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Disembodied Lives: How teachers come to care and what this might mean for research in schools

### Original Citation

Reid, James (2016) Disembodied Lives: How teachers come to care and what this might mean for research in schools. In: International symposium: Engaging Children and Young People: Creative Methods and Research Ethics, 20th - 21st June 2016, University of Huddersfield. (Unpublished)

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## **International Symposium**

### ***Engaging Children and Young People: Creative Methods and Research Ethics***

**Monday 20 June - Tuesday 21 June 2016**

#### **Registration and Refreshments**

Lockside Building, Firth Street  
LS1/27 – Floor 1, room 27

#### **Presentations**

Canalside East Building, Firth Street  
CEG/28 – Ground floor, room 28 (lecture theatre)

## Programme

### Monday 20 June – Day One

**9.30 - 10.00 Registration and coffee**

**10.00 - 10.15 Welcome**

Professor Bob Cryan (Vice-Chancellor, University of Huddersfield)

Professor Pete Sanderson (Dean, School of Education and Professional Development)

Professor Janet Fink (Huddersfield Centre for Research in Education and Society)

**10.15 - 11.30 Keynote**



**Professor Anna Sparrman (Dept of Thematic Studies: Child Studies, Linköping University, Sweden)**

***Engaging Children and Young People: Methodological Problems and Ethical Dilemmas***

There is a general idea that research methods are there to help researchers and that methodological difficulties should be solved so that methods improve and problems are overcome. The approach in this paper is however that methods and ethics are in no way innocent or neutral, but productive, i.e. they “produce the reality that they understand” (Law 2004: 5). This means that our research can benefit by looking at and investigating both methodological problems and ethical dilemmas encountered in the research process.

So what is new? We all know by now that the way research projects are framed and inflected upon effects the research results. This paper wants to extend this thinking by focusing on how research methodologies and ethics are knowledge producers during a research process, both when collecting and analyzing data.

Methodologies are not innocent. When ‘applied’ to children they can strengthen certain perceptions of what we mean by a child. It matters, for example, which notion of the child is combined or intertwined with the methodological approach and how the relation between the child and the researcher produces the research topic. For example, in *Social Studies of Childhood* a common starting point is the view that children are active, competent and capable of autonomous action. What consequences does this have for our knowledge production? How should we avoid the risk of repeating the idea of the child favoured within the area or institutions being studied?

The presentation addresses these questions with examples from different research projects, different data collection techniques, technologies and analyses. It concludes that the methodological problems and ethical dilemmas we encounter when conducting research with and about children give us important information about the topics we are researching.

**11.30 - 11.45 Refreshments**

**11.45 - 13.00**

**Professor Barry Percy-Smith (Centre for Applied Childhood, Youth and Family Research, University of Huddersfield)**



***Reflecting on the Whole Story: Using 'Rivers of Experience' in Participatory Inquiry with Young People***

Commitment to hearing the voice of the child has spurred the development of an increasing array of creative and visual methods to elicit the views and understand the realities of children and young people.

Arguably visuals provide richer and deeper insights into lived experiences in ways that are more difficult with the written word. However, in participatory research the value of different methods is in their ability to engage participants in reflection and sense making rather than just capturing a set of views and perspectives for researchers. Rivers of experience is a psycho dynamic approach which has been used in research as well as therapeutic settings. This paper discusses its use as a participatory action inquiry tool working with unemployed young people to understand their realities and experiences in order to inform change in support services as well as opening up different choices and ways of seeing for young people themselves through their own reflection and sense making. Using examples from different projects this paper discusses the value of such an approach as well as reflecting on limitations and challenges including ethical considerations.



**Dr Sarah Parsons (Centre for Research in Inclusion, University of Southampton)**

***Innovative Methods for Informed Consent with Children and Young People: The Need for Creativity and Collaboration***

The role of creative methods in supporting children and young people's participation in, and engagement with, research has been much explored since the core principles of the UNCRC were established. Consequently, we know much more about many aspects of children and young people's lives from their own perspectives. We are also much more skilled, aware, and critically reflective about the range of methods we might employ to enable children's voices to be heard. I was interested in whether, and how, such skills and awareness have been applied to informed consent practices with children and young people in social research. I'll provide some insights from a UK-based project that investigated this by: (1) analysing the information and guidance about children's participation in social research made available (or not) on research-intensive university websites, and (2) interviewing social researchers about their informed consent practices. Overall, there is much room for innovation and creativity in this area. There is limited guidance for researchers about how children's informed consent can be effectively gained, and researchers tend not to apply what they know about creative methods to the informed consent process. I argue that digital technologies have the potential to transform some of these practices, but there are cautions that need to be considered too.

**13.00 - 14.00 Lunch**

**14.00 - 15.15**



**Dr Lisa Russell (Huddersfield Centre for Research in Education and Society, University of Huddersfield)  
Dr Ruth Barley (Faculty of Development and Society, Sheffield Hallam University)**

***Ethics, Education and Ethnography: Working with Young People and Children***

Ethnography is one of the most responsive research methodologies and research products within educational research; it is also one of the most contested. There are continual debates about how educational ethnographies should be conducted and presented (Walford, 2008). Not only does ethnography incorporate a wide array of methodologies, but educational ethnographers themselves are situated in the practical domain of the everyday life where the course of predicting ethically sound research practise is to some degree challenging, as the ethnographer is forced to respond to the process itself rather than being situationally forged prior to its conduct (Dennis, 2010). This paper attempts to address the dearth in knowledge regarding the exploration of ethics and reflexive practise by exploring the work of two education ethnographers' work with children and young people.

Data is drawn from two ethnographies conducted by the authors. The first draws on two stages of a longitudinal ethnography with a multi-ethnic school in the North of England and incorporates two periods of fieldwork with the same group of children when they were in their Reception year (Barley, 2014) and then again in Year 4. The second draws on a Leverhulme Trust Funded 3 year ethnography that explored the experiences of NEET young people in Northern England (Simmons, Thompson and Russell 2014).

This paper argues that education ethnographers need to be reflexive in their consideration of ethics, especially when taking into account the variable fields of investigation, the close proximity to children and young people over a longitudinal basis and the potential use of a plethora of research methodologies. Ethnography can be varied and unpredictable and as such have key unprecedented consequences for the use of ethics when working with children and young people.



**Judith Hunter (Huddersfield Centre for Research in Education and Society, University of Huddersfield)**

***What's So Interesting Outside? An Exploration into the Different Affordances of Outdoor Play spaces and their Relationship to Early Childhood Pedagogy***

The case study explores the importance of contextual information in order to understand the function and meaning of children's play, and to compare the opportunities offered by different outdoor play spaces, including a Forest School for practitioners and children. During the research process, the children will play an active role as they identify 'places and things' that are of interest to them rather than those imposed by the adults. In this way the children will direct the research process and ensure their 'voice' is fully explored.



**Jim Reid (Huddersfield Centre for Research in Education and Society, University of Huddersfield)**

***Disembodied Lives: How Teachers Come to Care and What This Might Mean for Research in Schools***

Childhood Studies has significantly shifted the narrative about children and childhoods away from narrow conceptualisations of the child as an adult in the making, further rejecting the parochial and essentialist theorizing of social constructivism, to include a fluid and broader concern for the centrality of voice and how children develop, understand and regulate their own lives. In this context the politics of representation are an important concern and childhood researchers are keenly aware of the need to critically evaluate both how children's lives are organized and mediated, and how they critically analyse how they come to represent children's lived experience in their research work.

This presentation reports on the findings of an institutional ethnography of a primary school in the north of England during a period of regulatory scrutiny when the school was judged by Ofsted inspectors as 'performing less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform'. Consideration is given to use of a narrative method, the Listening Guide including 'I' poems, and how these were utilised in revealing and analysing the co-ordination of social relations. Readings of the poems reveal complex, relational, ethical and political context in which the teachers' work is organized by powerful texts and intertextual processes. Specifically, teachers are silenced as care receivers. The dilemmas this creates for research with children and young people in educational settings is discussed.

**15.15 - 15.30 Refreshments**

**15.30 - 16.30**



**Kath Shackleton (producer and co-founder at Marsden-based Fettle Animation)**

***The power of animation: evoking emotion, imagination, memory and aspiration***

Fettle are an award winning 2D Animation Studio, producing stand-alone animations, series, commercials, explainer videos, title sequences, product launches, training films, educational films, bumpers, idents and stings. In 2015 their much acclaimed 6 part series, Children of the Holocaust, which animated interviews with survivors of Nazi persecution during World War Two, won a Japan Prize, two Royal Television Society Yorkshire Awards and the Sandford St Martin's Children's Award, plus a BAFTA nomination.



A full length documentary version has been shown on BBC4 and has been broadcast in 10 countries around the world to date. It has also been shortlisted for 10 international film and animation festivals around the world, including the prestigious Annecy Animation Festival.

More recently Fettle have worked with Nine Lives Media and CBBC to create animated elements for a new children's documentary about Mental Health. My Life: Marvellous Messy Minds features three young people and their practical experiences of conquering their mental health problems to achieve what they want from their lives. They have animated young people's descriptions of how their mental health problems make them feel, to make it easier for others to understand what it is like on the bad days when anxiety and depression take hold.

In this session, Kath will explain how animation can be an ideal way to make complicated ideas easier to understand for both adults and children. It can put over sensitive subjects in a non-threatening and age appropriate way and can also be used to present research material dynamically. It engages the emotions and makes people think – and can make them laugh too.

<http://fettleanimation.com/>

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**19.00 Conference dinner**

# International Symposium

## ***Engaging Children and Young People: Creative Methods and Research Ethics***

**Tuesday 21 June – Day Two**

**9.30 - 10.00 Tea/coffee**

**10.00 - 11.15 Keynote**



**Professor Peter Kraftl (School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Birmingham)**

***Geography, Childhood, Education: Methodological Reflections***

This paper will be split into two parts: the first half will be largely conceptual, and the second will discuss methods. The first half of the paper will outline the main principles of scholarship in subdisciplinary children's geographies. It will note key overlaps and divergences with wider scholarship in childhood studies. It will then introduce and critically reflect upon a so-called 'new wave' or 'infra-paradigm' of childhood studies scholarship, which has focussed upon overcoming apparent biosocial dualisms. It will emphasise the need for greater interdisciplinary engagement, not least with well-established nonrepresentational approaches in children's geographies. It will also briefly chart some 'classic' methods from children's geographies scholarship, some of which will be familiar to a wider audience. These include mapping, participatory workshops and interviews based on GPS tracks of children's mobilities.

The second half of the paper will then introduce a range of methods that have attempted to broach the nonrepresentational and nondualistic challenge laid down by the 'new wave' of childhood studies. These include participatory workshops, observant participation and autoethnography. The final part of the paper will be less a conclusion and more a provocation for discussion: it will outline some of the (conceptual, political methodological and disciplinary) challenges faced by childhood studies scholars if the 'new wave' is to fulfil its early promise.

**11.15 - 11.30 Refreshments**

**11.30 - 12.45**



**Dr Dawn Mannay (School of Social Sciences, University of Cardiff)**

***Being seen or remaining out of view? Considering creative re-visualisation as an ethical practice in disseminating research***

This paper explores the ways in which marginalised communities become embodied as both different and lacking in contemporary media representations. Drawing on four research studies based in Wales, UK, with mothers and daughters in low-income areas and looked after children and young people, the paper considers how participants can reclaim acceptable identities, and tell new stories, through creative methodologies and visual participatory productions. The paper examines the ethical tensions between 'giving voice' and maintaining confidentiality in relation to digital landscapes, ocular centric cultures, open access and time immemorial. Centralising the space between visibility and invisibility, the paper discusses how visual exposure can be both a tool of empowerment and a vehicle of disempowerment. Presenting examples of graphic art, poetry, film and music videos the paper considers how re-visualising research findings can contribute to ethical and impactful forms of dissemination



**Professor Helen Lomax (Institute of Wellbeing, University of Northampton)**

***Consuming Images, Fixing Childhoods: Class, Gender and Ethics in Visual Research with Children***

This paper considers the ethical challenges engendered by participatory visual research with children. Drawing on photographs and filmed material taken by and of young people it consider how to reconcile the challenges generated by disseminating images of children while supporting them to have a voice in research. Of concern is how to maintain the integrity of children's visual voices whilst protecting them from any harm that may emerge from revealing visual information about them. This issue has become germane as developments in digital technology and visual culture mean that images can be widely circulated and consumed in unanticipated ways and for time immemorial. The paper considers diverse ethical approaches to resolving this on-going dilemma and examines their potential for honouring children's rights to be heard amidst wider anxieties about contemporary childhoods and children's digital visibility.



**Dr April Mandrona (Department of Integrated Studies in Education,  
McGill University, Canada)**

***The Ethics of Collaborative Visual Research with Young People in a  
Capitalist Age***

Academic scholars pursuing research with young people are situated within a complex web of relations between global forces, local social structures, and the needs and desires of young people themselves. This presentation explores the processes of building solidarity with “marginalized” children and young people in collaborative visual arts research. I consider what it might mean to be a young person today, particularly in relation to issues such as class, race, and geography, and how, as researchers, we can work alongside young people to better understand their lives. Using my research with indigenous communities in rural South Africa as a point of entry, I aim to open a space to grapple with the notion of “ethical research practice”. My research focuses on identifying and using resources (materials, tools, techniques) that are accessible within surrounding environments to build relevant and meaningful art practices with young people. Reflecting on evolving research relationships in a context deeply affected by poverty, structural racism, anti-child bias, systemic violence, and HIV and AIDS, I focus on my efforts to link with others both in moments of camaraderie and across fractures of misrecognition. Continuing from here, I wonder, what does “decolonizing” research mean in the context of visual work with contemporary young people? What might young people’s engagement with visual materials reveal about how they navigate the adult ordered world? How might encounters with communities of young people yield a new ethical process, practice, and outcome that depart from the familiar each collaborator knows individually?

**12.45 - 13.00 Concluding thoughts and ways forward**

**13.00 - 13.45 Lunch**

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