

Seminar 3: Abstracts

Interdisciplinary challenges: understanding data and the interpretive act

Isabel Dyck, Queen Mary University of London

Marta Rabikowska, University of East London

Matthew Hawkins, Independent film-maker

Iliana Ortega-Alcazar, Queen Mary University of London

In this presentation we put forward the tension in producing and representing data in the context of an interdisciplinary project producing a film concerned with international migrants' health knowledge and practices, focusing on changes and continuities in the context of migration and/or living in diaspora. The team of researchers has been working together, bringing to the project perspectives from the social sciences, film theory and practice. Together we discuss our various positions in relation to the project and how we understand the primary issues related to data production and interpretation. In doing so we uncover challenges that are fundamental to the process of producing the film which is to be the primary output of the research. We use examples from the field research to illustrate the tensions we experience and how these may be accommodated.

City Portraits

Paul Sweetman, University of Southampton

Laura Hensser, photographer

City Portraits is a major new installation by artist Laura Hensser, featuring 20 life-sized, full-length portraits of Southampton residents on banners located in and around the City's newly refurbished Guildhall Square. Part funded by the Creative Campus Initiative, and developed in association with the John Hansard Gallery, University of Southampton, and Paul Sweetman, Division of Sociology & Social Policy, University of Southampton, the artwork is intended to celebrate the lives and diversity of the City's inhabitants, and to help mark the inauguration of its new Cultural Quarter. It is also research-led, reflecting Paul Sweetman's concerns with visual methods of research, and issues of both ethics and anonymity and representation and recognition. The artwork is intended both literally and metaphorically to bring Southampton's residents into the new Cultural Quarter, to make them visible and to mark their presence in, and ownership of, this important new space. Paul has been fully involved in developing the project since its inception, and will be conducting focus groups with participants once the artwork has been taken down, asking about their experiences of having taken part.

Paul and Laura will talk about the development of the project (including its theoretical and conceptual underpinnings and starting point), the processes of recruitment and ethical approval, running the group photography sessions, and negotiations regarding installation, as well as the very successful and well attended launch event, and feedback received so far. They will also discuss future plans in terms of publications, lectures and other events, and their overall thoughts regarding the possibilities and potential of collaborations of this kind. Project links:

<http://www.hansardgallery.org.uk/exhibition/offsite.htm>;
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akrT5_RINA0
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40tyZwQgZZw>

Rhythm And Poetry: engaging marginalised young people in participatory research

Val Gillies, Families & Social Capital Research Group, London South Bank University

This paper explores some of the creative methods drawn on as part of an ESRC funded study of pupils at risk of school exclusion. The research was based in 3 secondary schools, located in disadvantaged, inner city areas. Aspects of classroom behaviour that frequently collide with institutional expectations include heightened physicality and emotionality as well as hostility to formal learning methods. In this paper I outline how our efforts to work within rather than against this context led us to the mediums of rap and performance poetry. More specifically I explore how music and poetry can be utilised as an effective tool in research with marginalised young people.

Links: www.lsbu.ac.uk/families; 'Serious About Youth': www.say-youth.org

Creative Encounters: drama as a method for exploring challenging student behaviour

Yvonne Robinson, London South Bank University

This workshop discusses using drama as a method in an ESRC funded project exploring secondary aged students at risk of school exclusion. It shows how drama as a research method offered an alternative way of working with young people and helped to illuminate particular issues and concerns. In this way drama also acted as a valuable medium to access meanings and experiences. The workshop concludes with a brief consideration of the ethical and practical issues raised by using creative arts as an approach.

'Children's drawings from a sociological perspective'

Olga den Besten

This part of the workshop will focus on the advantages and limitations of using children's maps/drawings in a social sciences research and, together with the participants, will try to answer the question: how can such visual data contribute to our understanding of social inequality? The visual materials that the workshop participants will be able to engage with, are taken from the research carried out by the author in 2005-06. It explored children's and young people's experiences in several socially contrasted neighbourhoods in Paris and Berlin through subjective maps drawn by the children. The study has argued that social and spatial divisions are interconnected and that children's exploration of their neighbourhood largely depends on financial resources and cultural capital available to these children's parents.

Listening to children: Making their voices visible in research, policy and practice

Lisa Whiting

This paper will present a qualitative study that has drawn upon an ethnographic approach; the aim of the study was to actively engage children in the development of a knowledge base that has the potential to inform policy and practice development in relation to the enhancement of childhood physical activity levels. The need to involve children in a range of issues that affect their lives is growing in acceptance; of more specific relevance to this study, is the suggestion by Tisdall and Davis (2004) that there has been a drive to ensure that the voices of children are listened to when policies are being written, stating that children “possess information and knowledge that policy makers require.” Despite their growing involvement in research, it could be argued that children’s voices are still not being truly heard and policy development is fundamentally based upon adult perspectives. The study used photo elicitation to facilitate insight into the lives of twenty children (9-10 years of age) through the lenses of their own cameras. The presentation will raise questions and promote audience debate in areas relating to:

- The use of photography as a method to engage children in research
- The potential impact of the research methods on the study’s findings
- The relevance of contemporary culture to children’s physical activity levels
- The strategies that can be used to enable children’s voices to be heard so that policy development can be appropriately informed

The children’s words and photographs will be used to illustrate the presentation.

The relevance of visual media in influencing social change

Geraldine Brady and Geraldine Brown, Applied Research Centre in Sustainable Regeneration, Coventry University

Attempts to include the voices of service users have become a common feature of health and social care service commissioning and commissioning of research; including the voices and experiences of those who may be defined as being ‘socially excluded’, ‘marginalized’, ‘vulnerable’, ‘hard to reach’ and ‘at risk’ are currently encouraged. It is often assumed that issues associated with inequality are being addressed from the ‘bottom up’ (Ferguson, 2002). In this workshop we highlight the way in which research around teenage pregnancy has been commissioned in relation to a specific political agenda. The pervasive discourse authoritatively places teenage parents’ experiences outside of the norm, constructing teenage pregnancy as negative for young women, their children and wider society. Over several years and across four different development projects, we have worked with young mothers to produce visual resources including storyboards, story booklets and film which serve to challenge this dominant discourse. These resources have been used in training and disseminated to health and social care professionals to provide a more holistic picture of the lives of young parents which, in turn, has influenced changes in professional practice.

We have found visual images to be a powerful way of encouraging practitioners, young people and wider society to confront the stereotypes which they may hold about teenage parents. However, our work has raised some questions about the adoption of visual methods which we would like to explore in this workshop. Examples of the

resources made during our projects will be shared with workshop delegates to encourage discussion.

Telling tales? Employing stories and pictures to facilitate an understanding of the everyday lives of marginalised women

Dawn Mannay, Cardiff University

This paper draws upon data generated by eighteen participants from a research project, which aimed to explore and represent the everyday experiences of working-class mothers and daughters, residing on a peripheral social housing estate. Central to the research was generating an environment and methods through which the compelling voices of the participants could be foregrounded. The paper describes how I, as an indigenous researcher, employed visual and narrative methods of data production in order to suspend my preconceptions of familiar territory, and facilitate an understanding of the unique viewpoints of mothers and daughters on the margins of contemporary Britain. The paper focuses on the usefulness of the approach for making the familiar strange when the researchers own experience mirrors that of their participants. However, as Ball and Smith (2001: 131) suggest '*the greater use of visual methods is not a panacea for all ethnography's ills nor is it the touchstone to startling ethnographic discoveries*'. There were then a number of inherent difficulties in the application of these participatory methods, and the paper also explores the ways in which such research can still be open to questions of power and representation.