Using creative methods to engage young people in research: The Sight and Sound Project

Dr. Sarah Wilson
University of Stirling
Presentation to Graduate School
Faculty of Humanities and Social Science
University of Strathclyde, 6 March 2013
Young People Creating Belonging: spaces, sounds and sights

exploring (non) belonging and its links with objects, place and sensory experience with young people who are looked after. Drawing on:

- relational Practice – GIRFEC (2008), Care Matters (2007)
- everyday domestic practices and personal life (Morgan 1996; Smart 2007; Mason and Davies 2010)
- home and its association with intimacy, privacy (Mallett 2004) and sensory respite (Adams et al. 2007)
- belonging: as ‘emotional..ontological attachment..feeling at home … include[ing] a notion of project or sense of hope for the future’ (Yuval-Davis 2011: 10; May 2011)
- sensory literature (Bull 2007; Rose 2007; Pink 2009; Büscher and Urry 2009, Miller 2010; ‘aesthetic dimension of autonomy’ DeNora 2000)
- work on parental substance misuse suggesting a link between unwanted sensory experience and not belonging (Wilson et al. 2012)
General methodological points

• **‘multi-sensorial’ approach**: photos can ‘carry flesh and blood’, convey the ‘texture’ of places and objects, encourage talk that would not be possible in their absence (Rose 2007: 237-48), understanding participants’ aesthetic.

• interviews supplemented by **ethnographic** material (long initial discussions, text and phone contact, home tours, walks to stations, social work offices, cat rescue homes, residence and observation on islands)

• **participatory approach** – ‘understand[ing] and engag[ing] with other people’s worlds through sharing activities, practices’ (Pink 2009: 9); sense of collective and creative endeavour, non-threatening proximity, fun!
Methods & Sample

* 22 participants (13 male; 9 female) aged 10-23 (most 14-17); 12 second interviews (so far).

**Categories shifting:**
- Kinship Foster Care 1 - Foster Care 11/9
- Adopted 1 - Children’s Unit 3
- Secure Accom 1 - Home with supervision 2/4
- Residential School 1 - Independent Living 2

Islands (urban) 4/5; (rural) 3/4
West Central (urban) 8, (rural) 1
East Central (urban) 4, (rural) 1
Running Script (Activity 1)

Take a series of photographs of:

- Your 2 **favourite places** (any space inside or outside, from different angles)
- Your 2 **least favourite places** (any space inside or outside, from different angles)
- The door/entrance to your favourite and least favourite spaces.
- 1 room which is used by you and by others where you live
- 3 **objects or ‘things’** that are most important to you

Make 1-3 minute sound recordings of:

- 3 **sounds** that are positive or make you feel good inside. Include at least one **music track** that makes you feel good or that you play the most.
- 2 other sounds that are important to you
SW: Ah! So was it your grandfather’s house?

CH: Aye

SW: ...So before it was your [auntie’s] house did you go there a lot?

CH: A-ha..It’s never been changed (Oh right). That’s why I like it so much. Never, ever been changed.

SW: So this house has always been the same throughout your life?

CH: Aye.
Belonging: biography and (re) creativity (Channel at her friend Alannah’s place)

SW: Did you choose the wallpaper here?
CH: Yes
SW: ...because it looks a bit like the one in your (grandad’s house)
CH: Aye
SW: But it’s in Alannah’s house?
CH: Aye
SW: So she let you choose the wallpaper?
CH: A-ha.
SW: Did you choose the carpet as well?
CH: Me and Alannah
SW: A-ha. So her house is kind of like a ...project?
CH: Aye (laughs)
Favourite/ Important Sounds
Bob

The Black Rose Song

Coz I’m a little boy that nobody knows
My best friend is a little black rose
Little black rose
Little black rose
Little black rose
Oh Little Black rose
Sitting down by the beach all on my own
When a girl came driving down the road
Now my heart is turning red
My heart is no longer dead
Anymore, anymore
Vincent: Last Resort – Papa Roach

Cut my life into pieces, This is my last resort
Suffocation, no breathing. Don't give a fuck if I cut my arm bleeding
This is my last resort
Do you even care if I die bleeding?
Would it be wrong? would it be right? If I took my life tonight?
Chances are that I might. Mutilation out of sight,
And I'm contemplating suicide
‘Cause I'm losing my sight, losing my mind. Wish somebody would tell me fine
never realized I was spread too thin 'Til it was too late and I was empty within. Hungry, feeding on my chaos and living in sin
Downward spiral, where do I begin?
It all started when I lost my mother. No love for myself and no love for another
Searching to find a love upon a higher level Finding nothing but questions and devils
Nothing's alright, Nothing is fine.
I'm running and I'm crying I'm crying, I'm crying I'm crying, I'm crying. I, can't, go, on, living, this, way.
Drab Video

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_oLfC5Z_Ys
Running Script (Activity 2)

* **My Dream Home/ Room/ Space**
  * Tell us about what your dream home would look like or what you would like the next place you live to look like. If you want you can make something in advance or, if you prefer you can do it with us. You can create it any way you want: design it on computer, draw it, make it out of card or lego.

* **Music with a Message**
  * Choose 2 pieces of music with words which are important to you or that you would like someone else to hear the lyrics. What is the music? What is the message you want to get across?

* **The Place I Live**
  * Make a map of the place you live or spend most of your time. Add stickers showing where you like, don’t like and the spaces you use and don’t use.
MA: okay, so that is like a wardrobe, but you climb through a space and it's got this really comfy bed...It's a secret hiding place. And They're like curtains.... And only a few people that I extra specially like know I'm there.... Because the curtains have a pattern on them to look like it's just a normal bit of a wardrobe...

MA: [I'd be] Hiding away.

MA: ...Erm, oh, and I would have soundproofed walls... well not the walls but erm, the chest of drawers would be like sound proof... because there's quite a lot of noise goes on when im trying to sleep....it's just sometimes we get, like, rows that go on....

MA: Oh I know! Optional soundproof so I can choose whether to switch it [the noise] on or off...I'd like press this button and a whole rack of CDs would come out and there'd be like, CDs of singing and music and there'd also be CDs of, like, things like people talking and playing snap and there'd be like cars as well.

EJ: and why would you have those sounds?

MA: ... just feeling not alone.
References


