pathé’s recent deposit of its entire collection of 85,000 news films (1896–1976) to YouTube (British Pathé 2014). These shifts in technology and access open up the possibilities for archival research “at a distance” for both academic and nonacademic communities. Secondly, there are dedicated websites that catalogue various collections and offer searchable databases. For example, “archives hub” in the UK (Archives Hub 2014) continues to expand its service and provide an invaluable resource to researchers. Thirdly, social media – notably twitter – is creating a platform for researchers to engage in discussions surrounding archives and archival research, often through direct communication with archivists and institutional representatives. For example, threads such as #twitterstorians are creating an online space for researchers, archivists, and learned societies, for example, the Society for the History of Children and Youth (@SHCY), to discuss and debate historical research practices. Finally, brand new archives are being established that capture *online material* from the recent past. The UK Web Archive now holds thousands of websites, captured in their various online layers, where users can “see how sites have changed over time, locate information no longer available on the live Web and observe the unfolding history of a spectrum of UK activities represented online” (UK Web Archive 2014).

Other than useful resources for researchers to explore in the context of their own empirical foci, it is worth reflecting briefly on how the “opening up” of these archival collections has wider links to childhood memories (see Brannen 2004; Horton and Kraftl 2012; Jones 2003; Philo 2003). For example, when British Pathé announced their move to YouTube, several responses by blog users on comment threads made a direct reference to childhood memories. For example, one user reflected that:

I've been looking at some of these films. They provide a fascinating insight into life in the UK, although the footage of the Hindenburg disaster still strikes fear in me. I remember seeing the Hollywood version of the film as a child and the thought that anyone escaped that fire amazed me. (User comment, British Pathé 2014)

Here, we read an emotive response to viewing archival material with reference to an individual's childhood – that significantly – is a response to online footage that was previously restricted to researchers with an institutional affiliation. *The Independent's* Simon Osborne, writing about a Bank Holiday spent exploring the new Pathé archive, describes how:

A search function allows you [to] enter any word you like – your street perhaps, or favourite childhood haunt. What might I discover? I start where I started, in 1982, at King's College Hospital in south London. (Osborne 2014)

He continues, moving through the various sites of his youth, powerfully finding out via a “haunting, silent film” that victims of the thalidomide drug scandal of the early 1960s attended a local school near his grandmother's house, with the YouTube clip showing small children “using various prostheses and motorised chairs to cope with their deformities” (Osborne 2014). This process of tracing one's life course through such footage, via the places and spaces that *matter(ed)*, could be of potential interest to children's geographers in their research and teaching activities.

It is important to pose a cautionary note over the “opening up” of resources and archival material, despite this section's celebratory tone. Other than some complex ethical issues involving online material, there remains a vastly unequal landscape of archival “openness” at the global scale. The politics of the archive remains a crucial consideration, and social media is increasing awareness about some of these issues. There are too many activist campaigns surrounding the preservation and use of archival material to list here. However, “Archival Platform” (@the_archive) is a fascinating blog mapping a network of campaigns on archives and the heritage sector in Africa, acting as a “civil society initiative committed to deepening democracy through the use of memory and archives as dynamic public resources” (Archival Platform 2014). On the one hand, social media is increasing access to archival sources, yet on the other hand, it is highlighting the very real politics of access to archives in diverse geographical locations and some of the wider inequalities over whose stories are being told.

7 Conclusion

In the opening vignette, a question was posed about the box belonging to Dewi Rowlands: could this collection of old toys be considered an archive? While the traditional image of an archival fieldwork “visit” remains powerful and indeed incredibly important to some research projects, this chapter has highlighted how the

processes and practices of archival research are becoming more diverse and “animated,” often engaging with objects (see Mills 2013a). One area where these new embodied and more-than-representational archival encounters requires further methodological reflection is around the practicalities of data analysis. Most data collection at archives utilizes written or visual sources that are then subject to textual analysis (Hannam 2002). This can either take place “in situ” in the archive reading room with a system of close reading, coding, or the use of an electronic database (Morris 2011) or “back home” after fieldwork with the aid of photocopies or photographs, employing various coding strategies or software such as NVivo (Cope 2003) to analyze data. As objects, textiles, ephemera, and sites themselves are increasingly considered “archival material,” the somewhat mechanistic processes of data analysis are becoming problematized (or perhaps liberated), and it is these new approaches to data analysis that are worthy of further scholarly reflection.

Overall, this chapter has used a number of examples to provide a discussion on archival fieldwork and children’s geographies. The historical record will always be partial, and this chapter has discussed some of the limitations of archival fieldwork in relation to questions of representation, truth, and interpretation. However, these apparent weaknesses of archival research are also challenges that could be leveled at other research methods. Indeed, this volume has demonstrated how questions of power and representation underlie several research methods employed by children’s geographers as they explore the spaces of childhood and youth. In sum, archives are just one methodological tool available to children’s geographers – a method where opening a box can open up a number of research avenues and adventures.

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Abstract

There is growing interest in the potential value of qualitative longitudinal research (QLR) for shedding light on temporal dimensions of experience and on the way personal biographies are shaped by social structures and processes over time. This chapter outlines some of the definitions, designs, advantages, and challenges in relation to QLR, focusing on ways of engaging children and young people. It offers three examples of QLR and describes a selection of methodological tools and techniques for accessing children's perspectives on their lives, trajectories, and social worlds, across time. The chapter underscores the academic and ethical value in involving children in QLR at the same time bringing to light the complex practical and ethical challenges stemming from their participation.

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Qualitative methodology • Longitudinal research • Methods • Children and youth • Ethics

1 Introduction

Till now no one has discussed like this with children. We feel happy that members of the research team mingle with us. Earlier we never spoke up before anybody. But now we are able to speak out in front of people like you without any fear, and this helped us in having courage, and now I know what I will become in my future. Within these two years, we come to know how to speak with elders.

(13-year-old boy, India, *Young Lives* study)

Engaging children and young people in qualitative longitudinal research (QLR) generates diverse methodological and ethical challenges (Morrow 2009). Longitudinal research exacerbates quandaries generally inherent in qualitative research with children, such that managing power dynamics between adult researchers and young participants becomes a long-term process, beyond “one-off” research encounters. The amount of data grows with each round of data collection, and personal relationships may deepen and complicate over time. Contextual factors are vital in shaping children’s involvement, since in many societies seeking children’s perspectives in research is considered at odds with local mores and hierarchies, and yet, in other contexts, children may feel at ease being interviewed, and the notion of filling out a survey questionnaire may be (or come to be) familiar to them. Context also influences the potential impact that research participation has on those individuals and groups who participate, as indicated by the above quote.

There is, however, tremendous value in involving children in longitudinal research, and the complexities underpinning QLR introduce unique opportunities for exploring the interaction between social and individual change across space and time. This chapter describes concepts, tools, and techniques for engaging children and young people in QLR, particularly in light of developments within the past few decades that recast children as valid and valuable participants within social research. Two developments stand out: The first is the movement around children’s rights and the role of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in framing all children as rights holders, including with rights to participation (Clark 2005:489). The second is the emergence of an academic social studies of childhood that reconceptualized children “as beings not becomings” (Qvortrup 1994:2) and that moved the focus away from future-oriented socialization processes toward children’s perspectives on their everyday lives in the “here and now” (Mayall 2002). Greene and Hill (2005:2) reflect:

As one looks from an historical perspective at the vast field of social scientific, empirical research already conducted on and with children, it is evident that the predominant emphasis has been on children as objects of research rather than children as subjects, on

child-related outcomes rather than child-related processes and on child variables rather than children as persons.

Childhood studies are an interdisciplinary field, including perspectives from anthropology, cultural studies, history, sociology, and geography; and although most research centers on Euro-American childhoods, there is a burgeoning international literature describing childhood in low- and middle-income countries and analysis of the way global and international structures shape childhood in different contexts (c.f. Abebe 2008a; Katz 2004). One of the major contributions of children's geographies to this reimagining of childhood has been exploration of the centrality of space and place in the everyday lives of children. Places are important for young people because identities are constituted in and through particular spaces (Holloway and Valentine 2000:770) and because they "play a large part in constructing and constraining dreams and practices" (Aitken 2001:20). Children's geographers draw on the main tenets of childhood studies to consider the way social constructions of childhood are also *spatial* constructions. Children are regarded as social actors, negotiating agency within the context and constraints of particular spaces and places. In light of these achievements drawing attention to space and place, in recent years, there has been a call within geography to introduce a greater focus on *temporality* (Cole and Durham 2008) and on time-spaces "to move beyond the individual, to see young people in relation to their wider contexts and in particular their relationship with others, as these shape outcomes" (Ansell et al. 2011:541).

Such developments have been accompanied by important methodological advancements aiming to strengthen the participation of children in both academic and practice-oriented research (c.f. Boyden and Ennew 1997; Clark 2005; Clark et al. 2014; Johnson et al. 2014; Morrow and Crivello 2015; Punch 2001; van Blerk and Kesby 2009). This chapter draws on these advances and describes how particular tools and techniques have been used (or may be adapted for use) within the context of longitudinal research design. The next section defines qualitative longitudinal research before moving on to a discussion of why and how this methodology may be used to study different aspects of childhood and youth experience, followed by three brief case examples. A selection of specific tools and techniques is described, before moving on to the final section which reflects on some of the practical and ethical considerations that arise when carrying out QLR with children in different contexts.

2 What Is Qualitative Longitudinal Research?

There is a well-established tradition of *quantitative* longitudinal research in social science, which has been facilitated by the growth of large panel data sets, for example, the *Birth Cohort Studies* in the UK, *Birth to Twenty* in South Africa, the *Gansu Survey of Children and Families* in China, and the dual-cohort study of childhood poverty, *Young Lives*, in Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

states), Peru, and Vietnam. In comparison, the development of qualitative longitudinal research is in its infancy, much of the innovation stemming from initiatives and networks based in the UK and other wealthy countries where the majority of the research takes place. Qualitative longitudinal research with children in low- and middle-income countries is relatively rare.

But what is qualitative longitudinal research? There are many definitions and models, such that each study is context specific and motivated by a particular set of goals, concepts, research questions, and funding constraints. *Time, change, and duration* underpin many definitions of QLR, reflecting “the deliberate way in which temporality is designed into the research process making change a central focus of analytic attention” (Thomson and Holland 2003). Neale and Flowerdew (2003:190) suggest that “It is through time that we can begin to grasp the nature of social change, the mechanisms and strategies used by individuals to generate and manage change in their personal lives, and the ways in which structural change impacts on the lives of individuals.” Time, nonetheless, remains a “sometimes forgotten aspect of the research process” (Greene and Hill 2005:17).

Time is inherent in QLR in two ways: first, in the design, since data are generated through multiple research encounters (Henwood and Shirani 2012:1), and, second, as an analytic theme through exploration of temporal dimensions of experience, from the biographical and the generational to the historical (Adam et al. 2008:7; Neale 2012:2). QLR has been referred to as “a particular theoretical orientation, a way of knowing and understanding the social world” (Neale and Flowerdew 2003:189). Macmillan (2011:5) asks, by extending the analytical time frame, “might things be seen differently, or different things seen?” The suggestion is that QLR opens a space for flexibility, adaptation, and innovation, these characteristics determined to be methodological advantages rather than weaknesses (Thomson and Holland 2003:234). Saldaña suggests that “we should be flexible and allow a definition of change to emerge as a study proceeds and its data are analysed. Ironically yet fittingly, we should permit ourselves to change our meaning of change as a study progresses” (Saldaña 2003:12).

There are many models of QLR (see Holland et al. 2004 for a review). These include:

- *Periodic revisits to the same sample or community at regular or irregular intervals.* An example is the anthropological study carried out by Jeannine Anderson (2007) in a poor neighborhood in Lima, Peru; through a series of visits, she followed a sample of 56 families over a 30-year period, examining poverty dynamics and intergenerational change. In the UK, the ESRC *Timescapes* program was the first major qualitative longitudinal study to be funded in the UK, developing a series of planned prospective qualitative longitudinal studies to explore how personal and family relationships develop and change over time; particular projects focused on siblings and friends, motherhood and fatherhood, transitions to adulthood, family lives, and older generations (for information on *Timescapes*, see <http://www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/index.html>).

- *Repeating a “classic” study in the same community after a lengthy interval has elapsed, possibly with new researchers not involved in the original study.* For example, “Living and Working on Sheppey: Past, Present and Future” was a follow-up study on research undertaken by Ray Pahl and colleagues three decades earlier on the Isle of Sheppey. The new study revisited some of Pahl’s archived material, collected new data, and worked closely with community members. One area of analysis drew on new and old data sets to examine the imagined futures of young people on the island and changes over time (Lyon and Crow 2012).
- *Mixed-methods approaches where qualitative longitudinal elements are intertwined with a quantitative study.* An example, discussed in further detail below, is *Young Lives*, a 15-year survey study of childhood poverty being carried out in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam that includes a 7-year longitudinal qualitative strand with a nested sample of children (Wilson and Huttly 2003) (for information on *Young Lives*, see www.younglives.org.uk).
- *Ethnographic research where there is long-term continuous engagement with a community.* For example, Margaret Mead’s classic study of Samoan adolescence, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), was based on 9 months of participant observation among the island’s young people. More recently, Ruth Emond employed an ethnographic approach in her study of children’s experiences living in a Scottish children’s home; initially, she planned to make periodic research visits to carry out interviews, but early on the children insisted that if she wanted to understand their lives, she needed more than a “snapshot” and should therefore live alongside them in the home (Emond 2005).
- *Evaluation and tracking research.* In the UK, there is growing interest in the value of qualitative longitudinal analysis to evaluate policy change (e.g., Clark and Fox 2012; Lewis 2007; Millar 2007). For example, Ridge and Millar (2011) studied working lone mothers and their children living on low incomes, repeating interviews with them over a period of 3–4 years, locating their family experience within the context of wider policy shifts and labor market forces.

Moreover, the design of QLR can be either prospective or retrospective in capturing the temporal dimension of experience. In *prospective* studies, individuals, groups, or institutions are tracked in “real” time, recording change as it occurs (e.g., in successive rounds or through long-term ethnography), whereas in *retrospective* studies, researchers rely on participants’ recreations of the past, using life history methods and other techniques of memory to explain life up to the present (Laub and Sampson 2003). Others distinguish between *synchronic* and *diachronic* perspectives, the latter adding depth to cross-sectional analysis. In Hay’s words (2002:149):

If the synchronic approach is analogous to the taking of a photograph at a particular instant ... the diachronic approach is the equivalent of a video ‘panning’ shot which follows the motion of the object in question.

In practice, QLR may combine synchronic and diachronic analyses and both retrospection and prospection – for instance, in prospective studies that ask participants to reflect on changes and continuities since the last visit and to engage in life history work. And in the analytic phase of QLR, the first step is often cross-sectional (synchronic) analysis of the latest round of data, followed by a second phase of longitudinal (diachronic) analysis (see Thomson 2007 on the construction of longitudinal case histories).

The next section turns the focus to the involvement of children and young people, followed by three brief examples from research.

3 Children and Young People in QLR

A plethora of child-focused methods for involving children in research has been developed in tandem with the growth of childhood studies and alongside mounting interest by NGOs and INGOs in “children’s participation” in a range of research and practice initiatives. But not all research necessitates children’s participation, and in some cases there may be an ethical case for excluding young people, for example, on the grounds that their participation might put them at risk, be exploitative, or cause them emotional distress. Not all research questions require a longitudinal design, while some topics are particularly well suited to QLR, such as those seeking to understand change and continuity, process, and causality, as in life course research focusing on transitions, turning points, and biographical change (see Holland et al. 2004:14). Less innovation and reflection has been recorded in the area of children’s participation in qualitative longitudinal research, perhaps because the particular methods used may be similar to those used in “one-off” qualitative studies, and it may be more a question of how individual methods are combined or used over time to answer particular questions.

Substantive areas of investigation that might benefit from a qualitative longitudinal design relate to:

- Transitions: life course issues, such as status and role changes across time and space; “critical moments” and what motivates decisions, e.g., in the movement from primary to secondary school or in transitions to adulthood
- Identity construction: identity formation across childhood; the way individual biographies evolve in the context of wider social processes and change
- Resilience: children’s experience of risk over time and the protective processes that promote resilience
- Family lives: the intersection between personal and family lives and social structures; the impact of key life events, household shocks, or policy shifts on changing family relationships and children’s well-being
- The study of specific processes: such as migration or poverty dynamics
- Careers of particular categories or groups: tracking the life trajectories of “street children,” “child-headed households,” or young people at risk of offending

- Impact of development programs: documenting medium- and longer-term experiences and outcomes of particular interventions into children's lives, families, and communities (such as the impact on children of participation in international child sponsorship programs)
- Trends: cultural shifts and changes in values and attitudes over time; changing conceptualizations of childhood

Several longitudinal studies have taken a child or youth focus, reflecting interest in child development, social change, and life course processes linking earlier circumstances with later outcomes. Werner and Smith's seminal Kauai longitudinal study of resilience stands out; in 1955 they initiated a four-decade long study of the Hawaiian island's entire birth cohort population, including many children born into difficult family circumstances. The study combined quantitative and qualitative approaches, finding that many young people who had experienced adversity early in life were able to flourish in adulthood and that supportive relationships and new opportunities were among the key factors protecting them from adversity (Werner and Smith 1992, 2001).

Children's participation in QLR can take different forms – children may be the primary “subject” being tracked over time, as in a birth cohort study – or they may participate in QLR on the basis of their membership in a larger unit, such as a particular sample of families, schools, or communities, being tracked longitudinally. Thomson and colleagues (2012) reflect on how the nature of participation of children in a longitudinal qualitative study of new mothering in the UK changed over time; although the study was designed to empirically focus on the new mother, researcher observations in successive rounds of research recorded the “emergence of the child” as an increasingly active presence in the study (from the prenatal stage into the early years of life).

4 Examples from Research

This section describes three cases of research engaging children and young people in QLR, each representing a different approach or model: *Inventing Adulthoods* is a planned prospective study of transitions to adulthood in the UK; *Young Lives* is a mixed-methods investigation of childhood poverty in four developing country contexts; and Samantha Punch's research following a group of Bolivian children resembles an ethnographic approach.

1. *Inventing Adulthoods* emerged through adaptation and innovation (Thomson and Holland 2003:234), growing out of an earlier (3-year) research program on “Youth Values: Identity, Diversity and Social Change” that involved young people (aged 11–16) growing up in five contrasting locations in the UK. *Inventing Adulthoods* followed up on a subsample of 120 of the original “Youth Values” participants and interviewed them at 9-month intervals over a further 3-year period. The purpose was to explore the process of identity change

and the factors shaping young lives and pathways over time. The offshoot study was eventually extended further (adding a third phase) so that ultimately the young people were followed over a decade (1996–2006), from as young as 11 years old into the transition to adulthood (the three studies were (1) Youth Values: A study of identity, diversity and social change; (2) Inventing Adulthood: Young people's strategies for transition; and (3) Youth Transitions).

The core method across the three phases was the repeat biographical interview (up to six over the course of the study) which was combined with various ethnographic techniques and group discussions (Thomson and Holland 2005). For example, researchers in the first interview invited young people to compile memory books (a form of open diary or scrapbook) that later served as a talking point come the second round interview. Similarly, lifelines completed in the first interview were revisited in the third interview.

2. *Young Lives* is an international study of childhood poverty following the changing lives of 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India (in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states), Peru, and Vietnam over 15 years. The study tracks the life trajectories of two age cohorts of children born in 2001 and 1994 through complementary panel survey and QLR components (the author is a senior qualitative researcher within *Young Lives* and leads on the QLR component). Researchers administer surveys to the full sample every few years: to the children/youth (above 8 years old), their caregivers, and community members. The qualitative component works with a nested sample of some 200 children recruited from both cohorts, with four rounds of data collection spanning a 7-year period. It documents children's (and caregivers') everyday experiences of poverty through detailed narrative accounts, reflecting on their childhoods (past, present, and future), including their perspectives on what has contributed to shaping their situations, trajectories, and well-being, their aspirations and goals, as well as realistic expectations for future outcomes.

The QLR component adopted a methods "toolkit" approach so that local research teams in the four study countries could select from a suite of methods and adapt them for use with children in different contexts: life course timelines, community mapping, mobile interviews and child-led walks, vignettes and story completion, body mapping, drawings, video and photo-elicitation, time-use diaries, and a "well-being" exercise generating indicators of child well-being and ill-being with children (for a review, see Crivello et al. 2013). These creative tools complement semi-structured interviews with children, caregivers, and community members at each round. Several of the tools have been repeated across different rounds to enable reflection and analysis of change. The data generate longitudinal case studies and analyses which are contextualized by statistics from the large-scale quantitative *Young Lives* survey.

3. Samantha Punch's research following a group of children from a rural community in southern Bolivia spanned a 10-year period, comprising two main periods of fieldwork combining ethnographic and interview-based approaches (Punch 2012). The first phase was PhD fieldwork, an ethnographic study of rural

childhoods in Bolivia, exploring how children negotiate autonomy in their everyday lives at home, work, play, and school. This phase consisted of Punch living in a rural community for extended periods of time over a 2-year period, beginning in 1993.

Punch employed a range of qualitative methods to engage children and families, including semi-structured interviews and (semi-) participant observation. The study included classroom observations and task-based methods with children (aged 6–14), consisting of children writing diaries, taking photographs, drawing pictures, completing worksheets, and creating spider diagrams and activity tables (see Punch 2001).

Although the longitudinal element was not originally built into her original doctoral research design, 10 years later, Punch undertook a 4-month follow-up study in the original community (Bolivia) and in Argentina where many of the young people had migrated; this entailed tracing 14 of the original 18 sample households. This phase relied on semi-structured interviews alongside some participant observation in the migrant destinations. The follow-up study shifted focus to child/youth migration and to the impact of wider social changes – such as Argentina’s economic crisis in 2002 – on young people’s decisions to migrate or not.

Like many researchers who develop close ties with particular families and communities, Punch had always hoped to be able to return to her original study village, but initially, time and funds did not permit her to include a second follow-up phase in the doctoral research design. She reflects that it would have been preferable to have carried out an interim study after 5 years, rather than leaving a 10-year gap, since interviews relied heavily on retrospection to capture decisions made over the 10-year period. The second research phase, however, benefited enormously from research relations established in the first phase of the study in terms of rapport and practical and logistical help accessing communities and tracking down her original sample of children.

5 Methods, Techniques, and Tools

The three examples (above) represent different ways of engaging children and young people in QLR, yet they demonstrate similarities (each study combining interviews with an ethnographic approach), including shared use of particular tools, such as diaries and visual methods (photos/videos). The studies were flexible in their approach and development and drew on multiple methods, adapting questions and techniques to reflect changes in children’s lives, capacities, interests, and circumstances. The three studies illustrate how “time” is captured in different ways through QLR with young people, often entailing the combination of prospective and retrospective techniques. Drawing on these and other studies, this section briefly describes a selection of specific tools that can be adapted for use with children in QLR.

5.1 Baselines and Change

The first round of data collection in a QL study serves as a “baseline” against which subsequent change and continuity can be detected and interpreted. It is therefore vital from the outset to have a clear understanding of what it is the study is tracking over time, as well as a vision of the conceptual and methodological “threads” that might tie the rounds together to produce something greater than the sum of a series of cross-sectional snapshots (i.e., the “movie” rather than the stack of “photos”).

Much QLR draws on more than one source of data. QLR involving children is often undertaken using the same individual methods employed in cross-sectional research, although methods eliciting temporal data (such as timelines) may be particularly instrumental in the former; the distinction in QLR often comes in the way methods are used “temporally” – through reuse and repetition across rounds (discussed below). The methods available for use in QLR are seemingly endless and only limited by time, imagination, and the studies’ particular research goals. Some of the more common methods that have been used with children are listed here.

5.1.1 Biographical Interviews

The repeat biographical interview is often the cornerstone of the QL methodological toolkit, including in child-focused research in which the “subject” being tracked and analyzed is “the child.” Biographical interviews can take a range of formats including structured, semi-structured, unstructured, and “open ended.” Semi-structured interviews are particularly common in qualitative research and enable in-depth exploration of personal perspectives (Bryman 2004) and the recording of individual biographies as they unfold over time. There may be an additional moral value when using interview-based methods to capture the “voices” of children representing marginalized or “hard-to-reach” populations whose perspectives often remain muted in research (such as undocumented immigrants or young carers).

Although interviews have been extensively used in research with young people (Wright et al. 2006; Johansson et al. 2007), there are many practical and ethical factors to consider. The decision to interview very young children (under 8) requires special consideration and exploration of possible alternative methods that may better reflect their preferred modes of communication (Clark 2005; Johnson et al. 2014). For instance, in the first round of Young Lives QLR in 2007, researchers arranged “interviews” with the youngest cohort of children who were 5–6 years old at the time. The semi-structured interview protocols could only be used as a loose guide, and the more traditional “one-on-one,” question-answer format did not yield rich data. A benefit of these early research encounters with children was to build rapport and to gain a basic sense of children’s personalities, as well as their likes/dislikes, daily routines, and relationships. Indeed, these were rarely “one-on-one” interviews, children often preferring to be with their mothers or another family member during the interview at home. However, the same children participated on their own (without family) in group-based discussions (involving drawing) with other children their age; and the semi-structured interview format

generally worked well with the older children, aged 12, in the first wave of data collection.

Researchers have debated the advantages and disadvantages of interviewing children on their own, in pairs and in groups, both in terms of the quality of data generated and the way children experience the research encounter (Broström 2005; Einarsdóttir 2007). Interviewing children in pairs and groups may offer a sense of safety and security and an opportunity to socialize. There may be circumstances when researchers wish to avoid eliciting children's "personal stories" and prefer collective accounts on sensitive topics, like community-based violence (c.f., Veale 2005:255). Focus groups can be reconvened to make them longitudinal, but careful recording procedures are required to enable tracking of individual perspectives within group-generated accounts.

Biographical interviews can be combined with any number of creative, mobile, and graphic elicitation tools to aid the flow and record of conversations with children – these range from audio diaries (Worth 2009) and photo-elicitation (Morrow 2001) to mobility maps and tours (Walker forthcoming), storywriting (Abebe 2008b) and storytelling, and vignettes (Barter and Renold 2000). Hanna and Lau-Clayton (2012:1) posit "Not only can these methods add depth, but they can be a means of accession, offering the researcher a 'way in' to more complex dimensions of experience that participants may find difficult to conceptualise or verbalise."

The incorporation of drawing or mobile activities may allow for pauses and silences in conversation, thus breaking up the intensity of one-on-one verbal exchange (Guenette and Marshall 2009). Creative elicitation tools may influence the power balance in research encounters between adults and children, in some cases awarding children greater scope for directing the flow of conversation, and in other cases helping the researcher to maintain control during the interview (c.f. Varga-Atkins and O'Brian 2009). Importantly, it is the conversation that is generated from use of these tools, rather than the visual (or other) prompts themselves, that remain the core output for analysis.

5.1.2 Timelines

Timelines (also known as life maps, life grids, lifelines, and life course timelines) can be effective tools within the context of biographical and life history interviews exploring individual experiences of past, present, and future. Timelines offer a way for participants to narrate life stories and sensitive events, to identify key milestones and turning points, and to generate new meanings and understandings (Ansell et al. 2011; Gabb 2008; Guenette and Marshall 2009; Hanna and Lau-Clayton 2012; Worth 2009).

Timelines can be constructed in numerous ways, often simply depicted as a horizontal line across a page which may be demarcated for different ages or years. Participants are then invited to record significant events and milestones from birth to present and to indicate expectations for the future. Variations have been used with young people in diverse contexts, including a study in Malawi and Lesotho exploring the life course trajectories and differential outcomes of AIDS-affected

young people, recording their changing relationships across time and space (Ansell et al. 2011).

In a different study, by *Timescapes*, timelines were used to explore young people's narratives about their past and present (in the first wave of data collection) and about their projections and expectations about their future lives (in the second wave) (Bagnoli 2009:560). Young people were also asked to include on their timelines any significant events that had happened in the wider world that may have been influential in shaping their life trajectories. In *Young Lives*, children were invited to write "positive" memories above the line and "negative" or "difficult" memories below, this enabling researchers to follow up with questions about the sources of support children accessed in times of difficulty.

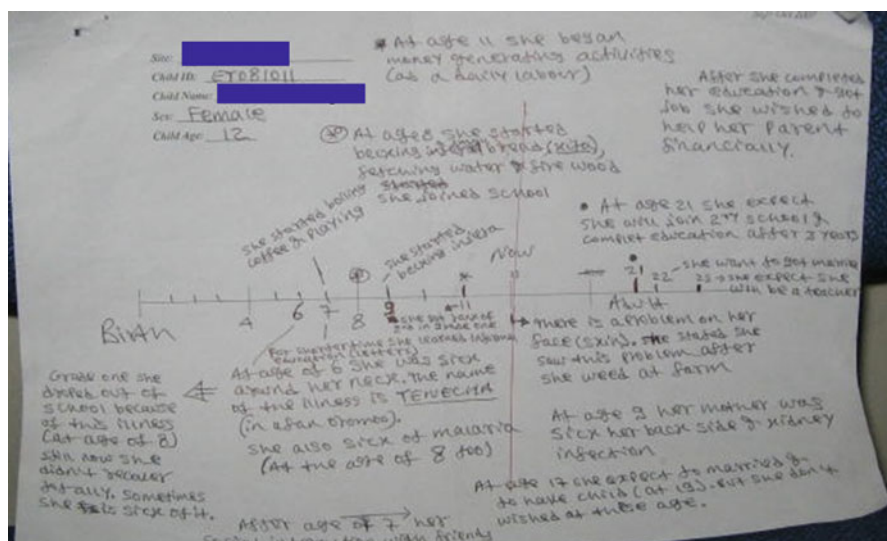


Photo of a timeline created with "Ayu," a 12-year-old girl in Ethiopia. *Young Lives* (2007)

The example here, from *Young Lives*, is of a timeline generated with "Ayu," a girl, around aged 12, in Ethiopia, during the first wave of data collection in 2007. Low levels of literacy meant that many of the children required assistance, including Ayu. The timeline was generated collaboratively with the researcher who, in this case, wrote the text in the third person. The discussion that happened around the drawing of the timeline was recorded, transcribed, and translated for analysis.

Researcher: Can you write?

Ayu: No, can I tell you what to write and you write it for me?

Researcher: Shall I write for you?

Ayu: Yes.

In this study, timelines were useful for exploring with children the time-space dimensions of their experience past, present, and future. In the first wave of data collection, timelines also served as a kind of baseline in order to explore change during subsequent research visits. In Ayu's timeline, we discovered that many of her childhood memories were associated with illness, including malaria, a facial rash, and a chronic swelling of the neck, all of which resulted in her missing school.

The timeline was also useful to capture Ayu's changing roles, responsibilities, and time-use; the relationship between schooling, housework, and paid work; and how she felt.

Researcher: When did you start to work? What kinds of work have you done?

Ayu: When I started school at eight, I also started to work at home.

Researcher: What activities did you start to do?

Ayu: Baking *injera* [local bread] and preparing coffee.

Researcher: Do you bake *injera* now?

Ayu: Yes. . . I started at eight. I also fetch water and collect firewood and go wherever mother sends me.

Ayu talked about her time-use in the context of her family relationships.

Ayu: I am happy in my working and my education. I am very happy with the daily work because I get money.

Researcher: Why does that make you happy?

Ayu: When I get money, even my parents are happy. At the beginning my parents prevented me from doing daily work, but now they are happy with what I am doing.

The timeline exercise elicited Ayu's hopes and views for the future regarding school, work, and marriage. Her aspiration at age 12 was to become a teacher, and she was not much interested in marriage.

Researcher: At what age do you think that you will get married?

Ayu: [Laughter] I don't want to get married, but my parents may force me to get married.

Researcher: Don't you want to get married?

Ayu: Yes.

Researcher: Why?

Ayu: Education is better for me. . . [I] don't have interest to get married. But my parents may force me to marry.

...

Researcher: When do you want to get married exactly?

Ayu: At 22.

Researcher: Why did you choose that age?

Ayu: It is not useful to marry at childhood age. It is better to marry after maturation.

Young Lives tracked Ayu's unfolding biography through the course of 7 years and three additional research visits. She left school in Grade 3 after having been in Grade 2 for 5 years. She was unable to pursue schooling alongside her long-term neck problem and her engagement in paid work which she managed alongside household chores. By age 16 she was married (apparently, of her own will, not her parents' decision), she moved to a neighboring town with her husband, and soon after she gave birth to her first child.

In Ayu's case and in others', it was extremely useful to be able to refer back (both directly and indirectly) to the timelines produced early on in the study. However, researchers should be mindful of the ethical concerns associated with asking children to reflect on multiple negative life events and experiences, or on failed aspirations, since this has the potential to cause further distress which researchers will need to address with sensitivity and skill (see Robson and Evans 2013).

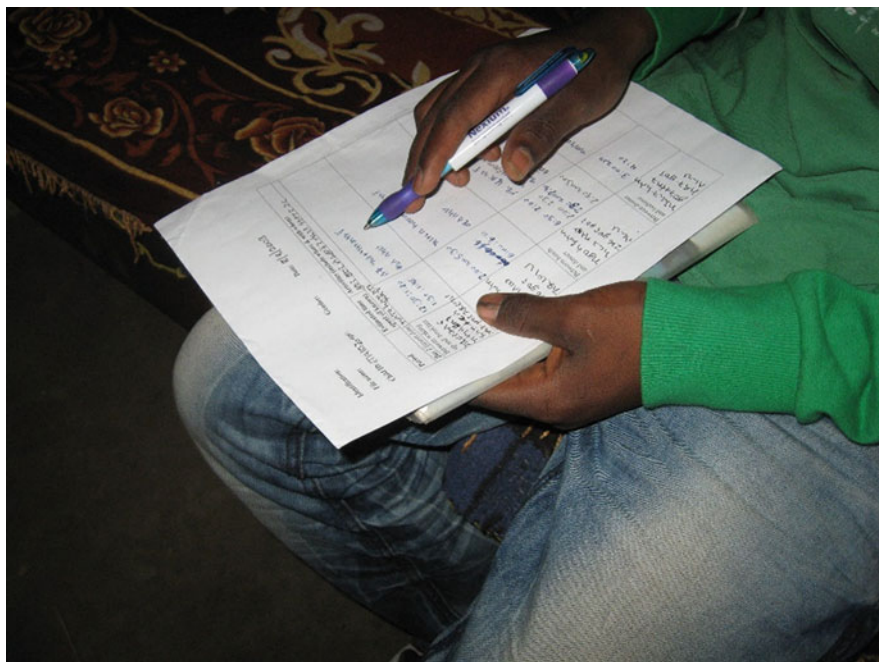
5.1.3 Diaries

Diaries take many forms (written, video, audio, photo, structured) and can be "solicited" or "commissioned" as part of QLR. Blythway (2012:1) contends that "diaries are an ideal instrument, providing a dated, contemporaneous record of interpretations, experiences and events." They present a space for recording sensitive or personal information that may otherwise not emerge in verbal discussions with the researcher, and diarists can fill out the diary at times convenient to them, without requiring the researcher to be present. Indeed, some young people may prefer to express themselves in writing, as reflected by Theis' (1996:72) description of an experience in Vietnam where "One 12-year-old girl...sat quietly in a corner of her house and did not respond to the interviewer's question. She was, however, quite happy to write her daily activity schedule on a piece of paper. When the interviewer later tried to talk to the girl again, she stood up and left the room."

Although diaries may overcome some of the limitations present in verbal interview formats (Elliot 1997), numerous contextual factors play a role in determining whether diaries will be an appropriate tool; for instance, in some contexts, keeping diaries is not a common practice, especially among children, and the individual recording of one's thoughts and opinions may raise suspicions in families and communities in which privacy and individualization may have negative connotations. There may be practical limitations to diary writing in cases where children cannot read or write and diaries can also be adapted depending on the particular research focus. For generating time-use diaries in contexts of low literacy, Boyden and Ennew (1997) suggest using an alternative tick list with pictures and colors. In a study of children caring for parents with HIV, Evans and Becker (2009) gave children stickers to indicate different emotions that they felt when doing different caring tasks over the course of a day, and older siblings sometimes helped children with low levels of literacy to record their activities.

There are many examples in which solicited diaries have been used effectively in QLR involving children and young people. In Ethiopia, Tafere asked children aged 12 to keep time-use diaries for a week as part of a longitudinal mixed-methods

study of everyday experiences of poverty. Researchers provided the children with a simple template into which they could record information about days and times of activities, whether they were alone or with others, the degree of choice they had, and how they felt about their activities (Tafere et al. 2013; see also Punch 2001). Researchers followed up shortly after the diaries were completed and used the diaries to stimulate discussions with the children about their roles and responsibilities inside and outside the home and how they managed competing pressures on their time (e.g., between schooling, working, and caring for others). In subsequent rounds, the children repeated the week-long diary exercise which prompted discussion and analysis of changes in children's time-use.



Sixteen-year-old boy completing a diary in Ethiopia. Young Lives (2011)

Other studies have combined diaries with other tools to facilitate children's creation of "memory books" or "life story books." In Evans and Becker's (2009) research on children caring for parents with HIV in Tanzania and the UK, they developed a life story book method called "My Story" based loosely on the format of memory books (memory books were developed by the National Community of Women Living with HIV and AIDS in Uganda and have been used in families affected by HIV in Eastern and Southern Africa), including sentence completion exercises, diary of a typical day, and spaces for drawing and collage. Other studies have used memory book techniques over longer periods of time to engage young people in self-documentation and reflection, as in the UK-based QLR project,

Inventing Adulthoods (described in the previous section), where the memory book method was used alongside interviews with young people about their agency, values, and identity in the transition to adulthood (Thomson and Holland 2005:202). In *Inventing Adulthoods*, the vision was that “memory books would be receptacles for memorabilia, materials that did not simply document a young person’s life (in the way that a journal or diary might) but which reflected the resources that they drew on in order to imagine themselves” (ibid, p. 203). The young people were provided with a scrapbook, stickers with heading labels (“adult,” “change,” “problems,” “sex,” “myself,” “relationships,” “love,” “career,” etc.), folders, and disposable cameras. They were told that they could “write, draw, stick in photos, stick in magazine or newspaper cuttings, stick in things that remind you of something – tickets from events you have been to, postcards etc.” (ibid, p. 205). Researchers distributed the memory books in the first round, and they were used as prompts for discussion with those who had returned them in the second interview. Thomson and Holland (2005:217) offer some caution, however: “In much the same way as private letters and diaries, memory books are compelling, providing access into an extremely intimate space that has the danger of inciting voyeurism and a prurient fascination. It is then a continuing challenge to us to use the memory book data in an ethical way that honours the trust that young people placed in us by both creating them in the first place, and then sharing them with us.”

5.1.4 Drawing

Drawing has become a favored technique for researchers wishing to access children’s subjective experience of their worlds, and it can take many forms depending on the purpose and desired output. Scenario drawing was used by researchers investigating child poverty in Peru (Niños del Milenio/Young Lives) in four contrasting communities (Rojas and Cussianovich 2013). Children in the study were invited to participate in a “well-being” drawing exercise that aimed to generate indicators of child well-being and ill-being in their respective localities (a description of the tool and a case study of how it was used in Young Lives, Peru, can be found in Johnson et al. 2014). The “well-being exercise” was originally developed by Jon Hubbard while at the Center for Victims of Torture in Minneapolis, Minnesota (USA), and Armstrong and colleagues (2004) used the tool effectively with adolescents in Sri Lanka. In the Peruvian child poverty study, this entailed each child drawing a scenario of a boy/girl who was doing well in life, and another image of a boy/girl who was not doing well. The drawings were presented in turn and discussed as a group, generating a list of well-being/ill-being indicators which the group ranked in the final stage of the discussion. This exercise was carried out in the same way in the first round (2007) and in the third round (2011), so analysis looked across time to changes in children’s perspectives (from age 12 to 16) and the factors contributing to change, such as life course transitions and events occurring at the household and community level.



Group of girls, 10 years old, generating indicators of child well-being/ill-being in Peru, *Young Lives*, 2011

Generally speaking, providing younger children with materials to color or draw may simply be a way to hold their attention when this is preferable for a research conversation (rather than the drawing being the core method). But drawing can also be an effective way of condensing and representing complex life processes and emotions that may otherwise be difficult to talk about (see, e.g., Evans 2004).

5.1.5 Relational Maps

Relational maps have been used to draw out children's perspectives on the quality, significance, and changing nature of their family and peer relationships, including identification of significant absences. Relational maps can prompt discussion around children's social networks and who they turn to when they need help (e.g., with homework, to earn cash, for emotional support) and who they support in return. Researchers in the *Young Lives and Times* (YLT) study in England used relational mapping in their investigation of young people's lives, identities, and relationships, as part of the second round interview (in a 10-year prospective study) (Bagnoli 2009:555).

There are many options for creating relational maps, the main purpose being children's identification of the individuals and groups that matter most to them.

5.1.6 Storytelling, Vignettes, and Newspaper Clippings

A variety of story-based methods including vignettes, story completion, and the use of newspaper headlines or clippings can be included in QLR to elicit young people's perceptions, assumptions, and experiences of particular topics. Often carried out in focus groups (Hennessy and Heary 2005; Hill et al. 1996), vignettes are stories of a hypothetical nature that can be presented to the group in one go (as a complete story) or in stages requiring participants to complete the story in turns.

Young Lives has used storytelling in the context of QLR to explore a variety of topics including children's work in Ethiopia, adolescent social transitions in India, school transitions in Peru, and peer bullying in Vietnam. For example, the following prompt was developed to explore the theme of school transitions with 12-year-old girls in Peru; the researcher began by saying:

Juliana is a girl who is in sixth grade of primary school. She likes to study but her parents have told her that she will not continue studying after finishing primary school because they need help at home. Juliana decided to talk to. . .

The children complete the story by answering open-ended questions posed by the facilitator to advance the story, such as "What will happen next?," "What should [Juliana] do and why?," and "Who might help?"

The hypothetical nature makes vignettes useful for exploring sensitive topics and topics for which participants do not have direct experience; however discussion prompts relating to actual events (in the community, country, or world) may also stimulate discussion. For example, newspaper and magazine clippings or short documentary or news video clips can provide springboards to discussion where young people relate news items to their everyday lives and communities.

Variations of storytelling can be used across multiple waves of qualitative research, but researchers may need to adapt the topics and techniques to reflect changing ages of children and new research priorities. For example, when individuals are younger, they may respond well to a story completion exercise, but in subsequent waves of research, and as they acquire adequate levels of literacy, they may prefer group discussion of newspaper headlines and news video clips.

5.2 Reuse, Repetition, and Reflection

While the first, baseline wave of data collection should utilize methods that generate robust, systematic, and rich data, a flexible approach in QLR means that researchers need to be open and creative in planning subsequent rounds, responding to emergent findings, social and life course changes, and ethical learning. The examples provided so far indicate the varied ways in which interviews can be combined with a variety of elicitation tools to capture children's perspectives on different aspects of their lives and social worlds.

Certain techniques enhance the analytic potential and value of QLR, namely, the reuse of materials (produced in an earlier round of research) in later rounds and the

repetition of specific methods across different rounds, these techniques aiding the capture of change and processes of reflection. Timelines, for example, “offer useful insights into life trajectories, plans and goals, and, used at each follow-up, the overwriting of biographies as lives unfold” (Hanna and Lau-Clayton 2012). Revisiting timelines produced in earlier rounds enables discussion of how participants’ lives, circumstances, and aspirations change and their explanations, since the meanings given to the past may change over time.

In the *Your Space! Siblings and Friends* study in the UK, Weller (2012) used relational maps across three rounds (2002–2009), alongside the introduction of new methods (such as timelines in round 2). This demonstrates the way QLR methodology itself represents a negotiated process of continuity and change. Weller suggests that rather than evaluating individual techniques, QL researchers should focus on process and creativity:

One key advantage of qualitative longitudinal research is that it provides the time and space for constant reflection and innovation allowing researchers to hone in on and recognise the diversity and shifting nature of participants’ interests and popular cultures of communications. (Weller 2012:130)

There is a further reason for researcher reflection, such that inviting young people to reflect on their past, present, and future, and using personal material prompts from the past (photos, video, diaries, drawings), may produce feelings of regret or failure when participants feel that they have not lived up to (their own or others’) expectations. Ethical and methodological reflection go hand in hand.

6 QLR: Practical and Ethical Challenges

The promise of QLR is to generate rich temporal data and to illuminate the way individual biographies are shaped within social structures and processes. QL researchers draw on, and increasingly contribute to, the fruitful body of literature addressing the complex challenges inherent in social research with children (Alderson 1995; Alderson and Morrow 2004; Einarsdóttir 2007; Hill 1997; Morrow and Richards 1996; Tisdall et al. 2009; Williamson et al. 2005). The examples described so far have hinted at some of the practical and ethical challenges that sometimes arise due to particular methodological choices – namely, whether and how to elicit the perspectives of children, which groups of children, for how long. These fundamental decisions are often made within the context of institutional constraints (e.g., university or disciplinary ethical guidelines and review boards) which may be at odds with researchers’ wishes to recognize children’s competence and their right to participation (Skelton 2008). In QLR, questions around “competence” and “duty of care” need to be revisited across time and space and in light of young participants’ changing lives and development. This section concludes the chapter by briefly addressing two broad categories of challenges that arise in QLR with children: the first pertains

to “data, analysis, and logistics” and the second to “research relationships and reciprocity.”

QLR gives rise to complex challenges around data, analysis, and logistics. QLR is expensive and, unlike non-longitudinal/ cross-sectional studies, may require additional resources related to tracking the sample between rounds of data collection, as well as the costs associated with management of large and evolving data sets, research staff, and ongoing project websites, over long time periods. The complexity and quantity of data increase with each new round, demanding that orderly data management systems be put in place early on and maintained over time. An increasingly large QL data set poses practical questions about how to “enter” the data analytically (case-wise, through thematically coded data, etc.) and how to integrate both cross-sectional and temporal dimensions of analysis. Thomson and Holland (2003) bring to light what they consider “the most challenging aspect of this kind of data set. . .the absence of analytic closure, with new rounds of data always threatening to render interpretations redundant” (p. 243). Much in the same way QL researchers invite their young participants to reflect on (textual and visual) materials produced in earlier rounds, the analytic process in QLR demands a constant “looking back” and the potential to cast new (and re-)interpretations on the data (and analyses). In the Young Lives study and majority of QLR, children are not directly involved in data analysis or dissemination, since involving them in these processes might be viewed as an “intervention” while the study is ongoing.

A further consideration stems from the increased expectation (by funders and within the research community) to publicly archive QL data; this poses many questions related to the ethics of secondary analysis and data sharing, including confidentiality and the need to achieve contextual understanding of qualitative data by analysts not involved in data collection (Neale and Bishop 2012; Morrow et al. 2014). Additionally, the preparation and anonymization of QL data for public use can be both time-consuming and costly.

Qualitative research favors small sample sizes, and in QLR this poses a particular challenge regarding attrition, since the tracking of research participants can span years or even decades. Young people may lose interest in participating (“respondent fatigue”), migrate, or lack the means to stay in touch (telephone/email). At the same time, retaining fieldworkers across rounds may prove difficult (e.g., if they are on short-term contracts or move on to new jobs), despite their crucial role in establishing and maintaining rapport with participants.

Researchers wishing to implement QLR may face initial funding constraints, and some studies begin as a “one-off” process but develop into QLR as time and resources become available (see Punch 2012, above). This can create a sense of uncertainty for researchers and participants when each subsequent wave of data collection requires renewed efforts to secure funding. Such indeterminacy also creates difficulties for researchers wishing to convey accurate messages to participants about their potential roles in future phases of research and information about possible return visits.

Indeed, the management of research relationships is a fundamental process within QLR. Neale argues that “adding time into the mix” of a qualitative study

heightens the need for ethical literacy (2013:6). Maintaining confidentiality becomes increasingly difficult when publishing detailed personal accounts of children's lives over time and when sharing findings and visual images through social media and project websites. Obtaining informed consent (or "assent") from participants is also ongoing (as it often is in non-longitudinal qualitative studies). In QLR, however, informed consent needs to be revisited over the course of research, rather than being seen as a "one-off" process, since new research questions and methods may alter the nature of participation across different phases of the study.

Research can have unintended effects on young participants (recall the opening quote to the chapter), and the nature and quality of QL data may be influenced by children's increasing familiarity with the "research process" and with what it means to assume the role of "research participant." The repeat interview format can have a normative effect, as pointed out by Thomson and Holland (2003:242), such that young people become accustomed to reflecting on their past and talking about their imagined futures, possibly inclining them to produce narratives of progress and development.

The nature of research relationships in QLR is a dynamic and negotiated process in time: children's (and families') expectations about the study and about their relationships with researchers can change. For example, *Young Lives* investigates childhood poverty across numerous resource-poor communities, and in some of them, there is also a heavy presence of NGO and humanitarian organizations (see Morrow 2009). Early on, some participants confused *Young Lives* (a non-interventionist research program) for an NGO, and over a decade on, the nature and purpose of the study continue to be explained at each round of survey and qualitative research. Of course, research encounters take place with particular families, in specific cultures and societies, framed by local understandings of what sharing, reciprocity, trust, and obligation mean. This gives rise to dilemmas in the field, when researchers are asked by families to become godparents or ritual siblings; to share personal telephone numbers, email addresses, and Facebook invitations; or to advise and provide assistance to children so that they can access schooling or jobs or migrate to the city or abroad.

Field teams agree ahead of time how they should respond tactfully to such requests so that there is a consistent response in line with the wider *Young Lives* approach. However, it is not so straightforward in practice. Some researchers express discomfort with the constraints placed on their roles as researchers and would prefer to (and in some instances, did) accept invitations to deepen their relationships with particular families, beyond that required for the research. In a personal capacity, they stay in touch with families, and some have even given small gifts outside of the context of research (although this is not part of their agreed research role). This can be a problem for the study if it generates tensions between participants, since some children may be seen to receive special attention and resources not enjoyed by others. Indeed, despite carefully designed ethical guidelines, maintaining a non-interventionist approach in long-term research with vulnerable children and families presents complex ethical challenges for all those involved. *Young Lives* anticipated these dilemmas would be important to capture

and learn from, so the study included a separate code (“Relationships with Young Lives”) that is applied when coding interview transcripts across rounds of research.

7 Conclusion

There is growing interest in the potential value of qualitative longitudinal research, both as a methodological approach and as a means of informing social policies. QLR developed as part of the “temporal” turn in the social sciences, reflecting a desire to deepen understanding of social phenomena in greater time perspective (Thomson et al. 2014:2). QLR brings to *geographies of children and young people* the potential to explore in more depth time-space dimensions of young people’s experiences and their dynamic contexts, at differing scales.

Geographers’ approach to studying children and young people has been shaped in recent decades through engagement with the new social studies of childhood (James et al. 1998), bringing with it a focus on children’s life worlds, often employing ethnographic methods; this has resulted in what some have described as “an overwhelming emphasis on different children’s micro-geographies at the expense of a macro analysis” (Holloway 2014; also see Abebe 2015; Ansell 2009). As a methodology, QLR can contribute to the “scaling up” of small-scale qualitative research by potentially extending the temporal, spatial, and disciplinary horizons of research, including in ways that are relevant for policy.

Indeed, current policy directions signal increasing awareness of temporal considerations, particularly at global level where concerns around sustainability, growing inequalities, and the life course have given rise to calls for a “data revolution” and for establishing new longitudinal cohort studies and collaborations. Thomson and colleagues (2014:1) suggest that QLR offers *deep data* to the “big data” debates, as well as a particular “sensibility” to time and reflexivity. Within the current policy landscape, QLR offers a space for multidisciplinary collaboration, methodological innovation, ethical learning, and the meaningful participation of children and young people in research about their lives.

While not all research questions require a qualitative or longitudinal design – or the participation of children for that matter – some questions and topics are particularly well suited to a QLR approach and benefit from children’s knowledge. For example, QLR is well suited to address the complexities of poverty dynamics, to identify links between earlier circumstances and later outcomes, to examine the relationship between geographic and social mobility, and to explore when, why, and how inequality emerges in childhood and youth (Morrow and Crivello 2015). This chapter offers a selection of methods that can be adopted and developed to generate temporal data with children and youth on differing aspects of their lives. Despite the practical and ethical challenges arising from young people’s involvement in QLR, there remain important “scientific, moral, political, and pragmatic” reasons for involving them in research about their changing lives and contexts (Greene and Hill 2005:18).

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